Preference of Social Network Sites for Uncertainty Reduction among International Students

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Submitted to the
Institute of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Communication and Media Studies

Eastern Mediterranean University
September 2020
Gazimağusa, North Cyprus

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ABSTRACT

International students are distant from their homes and seek for an appropriate platform which they can relate with home, North Cyprus and others. This research considers the preference of Social Networking Sites (SNS), particularly Facebook and Instagram by the international tertiary students. The various strategies employed by the students when they would like to reduce their levels of uncertainty have been also considered. 499 international students who study at the Eastern Mediterranean University participated in the study. The study made use of quantitative methodology and administered questionnaire as a means of data collection, in order to ascertain students' preference of SNS.

Findings revealed that although Facebook seems to be the most popular, Instagram seems to be significant in communicating with people in North Cyprus, and others than the use of Facebook. Also, the three uncertainty reduction strategies (URS) passive, active and interactive strategies have positive influence when SNS was used in inferential statistics to ascertain the influence when use as the mediating variable. Students are active in the selection of their media to reduce their uncertainty thus; they have positive relationship. The two theories used (Uses and Gratification and Uncertainty Reduction Theories) affirmed that youth are selective and active when selecting a medium for communication thus their suitability for the research.

Keywords: Preference, Social Networking Sites (SNSs), Uncertainty Reduction Theory, International students, Eastern Mediterranean University.

ÖZ

Uluslararası öğrenciler evlerinden uzakta olmalarından dolayı kendilerine evleri, Kuzey Kıbrıs ve diğerleriyle ilişki kurabilecekleri uygun bir platform aramaktadırlar. Bu araştırma uluslararası üniversitesi öğrencilerin, Sosyal Ağ Sitelerinin, özellikle Facebook ve Instagram'ın tercihlerini dikkate almaktadır. Öğrencilerin belirsizlik seviyelerini azaltmak istediklerinde kullandıkları çeşitli stratejileri de dikkate almaktadır. Bu çalışmaya, Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi'ndeki eğitimgören 449 uluslararası öğrenci katılmıştır. Çalışmada nicel metodoloji kullanılmıştır ve veri toplama aracı olarak öğrencilerin sosyal medya tercihlerini belirlemek için anket tercih edilmiştir.

Bulgular, Facebook en popüler sosyal medya platformu gibi görünse de Instagram'ın Kuzey Kıbrıs ve diğerleriyle iletişim kurmada Facebook'un kullanımından daha önemli olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca, üç belirsizlik azaltma stratejisi, aktif, pasif ve etkileşimli stratejiler, Sosyal Ağ Sitelerinin kullanıldığında olumlu etkiye sahip tir. Öğrenciler belirsizliklerini azaltmak için medyalarının seçiminde aktiftirler, bu nedenle pozitif bir ilişkiye sahiptirler.

Kullanılan iki teori (Kullanımlar ve Doyumlar ve Belirsizliği Azaltma Teorileri) kullanım sırasında uygulamalarını ve araştırma için nasıl kullanıldığını teyit etmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tercih, Sosyal Ağ Siteleri (SNS), Belirsizliği Azaltma Teorisi, Uluslararası öğrenciler, Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late parent Mallam Gambo Apinyang (Titati) and Naati

Salome Gambo Apinyang "SRDK"

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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3D	Three Dimensions
AOL	America Online
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
BBS	Bulletin Board System
CMC	Computer Mediated Communication
CR	Composite Reliability
ELIS	Every Day Life Information Seeking
EMU	Eastern Mediterranean University
FB	Facebook
FINSTA	Fake Instagram
GS	Gratification Sought
HTMT	Heterotrait - Monotrait
IFU	Intensity of Facebook Usage
IRC	Internet Relay Chat
LLU	Low Level of Uncertainty
MASA	Media uses as Social Action
MGA	Multi-Group Analysis)
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NFI	Normal Fit Index
OSN	Online Social Network
PLS	Partial Least Square
QQ	A Chinese Messaging Application
RINSTA	Real Instagram

SA	Social Acceptance
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SIM	Similarities
SKC	South Korean Communication
SNS	Social Network sites
TETFUND	Tertiary Educational Trust Fund
U&GT	Uses and Gratification Theory
UI	User Interface
URS	Uncertainty Reduction Strategy
URT	Uncertainty Reduction Theory
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

International students face uncertainty when they leave home and start studying in a university far away from home where they need to re-establish their social lives. In this socialization, in addition to meeting new friends, connecting with family and friends that they have already known is done mostly through Social Network Sites (SNS). In doing this, they have difficulty in making choice of which SNS to use for their communication.

