Psychological Factors in Continuance Digital Media Behaviour: Smartphone, Internet and Social Media in Young Consumers

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ABSTRACT

Since childhood, young consumers have experienced new digital media, from smartphones to the internet and social media. The purpose of this study was to compare the digital media behaviour of young people by exploring the psychological and antecedents that have sustained usage behaviour through the lens of the Uses and Gratifications Theory. Using a quantitative approach, a survey was conducted in three public universities in Ghana, based on existing scales for psychosocial and individual psychological satisfactions. A sample of 825 respondents between the ages of 18-35 was randomly selected to respond to the questionnaire. Logistic regression was used to analyse the extent to which psychological factors influence digital media behaviour. The findings revealed that young consumers' mobile internet and social media usage behaviour are greatly influenced by social-psychological gratifications such as social relationships, entertainment, and information. Still, smartphone usage is influenced by business and commercial motives. Individual factors such as self-esteem and self-seeking status did not affect any of the media usage behaviour.

Key Words: *Digital Media, Smartphone, Internet, Social Media, Psychology, Gratifications*

Introduction

Technological advancement and the emergence of new digital communication media such as the internet, mobile phone and social media have created a substantial technical industry for both businesses and consumers. With the advent of new digital media technologies, people worldwide are becoming ardent users of digital media. The ubiquitous nature of digital media appears to be a trend of the epoch, providing a faster, timely and intelligent solution for meeting a wide range of needs (Chen et al., 2020).

Digital media include all forms of new communication media and devices represented in codes of digits. It includes videos, texts, audio, e-books, advertisements, virtual reality, social media and digital tools like a smartphone. Digital media are electronic media or device that convey and transmit information using digital or numerical signals. This new media has created a new revolution that is causing dramatic changes in all sectors of the economy. Digital media has made information compressible, dense, accessible and manipulatable. Due to their nature, these digital media have become an integral aspect of young people's media landscape and daily consumption lifestyle (Kotler & Keller, 2013). With continuous usage, many thriving businesses are exploring more ways of simplifying operations and market activities through digital media. Thus, insight into consumer behaviour and continuous usage drivers are critical success factors for industry players. The three most predominant trending digital media that have become important in the lives of young people are smartphone, the internet and social media

Current researchers have identified some psychological factors influencing young people as smartphones, mobile internet and social media. The usage behaviour and social psychological factors have been explored through the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) Model, where young consumers have become the focal point of research. Findings suggest that social and psychological factors drive young people. Although digital media in young people has received considerable attention in research, data from Africa remains relatively scarce as existing psychosocial studies focus more on Asia and the Western developed world. Again, not many studies have compared these three primary digital media's usage behaviour to the best of my knowledge.

Owing to the above, the purpose of this paper is first to explore the psychological factors that drive young people's continuous usage behaviour; and the extent to which these factors drive user behaviour in digital media. Secondly, it is to assess the business implications of psychological gratifications in digital media consumer behaviour.

Literature Review

Digital Media and Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour occupies a central position in business and marketing. Understanding how consumers behave in daily purchasing and consumption is crucial in the planning and managing of business and marketing decisions (Holmes, Byrne & Rowley, 2013; Sunil, 2015; Blythe, 2008). Consumers and consumption practices play critical roles in marketing and corporate strategy by ensuring customer acquisition, retention, growth and general sustainability (Kotler & Keller, 2013; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). Understanding and managing consumers have been challenging due to the complexity of digital media behaviour.

The smartphone has evolved through changes in the industry and in consumer needs, taste and preferences. These functions include games, camera & video, radio, MP3&4, mobile internet, and social media, which support the provision of information and entertainment. Users can connect to Mobile Internet, the centre of the smartphone and Social Media, the centre of social interactions in digital media (Tobbin, 2010; Syed & Nurrullah, 2011; Vincent, 2014).

