

**CHANGING PATTERNS OF NEWS READING HABIT AMONG  
COLLEGE STUDENTS**

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

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**Yai Ban King**

Rimmer and Weaver (1987) stated that there have been numerous studies in the 1960's and 1970's that found media credibility and media use are positively correlated. However, numerous studies since then have found that media credibility and media use can also be negatively correlated. This means that those people who depend less on the traditional media and more on the Internet for news and information, can still find the traditional media to be more trustworthy. This study examines the media usage pattern of a group of students at a private college and seeks to find out the link between perception of media credibility and usage by this group of students. This study used a quantitative research methodology in the form of a questionnaire where students are asked about what they think about news and information based on Interpersonal Communication Motives Scale (ICMS). Overall, it found that media credibility could be negatively correlated. However, the statistical finding shows that the differences are too small that it is insignificant. Therefore this study concluded that the credibility of traditional media is still there today and the non-credibility of the alternative media might be just a belief among media researchers rather than a true happening.

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**FACULTY OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES**

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Date:

**SUBMISSION OF FINAL YEAR DISSERTATION**

It is hereby certified that ***Yai Ban King*** (ID No: ***12UJM01321***) has completed this final year dissertation entitled “*Changing Patterns of News Reading Habit Among College Students*” under the supervision of Miss Chew Wee Lee (Supervisor) from the Department of Communication, Faculty of Creative Industries.

I understand that University will upload softcopy of my final year dissertation in pdf format into UTAR Institutional Repository, which may be made accessible to UTAR community and public.

Yours truly,

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## APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation entitled “**CHANGING PATTERNS OF NEWS READING HABIT AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS**” was prepared by YAI BAN KING and submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Communication at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman.

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UTAR or other institutions.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## CHAPTER 1

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Gomez (2013) said that many Malaysians, especially the young ones, newspapers (or the traditional media as this paper termed it) may have never played a significant role in their life. The same happened too in the United States, where many young people have found it hard to even imagine the sweet experiences of reading a newspaper over a cup of coffee in the quiet morning. Writing about this experience Katz (2014) wrote that reading newspapers is “a comfortable and personal experience that information gives”.

Like the newspapers’ industry in the United States, Malaysian newspapers are also under siege. Wilson et al (2011) noted that the newspapers’ industry have been floundering for decades with declining number of readers, reduction in revenues and shrinking circulation as well as no strong sense of mission due to the power struggles of their patrons, who formed the ruling elites in the country.

Figures from the Audit Bureau of Circulation showed that the circulation of traditional newspapers such as The Star, New Straits Times, Utusan Malaysia and Berita Harian, has fallen over the past five years. From 2005-2009, The Star’s

circulation dropped from 310,000 to 287,000 (-7.4 %), New Straits Times from 139,000 to 111,000 (-20%), Utusan Malaysia from 213,000 to 169,000 (-21%) and Berita Harian from 204,000 to 155,000 (-24%). In contrast, ABC's figures showed that from 2005 to 2009, circulation of "light reading" newspapers such as Harian Metro and Kosmos shot up from 250,000 to 350,000 and from 101,000 in 2006 to 172,000 respectively. (Yow et al. 2010)

The advent of online media like MalaysiaKini and The Malaysian Insider has also put tremendous pressure on the newspapers' industry in the country. Online media have unleashed a vigorous flow of news, commentary, and commerce to millions of Malaysian. Besides ensuring that newspapers are stale before they're tossed on the truck, online media also release to their readers faster information than information controlled by the traditional media. The alternative media, besides providing information just alike the traditional media, also allow readers to express and share their opinion on certain matters of public interest via the comments section.

Furthermore, digital media technologies allow young people to mix their own music, mount their own stories, and edit their own images and videos offering tremendous opportunities for youth to take a stand and make a mark in their lives and communities. Hence, the readers are no longer just the recipients of images, ideas, and stories broadcast through a mass media system today but also creators.

(Jenkins, 2006a). This could be the reason why the social media is popular among the young people today as a way of obtaining information.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

There is a continuing increase over the years in the usage of alternative media over the more traditional media. Numerous studies in the 1960's and 1970's have found media credibility and media use are positively correlated. However several studies in recent years show that media credibility and media use are negatively correlated.

Wilson et al (2011) studied the trust and credibility of urban youth on online news media in comparison with the traditional media. Wilson et al (2011)'s study as well as some others found that media credibility and media use can also be negatively correlated. Chen et al (2006), Wilson et al (2011) and Gaskin and Jerit (2012) also found that those who use the alternative media more than the traditional media still believe that traditional media are more trust worthy than alternative media. This means, in theory, trust can be high while usage is low for the traditional media or in the reverse, where trust is low and usage is high for the traditional media.

This study looks at the news reading pattern of college students and seeks to find out their trust towards and the credibility perception held by the college students towards either the alternative media or traditional media. This research uses the Interpersonal Communication Motives as the framework to understand the college students' media consumption. It is hoped that by looking at a different perspective, as proposed in this study, the interpersonal communication motives scale (ICMS) may be considered as a measurement for media credibility.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to look into the pattern of news reading habit of college students. The pattern here is about whether college students think the traditional media is more credible than the alternative media, or the other way around.

As mentioned above, studies have found a pattern of traditional media credibility being high although usage is low while credibility for alternative media can be low, while usage is high.

#### **1.4 Research Objective and Research Questions**

This study had looked into many past research in order to find the most suitable research questions that will answer the purpose of the study above. One of the criteria that this study is looking for is on Cronbach's alpha. A strong Cronbach's alpha of  $\alpha = 0.7$  may indicate that credibility goes together with media usage, while a lower alpha  $\alpha$  would mean that credibility is no longer correlated with media usage.

To answer the question of positive and negative correlations, this study uses the Interpersonal Communication Motives scale (ICMS), developed by R. Rubin, Perse and Barbato in 2009. This scale by Rubin, Perse and Barbato is based on Uses and Gratification theory. The six scales are pleasure, affection, inclusion, escape, relaxation and control. They concluded from their study that people communicate because communication provides gratification.

