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Instagram Your Life: Why Do Female Kuwait University Students Use Instagram?

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This paper examines different reasons why female students at Kuwait University use Instagram. It also explores the different gratifications that students receive through using Instagram. The current survey targeted eight hundred and six randomly chosen female undergraduate students. Results found that acceptance from others, a desire to stay informed, meeting new friends, passing time, and escapism from reality are possible reasons to use Instagram. The study shows that many of these variables are considered as strong reasons for using this platform. Sharing photos with friends was the dominant gratification recognized from using Instagram.

Keywords: Instagram, uses and gratifications, Kuwaiti females, social media, Kuwait University students

Social media continues to gain enormous popularity. Therefore, it attracts the interest of researchers to study this cyber-social phenomenon, particularly the motivations of users and the gratifications gained from this usage. In the Arabic world, youth are among the top groups in social media usage. They use social media to chat, keep updated, share ideas and thoughts, obtain information on specific topics or to connect with the world. Among the many effective social media platforms, Instagram is considered one of the fastest growing. The popularity of it among young people over other prominent apps such as Snapchat and Pinterest is especially for social media marketing purposes (Lim, 2017). According to a survey from Harvard University's Institute of Politics (2016), about 46 percent of Americans aged 18-29 have an Instagram account with 300 million daily active Instagram posts (Kosoffjune, 2016).

Similar results were shown from the Arab Social Media Report of 2015. It shows that among 18 Arabic countries, Instagram is used in 16 of them (not used in Syria or Algeria). Moreover, it has a strong ranking over other social media platforms in all16 countries. In Kuwait, which is the country of our case of study, 43% of Kuwaiti youth use Instagram to share their photos or videos. Instagram is a free mobile photo and video-sharing app, which serves as a social networking service and is launched in 2000 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. The founders introduced it as:

Instagram is a fun and quirky way to share your life with friends through a series of pictures. Snap a photo with your mobile phone, then choose a filter to transform the image into a memory to keep around forever. We are building Instagram to allow you to

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experience moments in your friends' lives through pictures as they happen. We imagine a world more connected through photos" (Instagram, 2016).

According to the Instagram website, this application allows users to subject photos to some pre-installed filters like changing the photo to grey-scale, add hashtags to the group- together categories, and utilize frames to put together a digital storyline (Apodaca, 2017). After that, users upload these new photos or videos to their pages on the Instagram social network. In 2012, Facebook purchased the site for $1 billion (Luckerson, 2016) and made it easy to share an image simultaneously on Facebook, Twitter, Swarm Flickr, and Tumblr, by linking the user's accounts on the different platforms (Oloo, 2013; Tarakcý & Yeniçýktý, 2017).

Instagram, like any other media platform, encourages people to use it to satisfy their curiosity and motivation intentionally. People meet specific requirements using social media; they psychologically get relax from their satisfaction while simultaneously reducing their psychological tensions (Tarakcý & Yeniçýktý, 2017). In this context, we see the uses and gratifications approach which is based on the idea that people intentionally use media outlets to fulfill their needs and satisfaction. The assumptions of the uses and gratifications approach have guided the study in terms of explaining which motivations female students in Kuwait University attempt to fulfill by using Instagram and what are the gratifications they receive as a result. Despite a plethora of studies which have been applied to determine the motivations of using social media, this study contributes to the field because of the lack of studies based on Instagram in the Arabic region.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratification theory suggests that media audiences are active and they intentionally choose specific platforms to satisfy their needs (Katz, Blumler, Gurevitch, 1973). Since its appearance, many scholars applied this theory to various traditional media. Previous researchers found that there are two kinds of motivations; instrumental and ritual uses. Instrumental usage is highly selective, purposeful in nature, and linked to exposure to media outlets to meet cognitive or affective needs. It is related to gaining experience, knowledge, information, and all forms of learning from media. Ritual uses are habitual viewing for many different reasons; to pass the time, relax, or escape from life's problems. It is non-selective and includes exposure to a variety of media content (Mekkawy & Al-Sayyed, 2010; Simmons, 2002).