According to Baruah (2012), SNS are fast means through which communication update is handled and also they are cheap; thereby, they are used in sharing information with others. Thus, it permits livestreaming through videos, referring to computer based technology as a virtual means of communication that calls for interaction with other users which is tantamount to 3D environments that the users see themselves. In line with this, they appear themselves and make use of audio/touch sensations during communication. He further explains that chat rooms are not just for communication purposes but can also be used for games and to accomplish other tasks as may be desired by users.

For example, in a situation where a company would like effective executing of a particular task between the companies during crises management, the SNS are seen as the fastest and easiest means employed for dialogue between public, and stakeholders

in managing crises, hence, it is interactive, having the potential of immediate delivery and fastness (Jothi, Neelamalar, & Prasad, 2011).

Another example to buttress the point is the effective use of SNS among students who are described as digital natives by Prensky (2001). Youths are surrounded by computerized environment in that they have cell phone for communication, make use of video games, and have access to digital music because of the digital age. These have made students to have choices. As a result, the digital culture has influences the students in numerous ways which include their skills and academics stressing that the users who are students prefer to receive information immediately and also adept in processing the information actively instead of being passive (Abdelraheem, 2013; McCarthy, 2010).

Thus, there are various formats that made users prefer one site to the other, mentioning the audio as one, video, touch which the current websites offer in today type of communication as a result users are influenced by the modalities when it comes to their interaction with the systems, explaining further that the use of SNS which come with the formats, made users improve their level of interactivity in sites such as still images like photos, video and the audio applications have made people to cherish the sites (Chinthakayala, Zhao, Kong, & Zhang, 2014).

SNS are widely used by international students when communicating with home, North Cyprus and others. These students employ active, passive, and interactive strategies in their communication to reduce their uncertainty during communication. SNS have some uncertainty; it therefore, motivates the users to know the exact media that will suit their communication with home, North Cyprus and with others. The present study

seeks to explore strategies tertiary students use to reduce uncertainty in their communication with home, North Cyprus and others as well to consider the most preferred SNS when communicating with the places mentioned above.

1.1 Background of the Study

In the past, before the advent of social media platforms, few international students who study far away from home used letter writing as the means of communication with their families and friends back home. Students also contacted with others through letters. Subsequently, when analogue telephone was introduced in the early 19th century, international students had an alternative and faster means of communication. The use of telephone booth through which students communicate with their families and friends back home and others as effective and beneficiary means. Subsequently, at the turn of the 21st century social media came into existence, and students have wide array of SNS to choose from for communication purposes. It is interesting to note that up to date, few students still prefer posting of letters through post office to interact with others instead of SNS platforms (Nuakoh & Anwar, 2018). There are varieties of sites to be used for communication.

Each means of communication used has its advantages and disadvantages; thus, today, there are numerous SNS that the students can choose from for effective communication. Based on Figure 1, each of the means for communication has its own setback but the Internet has all the attributes others possess. Hence the need to consider it in this present dispensation since it is advancing with more choices, forms which students can select from for their communication since there are various modalities that come with the use of each site for communication.

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	Live?	Text?	Sound?	Picture?	Video?	Interactive?[a]
Print	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Radio	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Film	No	No[b]	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Television	Yes	No[b]	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Sound recording	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
DVD	No	No[b]	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Internet	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The technological limitations of each medium set the parameters for their use. With digitization, though, different media converge toward a single digital multimedia, making some distinctions less clear. The Internet—whether accessed via computer, mobile device, or game console—is, in effect, a generic platform of computer networks that allows for the delivery of all forms of media.