The Interpersonal Communication Motives model is also actually an extension of the Uses and Gratifications theory as the Uses and Gratifications theory is also about the motives people have for using certain media. According to Rubin, (1992), communication motives are key components of audience activity. The Uses and Gratifications theory sought to understand the audience in that they

were not passive but active in their selection of media usage because they are conscious of their motives. The audiences therefore make choices in their media usage to meet their needs. In other words, the audience will actively select media and media content to satisfy its needs and fulfill its expectations. Thus, communication motives and media usage are interrelated.

One common finding in Rubin et al's 2009 study was that satisfied and socially active persons were more likely to watch television. Rubin listed six habits that influence life-satisfaction. They are:

1. Pleasure
2. Affection
3. Inclusion
4. Escape
5. Relaxation
6. Control

The study assumed that satisfied and socially active persons were more likely to trust traditional media. On the other hand, people who are less satisfied in life and socially inactive were more likely to trust alternative media.

The study explores the media usage pattern of college students with the objective of finding out the link between their media usage and their perception of media credibility, that is, whether the college students think that traditional media are more credible or alternative media are more credible.

As such, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. Do students who use more traditional media think that traditional media are more credible?

RQ2. Do students who use more alternative media think that alternative media are more credible?

### **1.5 Definition of Terms**

**Traditional Media** – This term referred to big media companies that have been existence before the Internet era. Those companies refer in this term are The Star, New Straits Times, Utusan Malaysia and Berita Harian, Harian Metro and Kosmos.

**Alternative Media** – Unlike traditional media, alternative media has a broader term. Browser like Facebook, Google, Yahoo and many other internet service providers can also be defined as alternative media as they too are source of information. In this study the alternative media will be define loosely as media that provide alternative information like MalaysiaKini and The Malaysian Insider.



**ICMS** - Interpersonal Communication Motives Scale. The Interpersonal Communication Motives (ICM) scale was developed by R. Rubin, Perse and Barbato (Rubin et al, 2009) to understand why people communicate with one another. They conclude that people communicate because communication provides gratification.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Media Credibility Issue**

In 1986 four major news organisation banded together in face of what seems to be a credibility crisis for the media practitioners. Media researchers Cecile Gaziano and Kristin McGrath were called in to study the matter. The newspapers industry, who has been dominant in the United States, suddenly found that they are facing a serious challenger. Their challenger was television news. In order to protect their position, credibility has become an important issue.

#### **2.2 Early Research in Media Credibility**

There is no historical study at present on how media credibility research begins. The earliest research found “by this study” on media credibility was by John D. Abel and Michael O. Wirth. Published in 1977, the paper is titled “Newspaper vs. TV Credibility for Local News”.

Abel and Wirth (1977) were however not the first researchers to write about the credibility of the media. Many other classical researchers like Carter and Greenberg (1965), Greenberg (1966), Jacobson (1969), Roper (1975), Westley and Severin (1964), and Greenberg and Roloff (1974) studied media usage and credibility.

These researches however pose many problems to present day researchers. One major reason for it was in the usage of factor analysis that these researchers may have depended on. Pallant (2010) says factor analysis is not designed to test hypotheses or to tell you whether one group is significantly different from another.

*“Factor analysis takes a large set of variable and looks for a way the data may be reduced or summarised using a smaller set of factors or components. It does this by looking for clumps or groups among the intercorrelations of a set of variables. This is an almost impossible task to do by eye with anything more than a small number of variables.” (Pallant, 2010, pg 181)*

Pallant was clearly not positive about factor analysis. However factor analysis continued to be widely used researches until today. Gaziano and McGrath

(1986) whose famous 12 items credibility measure also uses factor analysis and so did many researchers who came after them.

The research by Able and Wirth (1977) was quite popular that Joey Reagan and Jayne Zenaty revisited it in 1979 with “Local News Credibility: Newspapers vs. TV Revisited”. Comparatively the survey sample by Reagan and Zenaty (1979) was much smaller at 213 respondents, while Able and Wirth (1977) has 681 respondents. The major difference between both papers was in the introduction of t-test by Reagan and Zenaty (1979).

T-test allows researchers to compare the mean scores of two different groups of people or conditions (Pallant, 2010). The Reagan and Zenaty (1979) finding support Able and Wirth (1977) finding that television is perceived to be more credible truthful and important source of local news than newspaper.

Lee (1978) also uses t-test in his study concerning credibility of newspaper and TV news. However, there is a major different in the way Lee conducted his research. Instead of asking long questions, which may incite a lot of different answers, Lee adopted a simple approach (see Appendix D).

The questionnaires designed by Rimmer and Weaver (1987) look much tougher to answer than Lee (1978). But most important of all was those questionnaires seem to be leaning towards a designated answer. A lot of scholars have written about this problem. (Katz; 2010, Gerbner; 1998, Chaffee: 2001)

However, despite the different approaches, both Lee (1978) and Rimmer and Weaver (1987) found television to be more favourable than newspapers. Even though the finding is nothing new, Lee's approach has featured strongly in later researchers like Gaziano and McGrath (1986) where questions were much simpler and short. Such approach allows researchers to determine the strength of variables more accurately and without bias when compared with the Roper-typed questions.

### **2.3 Measuring the Concept of Credibility by Gaziano and McGrath**

The News Credibility Scale by Cecile Gaziano and Kristin McGrath (1986) is given a special mention here due to their perceived importance for media credibility researchers. As mentioned above, Gaziano and McGrath were not the earliest but they did the most important research that almost set the standard for media credibility research.

Gaziano and McGrath's research was also unlike others because it was big and was sponsored by four major United States' media organisations. The organisations were American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), Times Mirror, the Gannett Center for Media Studies and the Los Angeles Times. Their research also came at a time when most media credibility researchers have suggested that media use and media credibility are positively correlated. Rimmer and Weaver (1987) stated that "those who use newspapers or television more often are those who rate the credibility of these media higher than those who use these media less often".