The uses and gratifications theory depends on five fundamental assumptions. Users of media are (1) active, (2) have motivations for media usage, (3) the media must fulfill the user's gratifications and needs and (4) the audience must be cognizant and capable of communicating the specific motives for media selection and usage. The theory also (5) highlights the importance of media content and exposure as well as the "context in which the exposure takes place" (Ballard, 2011, p. 7). Most early studies of uses and gratifications examined the motivations for using traditional media outlets and gratifications obtained from this usage like newspapers (Payne, Dozier, Nomai & Yagade, 2010), online newspapers (Mings, 1997), TV (Simmons, 2002), and radio (Bluebond, 1982). However, new studies have focused on many social media platforms.

In the social media age, many scholars have found this theory still applicable and even more useful now. The primary hypothesis here is that the audiences are active; which is the essential core of using the Internet. Internet users are free to choose which platform and information to be exposed to. Also, they can determine which websites they prefer, and when and how much time to spend online (Kearney, 2018). In other words, audiences are

more active than ever as the Internet has become the most personalized mass communication medium to date. Choosing which internet platform to use as a personal decision can be identified with McQuail's four motivations (1987). The motivations are entertainment, information, personal identity, and personal relationships. These main motivations of media usage offer a theoretical foundation to identify why people choose to use online communications, including social media (Lim, 2017).

Many studies applied the uses and gratification theory among different social media platforms. Alhabash and Ma (2017) investigated motivations and uses of four platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat among college students. They found that participants daily spent time mostly on Instagram, followed by Snapchat, Facebook, and Twitter, respectively. Mäntymäki and Islam (2016) found that using social media has positive and negative gratifications. They found many gratifications such as social enhancement and interpersonal connectivity as positive gratifications, and exhibitionism and voyeurism as negative gratifications for using social network platforms.

The Ismail (2017) study investigated why Egyptians use social media platforms. The results indicated "to be informed" and social reasons like "sharing/communication" are the most important reasons to use social media. Chen (2008) found that people use YouTube for entertainment and social interactions, like sharing videos. YouTube users watch and recommend videos to others mainly because YouTube videos are entertaining. Malik, Dhir, and Nieminen (2016) found that gratifications for sharing photos on Facebook include affection, attention seeking, disclosure, habit, information sharing, and social influence. Azab (2016) found that Egyptian and Saudi students use Twitter to communicate with others and chatting was the first reason to use this network.

Tarakci and Yeniçikti (2017) have studied the uses and gratifications of students using Instagram. They found that students use Instagram more for photo/video sharing, but they do not attach much importance to the subjects of collecting likes, increasing the number of followers, and being popular in the network. Their study has determined that students use Instagram with three different motivations, and these motivations have been called haring/ communication, social escape, and information. Lenhart, Duggan, Perrin, Stepler, Rainie, and Parker (2015) indicate that users utilize Instagram for many social reasons including social interactions.

Lee, Abu Bakar, Dahri, and Sin (2015) have studied the uses and gratifications of Instagram. They discovered four motives for sharing photos: informativeness, community support, status-seeking, and self-representation. Their results indicate that age, some followers and number of followings on Instagram are related to the gratifications users seek on Instagram. Further, they found that the need for self-representation and status-seeking mainly motivated users' photo sharing. Thus, we can conclude that uses and gratifications as an approach could be applied to social media platforms. Despite different audience perceptions, age, and nationalities, most previous studies have found similar uses and gratifications for social media platforms.

This study depends on the previous studies' results and aims to examine the behavior of female student Instagram users at Kuwait University and by which motivations they use Instagram using a questionnaire tool. The primary objective of this study is to put forward Instagram use motivations of college students in the context of the uses and gratifications approach. For this purpose, the study will seek to answer the following research questions and hypotheses:

RQ1: How do female students at Kuwait University use Instagram?

RQ2: Why do female students at Kuwait University use Instagram?

RQ3: What are the gratifications students gained from using Instagram?

H1: There is a statistically significant correlation between female Kuwaiti students level of use on Instagram and motivation rate.

H2: There is a statistically significant correlation between female Kuwaiti students' level of use of Instagram and gratifications level.

H3: There is a statistically significant variance between female Kuwaiti students in motivations rate and gratifications level of Instagram according to age, monthly income, and class.

H4: There is a statistically significant variance between female Kuwaiti students in motivations rate and gratifications level of Instagram according to home type and kind of college.