The arrival of the mobile internet has created significant opportunities for both businesses and consumers to offer and receive innovative services and advanced digital products and services from different applications, including social media (Wetlund, 2015; Kass et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2013).

Studies show an escalation of social media usage behaviour in the youth side (Bolton et al., 2013; Carter & Yeo 2016; Chiang, 2013; Chuma, 2014; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Watulak & Whitefield, 2016; Whiting & Williams, 2013). Studies show that the millennials are ushering the world into a postdigital era that is reshaping how we live, work, and play. They engage digital media for information, social life and other purposes (Aikat, 2020; Florenthal & Paterson, 2019).Consequently, there has been an evolution of digital consumers who the consumption of three primary media has significantly influenced; including the smartphone, mobile internet and social media research (Babadi-Akashe, 2014; Choliz, 2012; Khan 2017; Karikari et al., 2017; Lopez- Fernandez et al., 2017; Whiting & William, 2013). Yet there has not been much contribution from a different digital media from the African perspective; hence, it is essential to study digital media usage behaviour from a developing setting to expand knowledge based on the Uses and Gratification Theory.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses & Gratifications (U&G) theory attempts to define the specific motives and satisfactions underlying consumer behaviour and is associated with using a particular communication medium; outlines media use; and explains how the gratifications drive usage. According to Wei (2008), the Uses and Gratifications Theory is based on the premise that consumers are conscious of their social and psychological needs and are prepared to pursue these needs in their media engagements for satisfaction.

Lin (2002) conceptualises gratifications as needs and stipulates that media use is a conscious effort towards the fulfilment of both emotional, then mental requirements as shown in users seeking entertainment, identity and information (Wei & Lo, 2006; Chan & Fang, 2007; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Chen, 2010). Gratifications are social and psychological determinants moving people to use media and technologies. Lin and Chen (2017) conceptualise gratifications as the fulfilment resulting from using a particular media. This research embraces the satisfaction perspective of gratification as the drive for continuous digital media use in young consumers.

Uses and Gratifications Theory has been useful in a varied collection of new media technologies, including television, computers, smartphones, the internet, and social media (Raake & Bond-Raacke, 2008; Wei, 2008). However, not many studies have compared these three leading digital media in terms of their psychological and social situations, influencing usage behaviour and consequences.

Digital Media Usage and Psychological Factors in Young People

Psychosocial gratifications include satisfactions enjoyed through human interactions (Dolan et al., 2015; Raacke & Bond Raacke, 2008; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2011; Wei, 2006). Socially, belongingness and the need to connect are strong predictors of frequency of mobile phone use. (Karikari et al., 2017; Khan, 2017; Walsh et al., 2009). The need for social interaction is supported by Sey (2011), who confirms that people use mobile phones and SMS for the provision of social requirements as the device has emerged as a social device supplying the need to connect and interact with others (Sey, 2011).

Studies have also supported the need for entertainment and fun as a critical driving force in young people to use their digital media. Nysveen et al. (2005) survey in Norway on smartphone and social media usage suggests that social norms and intrinsic motives such as enjoyment are essential for social media use. Hussain (2012) observed that students used social media and chatting for pleasure and some academic activities.

Young consumers use new digital media technology to satisfy the significant need for searching for and receiving some information through new media technologies (Dolan et al., 2015). A report on young people's mobile internet and social media use indicates that one of the primary uses of mobile internet among young people is browsing for the news, information search and e-mail (Bohlin & Westlund; Dolan et al., 2015; Westlund, 2010). According to Westlund (2010), one of the functions fuelling mobile internet popularity is news provision.

Other findings similarly support social and psychological gratifications connected with social media and social networking sites (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). Whiting and William (2013) found ten themes thought out to be gratification for using social media, including social interactions, expression of opinion, relaxation, entertainment, information seeking and sharing. Karikari et al. (2017) noted that young Ghanaians use social media more because they have social pressure to associate with love ones through social networking sites. Nonetheless, more insight is needed to have more insight into young consumers on how gratifications affect different digital media and the controlling effect of age and gender on user behaviour.