Gaziano and McGrath's research in 1986 has the largest group of people ever to be polled in a survey until 1986. More than 8,800 people were polled throughout the United States. Gaziano and McGrath (1986) seem to have considered and incorporated both Roper and Lee (1978) style of questionnaires. Look at the sample in Appendix B.

Besides that, Gaziano and McGrath (1986) also use extensively questions that Rimmer and Weaver (1987) suggested as Roper-typed.

Overall, Gaziano and McGrath found that television to be more credible than newspapers, radio and magazine. One important thing to be reminded on

Gaziano and McGrath's (1986) research was that it was designed to test television and newspapers and the research was supported by media organisations. At that time, the Internet era, that will turn communication's research up-side-down, has not yet started.

Before looking at the time of the Internet, this paper looked into one of the most important criticisms of Gaziano and McGrath's research. That it does not provide coefficient alpha reading (Rubin et al, 2009).

#### **2.4 Developing an Index for Defining and Measuring Credibility**

The inaccuracy, unreliable and invalid measurement of Gaziano and McGrath (1986) has caused concern among researchers. The major reason was that it does not provide a base for the construction of theory (Meyer, 1988). However, it should be noted that the construction of theory may have never been a purpose for Gaziano and McGrath (1986) as their research was sponsored by four major media organisations in the United States. The major concern of the media organisations was to know how people perceived the credibility of the work they produced daily and how they can improve it.

Rimmer and Weaver (1987) was the first researcher to validate Gaziano and McGrath (1986). They say that the main reason for Gaziano and McGrath's news credibility scale was to study the decline of public trust in newspapers instead of media credibility as it was first stated. Gaziano and McGrath (1986) have assumed "that there is a casual relationship between media credibility and media use. The relationship was never casual but move only in one-way. Rimmer and Weaver (1987) said that numerous studies since 1960'until 1970's found that media credibility and media use are "positively correlated". Those who use newspaper or television more will give the media of their choice a higher credibility rating than the media the depend less upon.

However, the higher the media credibility and media uses may not actually end up with higher circulations or television viewership. Media credibility and media use remains an assumption. Past researches like Rimmer and Weaver (1987) have suggested this. They found that even by changing the media content in order to increase media credibility, circulation and viewership may not increase Jackson and Stamm (1979) suggested that are many predictors as to why people subscribed to a certain media. Among the predictors was the number of households, total market population, income, competitions and subscribers mobility. The news credibility scale designed by Gaziano and McGrath (1986) however did not take into consideration such predictors when studying news credibility.



Rimmer and Weaver (1987) also noted that people may stop the subscription, not because they disagree with its content but mainly because of the unsatisfactory delivery service, lack of time to read and cost. To this, they believe correlations between media use and media credibility is just a hypothesis.

Unlike Gaziano and McGrath (1986), Rimmer and Weaver (1987) computed the Cronbach's alpha for news credibility scale of both television and newspapers credibility at .90, which is a very high level of reliability. The author of this dissertation have also once conducted Gaziano and McGrath (1986) news credibility scale test on a group of 50 college students for a semester paper and found that its Cronbach's alpha to be very low. Gaziano and McGrath (1986) did not provide Cronbach's alpha reading at all. Rimmer and Weaver (1987) went on to conclude that reading newspaper and watching news "is not consistently related to news credibility".

The next most important development of credibility scale for news was made by Philip Meyer in 1988. Like Rimmer and Weaver (1987), Meyer also uses Gaziano and McGrath (1986) news credibility scale to study news credibility, but in a different ways.

Both Gaziano and McGrath (1986), and Rimmer and Weavers (1987) use open survey conducted nationwide in their studies. Meyer (1988), however just focused on the readerships of the Beacon Journal. The journal is based in Akron city, Ohio, United States. When he conducted his survey, a specific thing happened, and that was the Firestone 500 tyre safety sage. As most of Firestone tyres are produced in Akron, the closing of its plants have affected thousands of workers living there. Mayer's research shows that most people disapprove the way the newspaper covers a sensitive local story, but they still believe in what it says.

Meyer took a different approach when measuring Cronbach's alpha. He divided the news credibility scale into two parts, a four-item scale and a seven-item scale. The four-item gave a Cronbach's alpha of .72, while the seven-item scale gave a Cronbach's alpha of .84. Unlike Rimmer and Weaver (1987) whose Cronbach's alpha stand at .90 for the 15 items news credibility scale, Meyer was highly unhappy with his seven-item scale and described as bulky scale.

Meyer's measurement showed credibility and believability are not likely to be connected with each other. He did not give an explanation for this except more data are needed for it to be understood. He said studies by others found that confidence in media institutions tend to follow the general economic and political health of the country more than judgements of any media institution's specific performance.

The last paper for the discussion here will be from West (1994) who discussed about the validity of the measurement for media credibility. The reason for this is because researchers after West (1994) are more concern about how the internet has affected the audience rather than television and newspapers. More discussions on this will come later.

Like Meyer (1988), West was concerned about developing a measurement that is both reliable and valid for media credibility studies. He found Gaziano and McGrath (1986) news credibility scale fared poorly and the redesign news credibility scale by Meyer (1988) was more valid and reliable. The study by West (1994), like all others before him did not lead to the creation of a permanent news credibility scale that is both valid and reliable. For research knowledge to be cumulative, a credible and valid measurement or scale is needed. Therefore can there be a better measurement or scale to measure news credibility? In the meantime, humanity has entered the information age.

## **2.5 Humanity Entered the Information Age**

Journalist Joe Carmichael (2016) wrote twenty-three years ago, the world met the World Wide Web. It was twenty-three years ago, CERN – the European

Organisation for Nuclear Research – released Tim Berners-Lee’s WWW software to the public. And he stressed again that twenty-three years ago, on April 30, 1993, humanity entered the Information Age.

What does humanity entering the Information Age mean? It could mean many things but for the purpose of this research, we take a look at how the Internet has changed the occupation of journalism.

