A USES AND GRATIFICATIONS STUDY OF NICHE SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

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ABSTRACT

This study applied the uses and gratifications theory to determine how audience motives for using niche social network sites compared with motives for using popular social network sites. An online survey presented a single sample (N=554) with items measuring motives for using the popular social network site Facebook alongside items measuring motives for using the niche social network site Ravelry for comparison.

The results demonstrate that there is a significant amount of overlap between the motives for Ravelry use and for Facebook use. The motives of relaxing entertainment, expressive information sharing, habitual pass time, social interaction, cool new technology, and professional advancement emerged during separate factor analyses of both the Ravelry and Facebook use motive scales. New friendships emerged only as a motive for Ravelry use. The results also showed the most salient motive for Facebook use was social interaction where the most salient motives for using Ravelry were relaxing entertainment and new friendships. The strongest motive for using Facebook related to relationships maintenance, which supports findings of past research. In contrast, Ravelry use motives show members are seeking new relationships through the niche social network site. Implications of the significant differences between motives for using the niche social network site and the popular social network site are discussed. Additional research is suggested to refine the current conceptual definition of social network site and to classify social network sites.