Individual Psychological Factors

These factors include personality and other psychological factors influencing user behaviour such as self-esteem, impulsivity, locus of control, self-seeking behaviour, etc. Some studies have also been based on the big five personality approach based on the following factors; extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism and openness. These two factors are the most noticeable factors affecting smartphone and social media use: extraversion and conscientiousness (Wilson et al., 2010).

Moreover, research has established that self-esteem can predict user behaviour in social networking sites use and addictive tendencies. A qualitative study in Ireland by Lawlor and Rowley (2010) on young people's gratifications for using social networking sites indicated that personal satisfaction, such as individual psychological factors in social relationships, drives young people's social media use. Personal identity in managing a social connection is the central issue for attaching to social networking sites and online chatting. However, recent studies suggest that self-esteem and self-seeking status are key personal psychological factors in social media studies (Khan, 2017). Such findings reveal that individual factors may be dynamic; hence exploring these two digital media usage behaviour variables.

Age and Gender in Digital Media Uses and Gratification

One of the critical significant social factors influencing digital media usage behaviour is demographics, particularly age and gender (Ling, 2003, 2004; Campbell, 2006; Wei, 2008; Karikari et al., 2017). There have been several calls for further studies on these factors and the findings have yielded some inconsistency in mobile literature. For instance, Nyvseen et al. (2005) found that males and females differ significantly as females are more pleasure-seeking oriented in mobile chatting, while males are driven by usefulness. Haste (2005) found gender differences to be minimal in mobile phone usage, but age differences were significant. While girls connect mostly to their friends, followed by parents, males in general preferred calling to texting; however, those over 16 years preferred texting. Chatterjee (2014) confirms a gender difference in mobile phone usage: whereas girls are more likely to use it in a social context and

communicate intensely, boys use it for doing things and are more interested in the functionality.   Due to the inconsistencies in the literature, more research is required. Based on the reviewed literature, these research questions have been formulated:

RQ1. To what extent do psychosocial gratifications influence digital media usage behaviour?
RQ2: To what extent do individual psychological factors influence the digital media usage behaviour of young people?

Methodology

The current study was carried out using a quantitative research approach to correspond to the research objective. The survey method was used as a data collection method for measuring multiple variables. The survey method allowed for a deductive approach based on the theoretical framework (Neuman, 2007).

Population and Sampling

The population of the study was young university students aged between 18 and 35 years. These are considered to be in their prime ages and are at the digital media centre (Yan, 2017). They are the most active users because they are the generation who has been exposed widely to the smartphone since they were born (Karikari et al., 2017; Walsh, 2007; Yan, 2017). University campuses have been a strong convergence point for these young people. Three main public universities in Ghana were selected purposively, and three faculties were chosen at random from each university. To ensure sample representativeness, probability sampling was used to determine respondents at random from three main university campuses forming different young people's cluster. Below are respondents from the various campuses.

Table 3.1: Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Per cent
Institution: Univ of Ghana	304	37.4
Univ. of Cape .Coast	314	38.1
Kwame Nkrumah Univ. of Sci & Tech.	205	25.4

Instrument and Measures

The survey questionnaire was made up of questions assessing social demographic data such as age, gender, and digital media usage frequency. This section was followed by an article on the digital media psychosocial gratifications.   The questions here captured the social relationship, information and entertainment, self-esteem and self-seeking status. All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale anchored from 1 to 5 and categorised into various responses ranging from (5) strongly agree to disagree (0) strongly. The levels were adopted from related literature, including Walsh et al. (2009), Khan (2017) and Rosenberg's self-esteem inventory (1965). However, some were modified to suit the current research. Variables used all fell within the acceptable range for Cronbach's Alpha (.75 - .899), indicating a good level of robust reliability levels.