## **2.6 News Credibility Researches in Internet era**

As can be seen above, research on news credibility’s measurement has been plentiful with contradictory findings. The same thing seems to have continued well into the Internet era, where researches again try various ways and methods to examine news credibility. The difference now is with the emergence of new technology, the Internet, which also functions as an information provider, but can do much more than the old media of newspaper and television.

In Malaysia, Wilson et al (2011) examined the new phenomena and found that urban youth trusted the traditional media more than the new online news media. In China, Chan et al (2006) examined Chinese journalists who said that online news companies are significantly less credible than the mainstream media. Gaskins and

Jerit (2012) found that even though more and more people in the United States are using online news, a significant majority still trusted the traditional media.

Wilson et al (2011) asked respondents seven questions that concern the government control, freedom of expression, news coverage, accuracy, in-depth news coverage, the future of journalism and blog as a source of news. Please refer to Appendix D.

Meanwhile Chan et al (2006) looked more towards the behaviour of the respondents on a scale of eight items. They are website credibility, web surfing behaviour and attitudes toward the internet, web use at work, specialist orientation, evaluation of news media exemplars, media role beliefs, reporting value and perceived competitive pressure. Please refer to Appendix E.

Chan et al's (2006) research are credible and reliable due to the usage of Cronbach's alpha, where the lowest alpha = .60, while the highest alpha = .84. Many correlations are found between traditional media and commercial media(as Chan et al call it). This showed that the differences in credibility between the traditional and the alternative media are actually very small. Some variables even complement each other.

Gaskins and Jerit (2012) too found that Internet news has not yet replaced the traditional media outlets, changes is happening. However, before we discuss about Gaskins and Jerit (2012), it is worth noting again what communication researchers found before the start of the Internet's age. Rimmer and Weaver (1987) stated that there are numerous studies in the 1960's and 1970's that found media credibility and media use as "positively correlated" in other words, those who used newspapers or television more often are those who rate the credibility of these media higher than those who use these media less often.

However, the two research papers cited in this study found otherwise. Wilson et al (2011) and Chan et al (2006) found that media credibility and media use are not necessary "positively correlated". More people use the Internet today to source for information and news when compared to the traditional methods. But this does not mean the new medium is more credible than the old.

Instead of finding credibility, Gaskin and Jerit (2012) used the Niche Theory to determine which media, the traditional or the alternative, are superior in satisfying individual gratifications. Individual gratifications under the Niche theory are time spent on using the media and the choice of content the media provides (Dimmick et al, 2004)

Traditional media, like newspaper, offered a limited array of content and rigid schedules to the users. In contrast, the alternative media offer a greater choice, and more control over content. Under the Users and Gratification theory, users are always on the lookout for and seek gratification, and the alternative media did just that by offering plenty of gratifications.

Like all the other researchers before them, Gaskin and Jerit (2012) ask a series of questions that is almost alike as shown in Appendix D.

Gaskin and Jerit (2012) find that many people in the United States are reading less newspaper, watching less television and listens less the radio since they start using the Internet. The niche theory suggests that replacement is already happening from the traditional media to the Internet. Gaskin and Jerit (2012) also observed that the traditional media industries in the United States are also facing declining sales and advertising revenue as the result of people switching to online paper reading.

## **2.7 Summary**

Basically this literature review started with the study on media way back to Able and Wirth's paper in 1977. However the study of media does not just begin in 1977.

According to Robert (2010), research into the journalist credibility “harkens back to the earliest edition of Journalism Quarterly”. Unlike the media research today, media researches back then was purely academic in nature and carry little commercial value.

The arrival of the television and later the Internet era seem to have an impact in the commercialisation of media research, Gaziano and McGrath’s research in 1986 was funded by the media companies and associations. The information age or the Internet era saw further competition between the now traditional media and the new social media. Such competitions have given a serious impact to media research. This study seeks to find out which media, traditional or alternative, carry more weight and credibility among students in a private college.



## CHAPTER 3

### 3.1 Research Methodology

This study looks at the media usage and perception of college students towards the traditional and alternative media using a quantitative survey. The Interpersonal Communication Motives Scale (ICMS) is used to measure the college students' perceptions towards traditional and alternative media. A questionnaire survey was conducted among students in a private college to find out their usage of media, their motives for doing so and the extent that they trust the information obtained.

The questionnaire were designed to be answered in less than 5 minutes, in order to avert any possibility of the respondents being bored into giving unreliable answers. The questionnaire collected data on demographic profile followed by questions pertaining to their usage and frequency of using the media that they preferred. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never for frequency of media usage) to 5 (all the time) and 1 (not at all for motive of media usage) and 5 was used to study their usage, preference and motive. Students who are asked to answer ICM scale on traditional media would not be answering the ICM scale on alternative media. This was also done in order to avoid confusion on the part of the respondents as they would be very clear that they are providing answers based on

either traditional media or alternative media and not mixed up the two in giving their responses.

Eight demo graph indexes are created to measure the college students' response to the traditional media and the alternative media. They are the amount of time spend daily on the Internet (1 hour to more than 5 hours), the desired amount of time daily they (the students) would like to spend on the Internet (1 hour to more than 5 hours), how many Internet devices they owned (smartphone, desktop, laptop, PlayStation & Xbox, and others), where do they connect to the Internet (at home, school, cyber cafes, mobile data and tell me where), how often do you read newspapers or watch television news (1= never and 5=daily), how often do you read news in the alternative media (1= never and 5=all the time), do you think the traditional media will still be around in the future (1=no and 5=yes), and lastly do you think the alternative media will be the main source of information in the future (1=no and 5=yes).

### **3.2 Selection of Population**

Kumar (2011) said there are five types of non-random and non-probability sampling design in quantitative research. They are quota sampling, accidental sampling, judgemental sampling, experts sampling and snowball sampling. This

research uses judgemental sampling as interpersonal communication motives scale in media is a new phenomenon.

Kumar (2011) said that judgemental sampling strategy allows researchers “to select a predetermined number of people who, in the researcher judgement are best positioned to provide him with the needed information for his study”.

