***Internet Uses and Gratifications:***

***Understanding Motivations for Using the Internet***

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The Internet is no longer considered a communication medium for only a certain group of people. Considering numerous revolutionary changes caused by the Internet, it is natural that the medium has become one of the popular scholarly subjects for many researchers in the field of mass communication. Under such circumstance, my major interest was in why and how people use the Internet. Moreover, I was also interested in why people choose a certain type of Web site to visit among the innumerable and diverse selections from the Internet. For these reasons, the main objective of my study was to examine the motives of Internet usage and the relationship with certain types of Web sites as well as attitudes toward the Internet. The major theoretical framework of this study was the uses and gratifications theory because psychological and behavioral dimensions involving mediated communication have been effectively explained by this theory.
 In the spring semester of 2018, I took a seminar class, "Mass Communication and Public Opinion," taught by Dr. Michael F. Weigold. In this class, I learned about several approaches of attitudes and persuasions in mass communication and developed a personal research project related with "attitudes." Therefore, I attempted to explain which motivational factors of Internet usage are associated with a certain type of Web sites, and how these motivational factors explain the attitudes toward the Internet. Additionally, I also investigated differences among heavy, medium, and light users of the Internet in terms of the key aspects of Internet usage. The original data for this study were collected via self-report questionaire, and the study sample consisted of 196 students at the University of Florida. For the survey sample, I considered the college students acceptable due to the fact that this group represents a significant portion of the Internet population.

My first research hypothesis concerned the predictive utility of the Internet usage motivation variables for explaining the attitude toward the Internet. As a result, I found out that the use of the Internet is more inclined toward the instrumental orientation than ritualistic orientation. That means the Internet is still more considered as "information provider" than "entertainment provider" at this period of time. On the other hand, the result also showed the significant correlations between the Information motivation and the Information types of Web sites and between the Pass Time motivation and the Entertainment types of Web sites as expected. Finally, the results revealed that heavy Internet users have a higher level of motivation in using the Internet as well as a more positive attitude toward the Internet and they are more active and more goal-directed in choosing a certain Web site to visit than light users.

In spite of some limitations, I tried to understand several aspects of Internet usage in this study. Considering that the Internet is one of the fastest-developing media, studies about a variety of user's motivations for specific types of Web sites and specific contents should be continued in the future. I believe that further research that challenges the developing nature of mediated communication will provide better answers to understand the process and effects of mass communication in the future.

Hanjun Ko was the winner of the 2018 Moeller Award for the best student paper written for a class or seminar.