Data Collection and Analysis

Preliminary visits and letters to selected public universities for approval were carried out before data collection. Participants were fully informed and consent was obtained before participation. An initial briefing was given before participation, meaning participation was purely optional. In all, 825 questionnaires were completed and analysed. Data was all pre-coded in numbers for easy recording and organisation; some sections categorised respondents by attributes. The data was re-categorised into dichotomous variables for better analysis. The Logistics Regression analysis was used due to its ability to yield quality results for dichotomous variables.

Results and Discussion

Table 4.1a: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Per cent
Institution: U.G	304	37.4
U.C.C	314	38.1
KNUST	205	25.4
Age in Years		
20 & below	160	19.5
21-25	603	73.3
26-30 y	58	7.0
31-35	1	.1
36 and above	1	.1
Sex: male	326	39.6
Female	498	60.4

Source: Researcher's SPSS Version 22 computation

The tables show that over 80 % of the respondents are between the ages of 18-25 years, with the majority (73%). Age has consistently been a significant demographic factor in digital technologies such as smartphone and social media.

This finding is typical in most studies worldwide, suggesting that, due to the nature of the digital media, it is so connected to younger people (Millennials) within these age groups because of its ability to be used for entertainment, information and friendship.

Gender findings indicate more female participants (60.4%) for smartphone users and (51.7) for social media respondents. Aside age, gender is one of the vital influential characteristics of users of the mobile phone. Earlier studies suggested that men had more access to smartphones than female. There have, however, been mixed results where some findings indicated that females were more interested in social and entertainment functions while males use it more as smartphone and other digital media (Bianchi & Philip, 2005; Wei & Lo, 2006).

The next results show the descriptive analysis of the rate of usage in the three digital media. The extent of usage is classified as low usage, which is considered a frequency of use from 1-10 times daily, moderate usage described as daily usage of 11-20 times and extensive useage, which is above 20 times in a day. The regular usage rates are described below:

Table 4. 1b: Smart Phone, Internet and Social Media Usage Rate

Digital media	Least use		Moderate use		Extensive use		Not sure	
Smart phone	299	36.%	178	21.6	323	39.2	25	3.0
Mobile internet	279	34.3	210	25.8	300	36.9	36	4.4
Mobile social	190	23.0	204	24.7	396	48.0	35	4.3

From the results above, almost 40% of young consumers use the smartphone extensively; and those who used it moderately constitute 21.6%, meaning that more than 60% (60.8%) use their mobile phones from between 10-20 times and above 20 times in a day. This outcome shows that the rate of user behaviour for smartphone is very high compared to the other digital media.

For mobile internet, almost 40% use it 20 times and above, nearly 26% use it more than ten times daily, and the rest use it at least 1-10 times daily. This finding is quite high as most students are likely to search for different information types concerning their academic work. This result indicates that the mobile internet has become a part of a mobile phone's daily usage, just like regular calls and other daily functions. Daily usage of social media suggests that most respondents who use social media within 20 times daily were 48%; and those who do between 10-20 times are 25%. The rest who use least of social media less than ten times was 23%. The result reveals that social media use is quite high as most students' usage can be considered intensive or considered heavy. The next aspect of analysis shows the extent to which psychosocial factors affect continuous use of digital media. Personal psychological factors used are self-esteem and self-seeking status; and Psychosocial factors are Information Gratification (Info Grat), Entertainment Gratification (Ente Grat) and Social Relationship Gratification (S. Rel Grat).

Table 4.2 Smartphone and the Relevant Gratifications

Gratifications predicting Daily Calls Behaviour					
Gratifications	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	Z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]
S. Rel Grat	9.474	3.0039	7.09	0.000	5.0899 17.637
Info Grat	9.0219	6.8266	2.91	0.004	2.0474 39.753
Self-esteem	.6933	.12580	-2.02	0.044	.4858 .98942
Self-seeking	.23011	.1342	-4.34	0.000	.11856 .44661
Gender	.84249	.1420	-1.02	0.309	.60542 1.1723
Age	.65360	.0963	-2.89	0. 004	.489624 .87250

 Log likelihood = -469.43054   Source: Researcher's Stata/SE 14 computation

The findings revealed that those seeking social relationship gratifications or human to human interactions are more likely, that is, nine times (OR= 9.47, P< 0.000) than those who pursue other gratifications for smartphone usage rate**.** This finding implies that 21st-century consumers love to use smartphones and are stuck to the gadget due to social interactions. The information satisfactions also show a similar number of times **(OR=9.02, P<0.004)** more likely to engage in calls.