College students being in the age group that has access to the Internet were chosen as the target sample for the study because of their likelihood and frequency of using alternative media. Therefore a group of college students, in Segamat, were selected to participate in the ICMS research. The college has a student population that is less than 250 people. This study has managed to survey a total of 184 students, which is more than two thirds of the student population.

### **3.3 Development of the Research Instrument**

The interpersonal communication motives scale (ICMS) is basically a loosely combination of two theories, the interpersonal motives and the Uses and Gratification theory. (Rubin & Rubin, 1992) The ICMS was designed with the purpose to study why people communicate and how those communications seem to

fulfill interpersonal needs. Rubin & Rubin (1992) suggested six motives for interpersonal communication. They are:

1. Pleasure
2. Affection
3. Inclusion
4. Escape
5. Relaxation
6. Control

These six motives were used to determine the outcomes of consuming media (Rubin & Rubin, 1985). In this study, the motives of media use and the media choice may indicate the trust and credibility perception of the college students towards the traditional media or alternative media.

### **3.4 Research Instrument: The Questionnaire**

The questionnaire used in the survey was designed in three parts as follows:

#### **Section A: Demographic Profile**

This section collected demographic information including age, gender, ethnicity and time spent on the internet daily

Section B: Interpersonal Communication Motives Scale for Traditional media.

This section contains statements of reasons for using a particular media. Respondents are asked to circle a number ranging from 1 to 5 with 5 representing a reason that is exactly like the respondent's own reason and 1 representing a reason that is not at all like the respondent's own reason.

Section C: Interpersonal Communication Motives Scale for Alternative media.

This section contains statements of reasons for using a particular media. Respondents are asked to circle a number ranging from 1 to 5 with 5 representing a reason that is exactly like the respondent's own reason and 1 representing a reason that is not at all like the respondent's own reason.

The complete questionnaire is given in the appendix.

### **3.5 Analysis of Data**

The data gathered for this study were analysed using:

1. Cronbach's Alpha
2. Pearson Correlation
3. Mann-Whitney U Test
4. Pair Sample T-Test

5. Replacement Behavior
6. Overlap values
7. Superior Analysis

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Respondents

A total of 184 students participated in the survey. Out of this, 87 were asked about their Interpersonal Communication Motives (ICM) when using the traditional media, and 97 were asked about their ICM when using the alternative media. The students were aged 20-21 and are majority of Chinese ethnicity.

The demographic survey showed that the students spent an average of (M) 3.32 hours (SD=1.386) daily on the Internet slightly more than the average of (M) 3.15 hours daily (SD=1.408), for the time they desire to be on the Internet. This could indicate guilty feeling for spending too much time on the Internet and less time for their study.

Each of them owned, at least two (M=1.86, SD=0.842) devices that can be connected to the Internet, and they use it from at least two (M=1.98, SD=1.048) places, home and college, where the Internet is made available to them. Majority read and depend less on traditional media information (M=2.45, SD=1.149).

Most are depended on the Internet (M=2.92, SD=1.219) for information. They still believed that the traditional media (M=3.31, SD=1.393) will still be around in the future in competition with the alternative media (M=3.69, SD=1.191).

## **4.2 Cronbach Alpha's Result**

Cronbach's alpha result from the analysis of the data collected is as summarised on Table 4.1. The results are basically divided into three columns. The first and second column show the results of traditional and alternative media, while the third column are the results presented by the creator (Rubin & Rubin, 1985) of ICMS.

The data analysed show that basically there is no differences in opinion between the traditional and alternative media. Both media have strong Cronbach's alpha results in all the six factors, with only one exception. Pleasure for the alternative media is at 0.478, which can be considered low but nevertheless were quite high for this study. The correlation for traditional media will be high with the alpha at 0.847, which is quite close with the ICMS's result at 0.89.

The second factor is affection. Cronbach's alpha stand at 0.851, 0.843 and 0.85 respectively. The third factor, inclusion, Cronbach's alpha stand at 0.823, 0/906 and 0.84. The fourth factor, escape, Cronbach's alpha are at 0.804, 0.899 and



0.77. The fifth factor, relaxation, Cronbach's alpha are at 0.804, 0.843 and 0.81. Lastly the sixth factor, control, 0.819, 0.802 and 0.75.

**Table 4.1**

	TRADITIONAL MEDIA	ALTERNATIVE MEDIA	ICMS
Pleasure	0.847	0.478	.89
Affection	0.851	0.843	.85
Inclusion	0.823	0.906	.84
Escape	0.804	0.899	.77
Relaxation	0.804	0.843	.81
Control	0.819	0.802	.75

The results from the above table point to one assumption, that correlations for all the sixth factor will be high for both traditional and alternative media, with the exception of the factor pleasure. These results do not correlate well with the intention of the study, which is low Cronbach's alpha and low Pearson correlation.

### 4.3 Exploring differences between groups

The next two tests on the data collected explored the possibility of differences between groups. The two tests are Mann-Whitney U-Test and T-test.

The results from the Mann-Whitney U-Test showed the probability value ( $p$ ) is not less than or equal to 0.5, so the result is not significant. There is no significant difference between male and female students when using the traditional or alternative media.

**Table 4.2**

	Traditional Media	Alternative media
Male	$p > 0.5$	$p > 0.5$
Female	$p > 0.5$	$p > 0.5$
<i>n</i>	86	96

The second test, T-test, explored the differences between the six factors under the interpersonal communication motives scale. Paired-Sampled T-Test above showed that there is no major differences between all the six-factor under the interpersonal communication motives scale (ICMS) when compared under the traditional and alternative media.

Pleasure scored  $t(85) = 5.35$ ,  $p < .05$  (two tailed) and  $\eta = 0.25$ . Affection scored  $t(85) = 0.334$ ,  $p > .05$  (two tailed) and  $\eta = 0.001$ , Inclusion scored  $t(85) = -1.038$ ,  $p > .05$  (two tailed) and  $\eta = 0.012$ . Escape  $t(85) = -0.083$ ,  $p > .05$  (two tailed) and  $\eta = 8.09$ . Relaxation scored  $t(85) = 3.424$ ,  $p < .05$  and  $\eta = 0.12$ . Lastly control scored at  $t(85) = 1.119$ ,  $p > .05$  (two tailed) and  $\eta = 0.01$ .