Data Collection

This study depends on a survey done by a team of assistant researchers who were trained to collect data for this study. All female students in all faculties at Kuwait University were targeted. A pre-test was conducted with 80 participants before the launch of the survey, and the results showed that the instrument was suitable for the full survey. The questions on the data collection form consisted of the questions to determine the participants' demographic characteristics, Instagram uses behaviors, motivations, and gratifications gained from this usage. The obtained data were analyzed with SPSS 18.0 statistical software. The authors found that 10% of all the female students were good for representing this society, so 806 undergraduate female students were randomly targeted by the current survey. The data collection team was advised not to stratify the sample on any basis to ensure the randomness. Six surveys with missing entries were excluded from the analysis. The sample used for analysis consisted of 800 female students who answered all the questions. Applying the survey took four months starting on the first of March and ended at the end of June 2016. Table 1 shows the sample distribution:

Main variables	Variables	Frequency	%
Age	18 or less	136	17.0
	19-23	546	68.3
	24-28	101	12.6
	29-33	13	1.6
	34 or older	4	0.5
	Total	800	100
Faculty	Humanities	365	45.6
	Scientific	435	54.4
	Total	800	100
Year	Freshman	155	19.4
	Sophomore	145	18.1
	Junior	221	27.6
	Senior	161	20.1
	Fifth year	118	14.8
	Total	800	100
Income (monthly)	1500 Dinar or less	214	26.8
	1501-2500	333	41.6
	2501-3500	174	21.8
	3501-4500	49	6.1
	4501 and more	30	3.8
	Total	800	100
Housing	Apartment	145	18.1
	House	655	81.9
	Total	800	100

The sample is appropriate for examining Instagram uses and gratifications as 746 respondents (93.3%) indicated that they use social media (Table 2). Among these students 36.1% indicated that they use Instagram between 2-3 hours a day, 19.4% use it 4-5 hours and 21.2% use it more than five hours per day. This shows that more than 76% of the subjects in the sample use social media at least two hours a day, and the sample included only 23.3% subjects who mentioned that they use social media one hour or less (Table 3). This result shows how important this site is for the female students at Kuwait University.

Results

Table2. Using Instagram among female students at Kuwait University

Do you use	Answer	Frequency	%
Instagram?	Yes	746	93.3
	No	54	6.8
	Total	800	100

Table 2 shows that 93.3% of the sample use Instagram, but only 6.8% of them do not use it. This result indicates how important Instagram has become for the female Kuwaiti students at Kuwait University. The majority of these students use it, so it could be that Instagram has turned into a very useful tool to change the minds or way of thinking.

Table 3. Time female students of Kuwait University spend using Instagram

Hours	Frequency	%
One hour or less	174	23.3
2-3 hours	269	36.1
4-5 hours	145	19.4
More than 5 hours	158	21.2
Total	746	100

Table 3 explains the amount of time daily that female students spend using Instagram. It represents that more than one out of three parts of the sample use Instagram for 2-3 hours daily.

Table 4. Motives to Use Instagram among female students at Kuwait University

Motives Type	Motivations	Mean	Std.	Rank order
Ritual motivations	To Communicate with my Colleagues	4.07	0.85	1
	As a social integrity	3.85	0.96	2
	To get new friends	3.64	1.08	3
	To get rid of loneliness	3.63	1.16	4
	To escape the social reality and my problems	3.25	1.22	5
	Because it is easy to deal with	2.96	1.59	6
Instrumental motivations	To follow up the current news, primarily supported by pictures	4.13	0.78	1
	To shop and identify shops and goods that are not media advertised in the traditional	4.05	0.88	2
	For knowledge and access to information not published in the traditional media	3.95	0.87	3
	To discuss my ideas and products, I buy with my group on Instagram	3.64	1.05	4
	Because it provides advertisements for useful products at affordable prices	3.09	1.60	5

Table 4 represents the ritual and instrumental motivations, and the results indicate that female students use Instagram for instrumental motivations more than ritual motivations. However, the motive, "To communicate with my Colleagues," was a powerful reason to use Instagram for the Kuwaiti female students (mean= 4.07, second place among all motivations). This result is consistent with Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert (2009), who found that "Social networking sites are designed to foster social interaction in a virtual environment" (p. 228). So, they attempt to gratify their needs for instant communication by using computer-mediated technology that allows them to interact with their peers (Vrocharidou & Efthymiou, 2012) by sharing photos and comments in the case of Instagram.