52 PentVars Business Journal
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Table 4.3: Mobile Internet Gratifications and Usage Behaviour

Gratifications predicting Mobile Internet					
Gratifications	**Odds Ratio**	**Std. Err.**	**Z**	**P>z**	**[95% Conf. Interval]**
Soc. Rel Grat	.67755	.13355	-1.97	0.048	.46042 .99707
Selfest Grat	3.6015	1.2821	3.60	0.000	1.7924 7.2363
Info Grat	10.713	7.9712	3.19	0.001	2.4920 46.053
Selfseek Grat	3.183	1.499	2.46	0.014	1.2640 8.0155
Gender	.37298	.07413	-4.96	0.000	.25263 .55065
Age	1.2413	.23311	1.15	0.250	.85911 1.7936

Log-likelihood = -379.0231   Sources: Researcher's Stata/SE 14 computation

It can be observed from table 4.3 above that those who use mobile internet are more than ten times **(OR=10.7, P<0.001**) expected to be satisfied by information gratification. Those who seek self-esteem needs are also more than three **(OR=3.6, P< 0.000)** times more probable to use their smartphones for internet sources, while those who are motivated by self-seeking status are **(OR=3.1, P< 0.014)** three times more probable of using the internet.

This result is in line with other findings, which show that the mobile internet is a significant source of information for young people. For instance, a report on young people's mobile internet use indicates that one of the mobile internet's practical benefits is browsing for the news, information searching, and e-mails (Bohlin & Westlund, 2008; Westlund, 2010).

Table 4.15: Satisfactions Driving Social Media Usage on Smartphone

Gratifications Predicting Social Media Usage Behaviour					
Gratifications	**ORatio**	**Std. Err.**	**Z**	**P>z**	**[95%Conf. Interval]**
Ente Grat	1.3889	.07964	-4.61	0.000	.26039 .58103
Info Grat	4.5876	.96988	7.21	0.000	3.0313 6.9429
Soc.Rel. Grat	2.797	.05812	-6.13	0.000	.18613 .4203
Selfest Grat	1.750	.45650	2.15	0.032	1.0503 2.9187
Selfseek Grat	1.005	.28140	0.02	0.983	.58131 1.7405
Gender	.3223	.05594	-6.52	0.000	.22935 .45293
Age	.63614	.10080	-2.85	0.004	.46630 .86784

Log likelihood = -441.66774   Source: Researcher's SPSS Version 22 computation

The results show a significant positive relationship between social media usage behaviour and social relationship gratification (OR=2.79, P<0.0000); thus, those on social media regularly are almost twice as likely to seek social connections. In contrast, entertainment gratification shows more than one times likelihood **(OR=1.3, P<0.0000),** information gratification shows a more reliable connection to social media with odds of **(OR =4.587)** significant at **(P<0.000)** and self-esteem is almost twice likely **(OR=1.75)** at (**0.034**) as well. However, the result of self-esteem may not show a strong connection. This outcome implies that

those who use social media are four times more probable of being motivated by information needs than all other requirements.