Based on the scores, the results do showed a significant difference for pleasure and relaxation. However the two factors are too small and failed to effect the overall scores of ICMS in this study. Therefore there is no major difference between the traditional media and alternative media under the 3 tests i.e. Cronbach's alpha, Mann-Whitney U test and pair sample t-test.

**Table 4.3**

Pleasure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Traditional Media	27.49	5.06	86
Alternative Media	23.44	4.74	96

$t(85)=5.35$        $p < .05$  (two tailed)       $\eta (.25)$

Affection	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Traditional Media	16.57	3.63	86
Alternative media	16.36	4.57	96

$t(85)=0.334$        $p > .05$  (two tailed)       $\eta (.001)$

Inclusion	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Traditional Media	12.22	3.506	86
Alternative Media	12.81	4.437	96

t(85)=-1.038      *p* > .05 (*two tailed*)      eta (.012)

Escape	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Traditional Media	12.37	3.343	86
Alternative Media	12.42	4.160	96

t(85)=-0.083      *p* > .05 (*two tailed*)      eta (8.09)

Relaxation	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Traditional Media	13.59	2.767	86
Alternative Media	11.88	3.995	96

t(85)=3.424      *p* < .05 (*two tailed*)      eta (0.12)

Control	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Traditional Media	8.81	2.824	86
Alternative Media	8.31	2.011	96

t(85)=1.119      *p* > .05 (*two tailed*)      eta (0.01)

#### 4.4 Pearson Correlations Results

Pearson correlations represent one of the important SPSS measurement in this study.

The table below showed Pearson correlations measurement for traditional media. All six factors not only have positive correlations between them but are also significant  $**p < .05$  (2-tailed). However, majority of these correlations are rather small and not of a significant value.

**Table 4.4**  
**Pearson Product-moment Correlations Between Measures of ICM for**  
**Traditional Media**

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Total Pleasure		.232*	.257*	.324**	.477**	.318**
2. Total Affection	.232*		.552**	.547**	.342**	.464**
3. Total Inclusion	.257*	.552**		.628**	.486**	.544**
4. Total Escape	.324**	.547**	.628**		.379**	.617**
5. Total Relaxation	.477**	.342**	.486**	.379**		.383**
6. Total Control	.318**	.464**	.544**	.617**	.383**	

\*\*p < .05 (2-tailed)

Based on the table below which showed Pearson correlations measurement for alternative media, it can be seen that unlike the traditional media, the alternative media showed a rather mix reactions among the six factors, with some factors without a significant value p.

**Table 4.5**  
**Pearson Product-moment Correlations Between Measures of ICM for**  
**Alternative Media**

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Total Pleasure		-.05	-.083	-.268**	-.07	.003
2. Total Affection	-.05		.883**	.679**	.673**	.650**
3. Total Inclusion	.083	.883**		.655**	.678**	.613**
4. Total Escape	-.268**	.679**	.655**		.774**	.599**
5. Total Relaxation	-.070	.673**	.678**	.774**		.691**
6. Total Control	.003	.650**	.613**	.599**	.691**	

\*\*p < .05 (2-tailed)

#### **4.5 Replacement Behaviour Across Media**

The replacement behaviour across media tests are adopted from Gaskin and Jerit (2012) who in turn adopted it from the Niche theory. The purpose of these tests is to determine how big is the differences between the two media. The results can also be viewed under the Uses and Gratifications theory, where the bigger the number means the larger the gratifications received by the users. There are three tests, which is replacement behaviour, overlap values and superior analysis. The results of these tests will determine how much gratification the college students received from using the traditional and alternative media.

The findings of these tests as given below in Table 4.6 showed that the replacement behaviour is happening even though it is not a very strong replacement. There a slight tilt toward the alternative media (2.91) when compared with the traditional media (2.45) when students are asked about which media are their preferred choice. The same situation also applied when college students are asked about whether they will still be reading the traditional media (3.31) or the alternative media (3.69) will be the main choice for reading news in the future. Overall the differences are just too small.

**Table 4.6**

Read the traditional media	2.45
Read the alternative media	2.92
The future of traditional media	3.31
The future of alternative media	3.69
<i>N</i>	182

In the overlap analysis, Pleasure is the only variable that has an effect in the relationship between the traditional media and the alternative media. The overlap value for Pleasure was 1.807 which is overall higher than what was reported by Dimmick et al (2004) in Table 4.9. A higher overlap values mean displacement has occurred.

However, if read as a whole for all the six factors, displacement has not occurred as the findings on Affection (0.268), Inclusion (0.178), Escape (0.325), Relaxation (0.071) and Control (0.108), are all too small in value for displacement to occur. Please see Table 4.7 below on the overlap values between Traditional Media and Alternative Media.



**Table 4.7**

**Overlap Values between the Traditional Media and the Alternative Media I**

Overlap	Exactly	A Lot	Somewhat	Not Much	Not At All
Pleasure	2.758	3.084	3.561	4.362	6.169
Affection	0.408	0.457	0.528	0.647	0.915
Inclusion	0.271	0.303	0.349	0.428	0.606
Escape	0.495	0.554	0.639	0.783	1.108
Relaxation	0.107	0.120	0.139	0.170	0.241
Control	0.163	0.183	0.211	0.258	0.366

**Table 4.8**

**Overlap Values between the Traditional Media and the Alternative Media II**

	1	2	3	4
Pleasure	0.326	0.477	0.801	1.807
Affection	0.049	0.071	0.119	0.268
Inclusion	0.032	0.046	0.079	0.178
Escape	0.059	0.085	0.144	0.325
Relaxation	0.013	0.019	0.031	0.071
Control	0.02	0.028	0.047	0.108

**Table 4.9**

**Overlap Values Reported by Dimmick et al. (2004)**

Internet-Television	1.20
Internet-Cable Television	1.03
Internet-Newspapers	1.30
Internet-Radio	1.37

Moving on to superior analysis, the data in Table 5.0 below show that traditional media trumps the alternative media in all six factors with  $i > j$ . However in term of value, the differences between all the six factors were too small and scored below the highest value possible for each factors as indicated in the brackets. Pleasure scored 31.632 (40) for traditional media over 25.463 (40) for alternative media. Affection scored 16.569 (25) over 15.656 (25). Inclusion scored 12.220 (20) over 11.614 (20). Escape scored 12.337 (20) over 11.229 (20). Relaxation scored 13.011 (20) over 12.770 (20). Lastly control scored 8.813 (15) over 8.447 (15).