However, in the first place was the motivation "To follow up the current news, especially supported by pictures" (Mean= 4.13), then female students use Instagram for shopping (Mean= 4.05). Thirdly, some students use it for knowledge and to access information not published in the traditional media (Mean= 3.95). They then use Instagram to discuss their ideas and products they buy with their friends (Mean= 3.64) and because it provides advertisements for useful products at affordable prices (3.09).

Regarding the ritual motivations, after communication with others, some students use Instagram as social integrity (Mean= 3.85) then to get new friends (Mean= 3.64). In fourth place "to get rid of loneliness" (Mean= 3.63) and then to escape the social reality and my problems by a Mean= 3.25. At last, because it is easy to deal with (Mean= 2.96).

These results refer to Instagram as not only an application for communicating for female students of Kuwait University, but also it has become a big market for a lot of goods and products which use Instagram as an advertising medium.

Table 5. Gratifications gained from using Instagram among female students of Kuwait University

Gratifications Type	Gratifications	Mean	Std.	Rank order
Medium gratifications	I enjoy communicating and watching friends pictures, especially close friends	4.22	0.76	1
	It helps me to pass boredom periods and forgetting daily problems	4.20	0.77	2
	It entertains me	4.16	1.64	3
	It makes me relax and eliminate the leisure time	3.90	0.90	4
	It introduces my personality and interests to those who follow me	3.82	0.97	5
	It helps in getting a good social position	2.73	1.64	6
Content gratifications	It increases my knowledge	3.97	0.90	1
	It teaches me new qualifications	3.84	0.95	2
	It provides an e-market for products and services	3.80	0.97	3
	It helps in communicating with others better than face to face communication	3.28	1.21	4

Table 5 indicates that enjoying communication and looking at friends pictures, especially close friends, comes in as the first gratification among medium gratifications gained by female students at Kuwait University (Mean= 4.22, Std.= 0.76). In second place is that Instagram helps them in passing periods of boredom and forgetting daily problems (Mean= 4.20, Std.= 0.77). Entertainment is one of the highest three gratifications gained from using Instagram by female students (Mean= 4.16, Std.= 1.64).

It then helps a lot of students in relaxing and getting rid of leisure time (Mean= 3.90, Std.= 0.90). Next, it introduces the students' personality and interests to those who follow them (Mean= 3.82, Std.= 0.97). Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2006) found that users of social media networks believe that their "virtual profiles" are accurate representations of themselves, eliminating the spatial need for interpersonal communication. In the last place, Kuwaiti students think that Instagram helps them in gaining an excellent social position (Mean= 2.73, Std.= 1.64).

Regarding the content gratifications, at the top comes the 'increase in my knowledge' (Mean= 3.97, Std.= 0.90). Next comes 'it teaches me new qualifications' (Mean= 3.84, Std.= 0.95). Then it provides an e-market for products and services (Mean= 3.80, Std.= 0.97). Finally, it helps in communicating with others better than face-to-face communication (Mean= 3.28, Std.= 1.21).

These results reflect that medium gratifications are higher than content gratifications despite students use Instagram more for instrumental motivations than ritual motivations. This may occur because of the nature of Instagram as a social network that provides some ways to help students communicate with other people or friends.

Table 6. Using Instagram for female students of Kuwait University

Phrases	Mean	Std.
Using Instagram became an addiction	3.752	1.092
Instagram is a critical necessity for our daily life	3.51	1.163
I cannot stop using Instagram	3.260	1.206

Table 6 illustrates that students describe using Instagram as an addiction in the first place with Mean= 3.752, Std.= 1.092. Then they believe that Instagram is a critical necessity for our daily life (Mean= 3.51, Std. 1.163). Finally, many of them declare that they cannot stop using Instagram with Mean= 3.260 and Std.=1.206. These results tell us how much importance Instagram holds in the life of female students at Kuwait University to the extent that they cannot stop using it. It agrees with Altheide (1997) who noted that the mass media is vital in our everyday lives when it comes to leisure, as they are at the center of our daily routine to accessing sources of entertainment (p. 18). However, the current study illustrated that Instagram has become very important all the time not only during leisure time. Oloo (2013) stated that "users of social networking sites have adopted these sites, allowing them to be dominant a better part of their lives and this may also lead to addiction" (p. 6).

Hypotheses Test Results

In this part of the article, the authors present the results regarding the hypotheses testing. It begins with the two hypotheses about the correlation between female Kuwaiti students' usage level of Instagram and rate of motivations and gratifications.