These findings resonate well with Khan's (2017) report on social media engagement in the US, which showed that the primary needs for using social media are entertainment, social, information seeking and sharing. For this digital media study, psychosocial factors focused on social relationships, entertainment, information, self-esteem, and self-seeking status. These findings suggest that young people below 30 years' psychosocial needs are growing due to digital media. This finding confirms a study by Walsh et al. (2009), which reported that social gratifications influence Australian young people's smartphone usage behaviour. It further confirms Khan's (2017) study on social media engagement in the US, which reported principal gratifications for using social media as entertainment, social interactions, information seeking and information sharing. However, the findings are contrary to other results, such as Scholtz et al. (2017), who reported that gratifications such as environmental coordination,

immediate access and social presence were low. Several other studies confirm the drive for these gratifications (Karikari et al., 2017; Khan,2017; Walsh et al., 2009; Whiting and William, 2013).
The findings further confirm the Uses and Gratification Theory's position, which fundamental proposition is that gratifications sought from a medium predict individual user behaviour to the medium. Previous studies have indicated gratifications out of uses (Al-Kandari et al., 2016; Khan, 2017; Bulduklu, 2017; Rubin, 2009; Wei et al., 2018).

The findings in age and gender seem to support the results by many previous types of research that students within the generations that were born to meet the digital technology have a higher affinity for the technology than other age groups (Campbell, 2006; Karikari et al., 2017; Ling, 2003; 2004; Walsh et al., 2009). However, the outcome does not support Nysveen et al.'s (2005) report that males and females differ significantly in gratifications for digital media behaviour as females are more pleasure-seeking in mobile chatting while the male is driven by usefulness.

Conclusion and Research Implications

Based on this research's findings, it can be concluded that psychosocial factors include information, entertainment, social relationship, self-esteem, self-seeking, and critical influencers of digital media consumer behaviour of young people. Entertainment gratifications influenced social media's continuous engagement to meet these gratifications, while information gratification influenced smartphone mobile internet and social media. Social relationship gratification also affected social media and smartphone usage behaviour. Self-esteem predicted the continuous use of social media and the internet, but self-seeking pleasure did not significantly influence. This finding also shows that the two demographic variables (age & gender) may be losing their digital effects since they do not demonstrate a strong influence on specific digital media user behaviour. So, digital

media may be a media for communication and psychological and social bases for usage.

Implications of the Study

The study implies that digital media has become pervasive and has a significant influence on consumers behaviour. This situation has enabled the young consumer to engage in digital media without effort and also to satisfy some social and psychological needs.

The findings from these studies authenticate that psychosocial factors in technology and consumer have evolved. These psychosocial gratifications are acting as a force in the continuous engagement of smartphone, internet, and social media use for the current generation. The findings strengthen the

existence of emergent psychosocial gratifications as the drivers of usage behaviour in digital media.

The finding extends the Uses and Gratification Theory that there are specifically connected satisfactions involved in usage behaviour for every specific digital. It is also the gratification sought that predict the decision to use particular services and the frequency of usage. Furthermore, the study extends the Uses and Gratification Theory by including psychosocial gratification as emerging needs driving continuous user behaviour. Again, the finding implies that these gratifications existence can strongly influence consumer usage behaviour.

The findings imply that, although physiological gratifications may be necessary, it appears that products and services have moved beyond meeting physiological needs to psychosocial needs in young consumers. These include information, entertainment, self-esteem, and relationship gratifications, which have become crucial in ensuring continuous usage and resonance leading to business growth and sustainability. Hence businesses should find ways of meeting psychosocial satisfaction for customers to build strong brands.

Again, the upsurge of information, entertainment, and relationship gratifications driving young people's usage behaviour in digital technologies could facilitate policy formulation and information to communities, schools, and other places by government and other policymakers.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the insight provided by this study, it is not without limitations. First, the study is limited by the closed-ended existing questionnaire used as compared to open-ended questions that could have added more knowledge but which this questionnaire ignored. Furthermore, the study sample was university students, which can influence the generalizability of the study. However, it should be noted that they are the most predominant mobile phone technology users in the current situation.

Future studies could add open-ended and qualitative sections to enrich the data and include more young people who are not in the universities to broaden the scope. Finally, future research should compare new media uses and gratifications as well as dependence and psychological attachment.

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