**Table 5.0**

**Superior Analysis**

	Traditional Media ( <i>i</i> )	Alternative Media ( <i>j</i> )	$S = \sum_{k=1}^K m = i > j$
Pleasure	31.632 (40)	25.463 (40)	<i>i</i> > <i>j</i>
Affection	16.569 (25)	15.656 (25)	<i>i</i> > <i>j</i>
Inclusion	12.220 (20)	11.614 (20)	<i>i</i> > <i>j</i>
Escape	12.337 (20)	11.229 (20)	<i>i</i> > <i>j</i>
Relaxation	13.011 (20)	12.770 (20)	<i>i</i> > <i>j</i>
Control	8.813 (15)	8.447 (15)	<i>i</i> > <i>j</i>

- The number in the bracket ( ) indicates the highest mean scores possible for a factor.

## CHAPTER 5

### 5.1 CONCLUSION

The survey results showed that a majority of the college students have adopted the alternative media as their source of information and news.

Cronbach's alpha result too supported the conclusion with all six factors scoring high alphas ( $< 0.7$ ) for both traditional and alternative media. All six factors are highly correlated. Pearson product-moment correlations between measures too confirmed this conclusion with all six factors scoring a significant high  $**p < .05$  (2-tailed). The result is that college students find pleasure, affection, inclusion, escape, relaxation and control when using both the traditional and alternative media. The more time they spend using the traditional and alternative media the higher gratification they received. And this can be read from the results on the six-factor tests.

As to which one of the two media provides greater gratification to the college students, the Mann-Whitney U Test and pair sample T-Test show that both groups of college students, that is the group that answered the traditional media section and the group that answered the alternative media section, tended to believe

both media are the same. There is no significant difference in both group's data analysis. The data analysis showed that for the college students, both traditional and alternative media are equally credible.

Replacement behaviour, overlap value and superior analysis are another test instruments to find the possible gratification that college students might receive from using the media. In these analysis, traditional media trumps the alternative media in all the six factors, however the differences are too small to be significant.

Therefore, this study concluded that the college students believed there are no differences in their perception when using the traditional media or the alternative media. The college students in this study seemed to care less about the issue of credibility. Both media gave them almost the same gratification. This insignificant difference in the credibility perception of the college students towards traditional media or alternative media is that that they may not be concerned about the issue of credibility of the information provided by the media. Instead, what can be clearly concluded is that the college students relied more on the alternative media than the traditional media as a source of information.

The findings of this study confirmed that media users have different reasons for sourcing information. According to Goel (2009), under the uses and gratifications theory, people consume media because of their need to reinforce their own behaviour by identifying with roles and values presented in the media, their

need for interaction, their need for escape from routine and their need for entertainment.

All the reasons above may be the cause for the small statistical difference found in this study. College students interviewed in this study may be thinking more about their needs above when they are asked about whether they perceive information from traditional or alternative media are more credible. To recap, the small statistical difference found in this study when interpersonal communication motives scale (ICMS) is used, shows that the users and gratification theory is not suitable for studying the link between media usage and media credibility. This study further revealed that it is not a straightforward link between media usage and media credibility, that is, the media used may not be the media trusted by the user.

Traditional media and the alternative media, both provide pleasure, affection, inclusion, escape, relaxation and control to its user. The only differences can be found in the demographic profile, where almost all stated they seldom use the traditional media even though they believe that the traditional media is more credible when compared to the alternative media. Therefore this study again concluded that user and gratification theory is unsuitable to study media credibility.

## **5.2 Limitations**

There are two major limitations in this study of which the most notable is the sampling which is small in number and in composition as the students were all from the Chinese ethnic group. A bigger sample size and composition of all the major ethnic groups in the nation would provide better findings on whether credibility is an important pattern in the news reading habit of college students. In view that the sample for this study was limited to only a small group of Chinese students in a private college, the findings of this research cannot be generalizable to Malaysians.

A further limitation of this study is the timing of the data collected and also the sample studied. It should be noted that the data was collected some time ago which may no longer be representative of current interest on credibility of the media. In addition, this limited sample of college students from only the Chinese ethnic group may not be concerned with the issue of media credibility which is not reflective of other media users in Malaysia.

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Appendix A

**DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

Please tick (x) at the appropriate answer for the following questions.

1. Gender       Male       Female

2. Ethnic grouping.

Malay     Chinese     Indian     Bumiputers

Others

3. Time spend on the internet daily?

1 hours     2 hours     3 hours     4 hours

More than 5 hours

4. The desired amount of time you will like to spend on the internet daily?

1 hours     2 hours     3 hours     4 hours

More than 5 hours

5. Click if you own any of these devices?

Smartphone     Desktop     PlayStation & XBox

Laptop     Tell me about your other's device \_\_\_\_\_

6. Internet availabilities?

Home     School     Cybercafés

Mobile [ ] Tell me where else \_\_\_\_\_

7. How often do you read the newspaper?

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Daily

8. How often do you read alternative media?

Never 1 2 3 4 5 All the time

9. Do you think the newspaper will still be around in the future?

No 1 2 3 4 5 Yes

10. Do you think the alternative media would be the main source of information  
in the future?

No 1 2 3 4 5 Yes

## Appendix B

### INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION MOTIVES SCALE

**INSTRUCTION 1:** Figures from the Audit Bureau of Circulation showed that the circulation of traditional newspapers such as The Star, New Straits Times, Utusan Malaysia and Berita Harian, has fallen over the past five years. From 2005-2009, The Star's circulation dropped from 310,000 to 287,000 (-7.4 %), New Straits Times from 139,000 to 111,000 (-20%), Utusan Malaysia from 213,000 to 169,000 (-21%) and Berita Harian from 204,000 to 155,000 (-24%).