H1: There is a statistically significant correlation between female Kuwaiti students using level of Instagram and motivations rate.

H2: There is a statistically significant correlation between female Kuwaiti students using level of Instagram and gratifications level.

Table 7. Spearman's Rho correlation between usage level, motivations rate and gratifications level

Independent variable	Dependent variables	Rho	Sig.
Usage Level	Motivations rate	0.264**	0.000
	Gratifications level	0.008	0.830

** significant at p value 0.01

Table 7 demonstrates that results support the first hypothesis which says there is a statistically significant correlation between female Kuwaiti students using level of Instagram and motivations' rate positively (rho= 0.264**, α= 0.000). While it does not support the second hypothesis which says there is a statistically significant correlation between female Kuwaiti students using level of Instagram and gratifications' level (rho= 0.008, α= 0.830).

H3: There is a statistically significant variance between female Kuwaiti students in motivations' rate and gratifications' level of Instagram according to age, monthly income, and the class.

Table 8. One Way ANOVA between student groups in motivations rate and gratifications level

Independent variables	Dependent variables	F	Sig.
Age	Motivations rate	0.511	0.72
	Gratifications level	0.117	0.97
Monthly Income	Motivations rate	1.233	0.29
	Gratifications level	2.117	0.08
Class	Motivations rate	0.335	0.85
	Gratifications level	0.680	0.60

Table 8 indicates that none of the independent demographic variables (age, monthly income, and class) affect the dependent variables (neither motivations rate nor gratifications level). In all cases, P values are ≥ 0.05. Regarding age variable with motivations' rate F= 0.511, α= 0.72, and gratifications' level F= 0.117, α= 0.97. For monthly income with motivations rate F= 1.233, α= 0.29, and gratifications level F= 2.117, α= 0.08. Finally, the class with motivations rate F= 0.335, α= 0.85, and gratifications level F= 0.680, α= 0.60. These results do not support the third hypothesis which states there is a statistically significant variance between female Kuwaiti students in motivations rate and gratifications level of Instagram according to age, monthly income, and class.

H4: There is a statistically significant variance between female Kuwaiti students in motivations' rate and gratifications' level of Instagram according to home type and kind of the college.

Table 9. One Way ANOVA between student groups in motivations rate and gratifications level

Independent variables	Dependent variables	t-test	Sig.
Home Type	Motivations rate	0.037	0.97
(House or Apartment)	Gratifications level	- 2.168	0.03
College Type	Motivations rate	0.041	0.88
(Humanities or Sciences)	Gratifications level	- 0.003	0.924

According to the results in Table 9, the independent variable "home type" does not affect motivations rate (t-test= 0.037, α= 0.97) but, it affects the gratifications' level (t-test= -2.168, α= 0.03). Whereas college type variable does not affect any of the dependent variables (neither motivations rate t-test= 0.041, α=0.88, nor gratifications' level t-test= -0.003, α=0.924). These results support the fourth hypothesis partially which explains that there is a statistically significant variance between the female students in motivations rate and gratifications level of Instagram according to home type and kind of college.

Conclusion

Results of the current study state that Instagram has become an essential technological medium in the life of female students at Kuwait University, to the extent that they cannot stop using it. This importance increases in particular when it comes to leisure. Thus, most of the female students use Instagram and for a long time, precisely more than two hours. The reasons which make them use it are: 1) To follow up with current news, especially when supported by pictures. 2) To communicate with their colleagues. 3) For knowledge and access to information not published in the traditional media. 4) To shop and identify shops and goods which are not advertised in the traditional media. These results refer to Instagram as not only an application for communicating for female students of Kuwait University, but it has become a vast market for a lot of goods and products which use Instagram as an advertising medium.

Regarding the ritual motivations, some students use Instagram as social integrity, then to get new friends, to get rid of loneliness, and to escape from social reality and personal problems. Also, results indicate that enjoying communication and watching friends' pictures, especially close friends, comes as the first gratification gained by female students at Kuwait University. In second place is that Instagram helps them pass periods of boredom and forget daily problems. Entertainment is one of the highest three gratifications gained from using Instagram by female students. Finally, the findings prove that the usage level of Instagram is positively correlated to motivations rate, and "home type" is correlated to the gratifications level. On the other hand, Instagram usage level is not correlated to gratifications level. As well "age, monthly income, class, and college type" do not affect neither the motivations rate nor gratifications' level.

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