Can you tell us the reasons why you think people have stop using the traditional media. Here are several reasons to help you along the way. For each statement, please circle the number that best expresses your reason for using the traditional media.

Here are several reasons why you use the traditional media. For each statement, please circle the number that best expresses your reason for talking to others.

- i. If the reason is **EXACTLY** like your own reason, circle a **5**.

- ii. If the reason is **A LOT** like your own reason, circle a **4**.
- iii. If the reason is **SOMEWHAT** like your own reason, circle a **3**.
- iv. If the reason is **NOT MUCH** like your own reason, circle a **2**.
- v. If the reason is **NOT AT ALL** like your own reason, circle a **1**.

**I use the media ...”**

		Exactl y	A lot	Somewhat	Not much	Not at all
<b>Pleasure</b>						
1	Because it's fun	5	4	3	2	1
2	Because it's exciting	5	4	3	2	1
3	To have a good time	5	4	3	2	1
4	Because it's thrilling	5	4	3	2	1
5	Because it's stimulating	5	4	3	2	1
6	Because it's entertaining	5	4	3	2	1
7	Because I enjoy it	5	4	3	2	1
8	Because it peps me up	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Affection</b>						
1	To help others	5	4	3	2	1
2	To let others know I care about their feelings	5	4	3	2	1
3	To thank them	5	4	3	2	1
4	To show others encouragement	5	4	3	2	1
5	Because I'm concerned about them	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Inclusion</b>						
1	Because I need someone to talk to or be with	5	4	3	2	1
2	Because I just need to talk about my problems sometimes	5	4	3	2	1
3	Because it makes me feel less lonely	5	4	3	2	1
4	Because it's reassuring to know someone is there	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Escape</b>						
1	To put off something I should be doing	5	4	3	2	1
2	To get away from what I am doing	5	4	3	2	1
3	Because I have nothing better to do	5	4	3	2	1
4	To get way from pressure and responsibility.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Relaxation</b>						
1	Because it relaxes me	5	4	3	2	1
2	Because it allows me to unwind	5	4	3	2	1
3	Because it's a pleasant rest	5	4	3	2	1
4	Because it makes me feel less tense	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Control</b>						
1	Because I want someone to do something for me	5	4	3	2	1
2	To tell others what to do	5	4	3	2	1
3	To get something I don't have	5	4	3	2	1



## Appendix C

**INSTRUCTION 2:** Alternative media like MalaysiaKini, The Malaysian Insider and FreeMalaysiaToday have unleashed a vigorous flow of news, commentary, and commerce to millions of people. They ensure that newspapers are stale before they're tossed on the truck. They are doing what newspapers use to do and they did it more quickly, more attractively, more efficiently, and in a more interesting and unfettered way.

Here are several reasons why you use the alternative media. For each statement, please circle the number that best expresses your reason for talking to others.

- vi. If the reason is **EXACTLY** like your own reason, circle a **5**.
- vii. If the reason is **A LOT** like your own reason, circle a **4**.
- viii. If the reason is **SOMEWHAT** like your own reason, circle a **3**.
- ix. If the reason is **NOT MUCH** like your own reason, circle a **2**.
- x. If the reason is **NOT AT ALL** like your own reason, circle a **1**.

**I use the media ...”**

		<b>Exactl y</b>	<b>A lot</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Not much</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
<b>Pleasure</b>						
1	Because it's fun	5	4	3	2	1
2	Because it's exciting	5	4	3	2	1
3	To have a good time	5	4	3	2	1
4	Because it's thrilling	5	4	3	2	1
5	Because it's stimulating	5	4	3	2	1
6	Because it's entertaining	5	4	3	2	1
7	Because I enjoy it	5	4	3	2	1
8	Because it peps me up	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Affection</b>						
1	To help others	5	4	3	2	1
2	To let others know I care about their feelings	5	4	3	2	1
3	To thank them	5	4	3	2	1
4	To show others encouragement	5	4	3	2	1
5	Because I'm concerned about them	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Inclusion</b>						
1	Because I need someone to talk to or be with	5	4	3	2	1
2	Because I just need to talk about my problems sometimes	5	4	3	2	1
3	Because it makes me feel less lonely	5	4	3	2	1
4	Because it's reassuring to know someone is there	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Escape</b>						
1	To put off something I should be doing	5	4	3	2	1
2	To get away from what I am doing	5	4	3	2	1
3	Because I have nothing better to do	5	4	3	2	1
4	To get way from pressure and responsibility.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Relaxation</b>						
1	Because it relaxes me	5	4	3	2	1
2	Because it allows me to unwind	5	4	3	2	1
3	Because it's a pleasant rest	5	4	3	2	1
4	Because it makes me feel less tense	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Control</b>						
1	Because I want someone to do something for me	5	4	3	2	1
2	To tell others what to do	5	4	3	2	1
3	To get something I don't have	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix D

**Table 2.1**

Extremely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Extremely
Trustworthy								Untrustworthy
Honest								Dishonest
Just								Unjust
Reliable								Unreliable
Expert								Inexpert
Experience								Inexperience
Trained								Untrained
Incomplete								Complete
Inaccurate								Accurate
Substantive								Superficial
Straight								Not straight
Bold								Timid
Meek								Aggressive
Active								Passive
Biased								Unbiased
Partial								Impartial
Opinionated								Not Opinionated
Personal								Impersonal
Intimate								Not Intimate
Visual								Not Visual
Live								Second-hand
Immediate								Delayed
Convenient								Inconvenient
Available								Not available
Disagreeable								Agreeable
Unfavourable								Favourable
Difficult								Easy
Hazy								Clear