Notes: [a] We are using *interactive* here to mean a medium that enables two-way communication between producer and receiver.

Figure 1: Characteristics of different media source (Croteau and Hoynes, 2015)

Preference according to the English Cambridge Dictionary means "liking something more than the other". Preferring something is because one has alternatives from which to choose from (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). Preference of the SNS is influenced by numerous factors among which are the demographics of users such as age, nationality and ethnicity. In an empirical study, these serve as the predictor of choice of a media (Jung et al. 2017; Shim et al. 2015). This is also applicable to the use of the new media which have various sites therefore; making a choice becomes problem-based on what each platform can offer. For instance, Facebook which is the first of the platforms to be introduced has been of great interest among scholars and it is said to have psychological impact on the users. (Tandoc, Ferucci & Duffy 2015). In a study among 736 college students link the use of Facebook with (mediated by Facebook envy) on depression. When used for monitoring, Facebook controls envy and lessens depression (Tandoc, Ferucci & Duffy).

In a series of studies on the emotional consequences of Facebook, Sagioglou & Greitemeyer (2014) arrive at the conclusion that longer active presence on Facebook leads to a negative mood among users. The longer a user stays on Facebook, it creates a different mood; therefore, there is a need for a change to another platform. Similarly, the use of Instagram plays a surveillance role in having knowledge about others too. In a research conducted with 239 people, results show that there is positive relationship when interpersonal communication is employed. This result means there is calmness, coolness and creativity on Instagram as a platform and also there was positive relationship with calmness and surveillance on Instagram too. (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

However, Chow & Wan, (2017), on their part, carry out a study on the moderating roles of Facebook, social comparison, neuroticism and the role jealousy plays in the interaction between the use of Facebook and symptoms of hopelessness. The findings show an insignificant statistical relationship between Facebook use and depressive signs have a statistically significant correlation on the interactive effect of time spent on Facebook and neuroticism.

Jelenchick, Eickhoff, & Moreno (2013) carry out a study on the relationship between the use of (SNS) and older adolescent university students on the Facebook platform. Their findings reveal evidence of a relationship between the use of SNS and clinical depression. Hence, there is a relationship for use and depression since the participants' report that the SNS can be used for minutes while least of usage stay online for 2 hours.

On another dimension, Instagram, which is a mobile photo application post that messages are mostly pictures with little captions, "Nowadays people look at photos,

find new photographers and show off their own photography on Instagram", thus "the platform can be used as a virtual exhibition hall which is the gateway to photography, feeding people with the images they would like to see based on what they have liked before" (Ting et al. 2015). According to Lee, Lee, Moon, and Sung (2015), there are about five (5) reasons for using Instagram. They itemized these as having social and psychological motives such as good for social interaction, serving as an archive, good for self-expression, used for sake of escape and also for peeking, the role the media play in our lives are enormous. To this extent, it is worth knowing that "OUR MEDIA" serve different purposes with different gratification thus media and technology are intertwined, interwoven based on the word of Mcluhan "qualities of a medium have as much effect as the information it transmits" (McLuhan & MCLUHAN, 1994). Communication advances witnessing different phases with different development as a result of variety this posed problem mediating media of our choice.

1.2 Statement of Research Problem

Proliferation of social media platforms such as Facebook since 2004, with other platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Snapchat and others have led to inconveniences in the use of SNS which lead to uncertainty in communication, associated with identity and cases of staking and socially being attacked by phishing (Gross et al., 2005). Our present users tend to replace letter writing; making phones and email with those devices that seem to be faster hence pointing out that messaging through text seems to be higher in comparison to the use of email termed as "lean media". There are a lot of SNS available for the younger generation for their choices of platforms (Williams, Crittenden, Keo, & McCarty, 2012). While privacy related issues are studied based on privacy disclosure and cases of identification, some other researchers consider the cost and benefits of disclosing their identity with a stranger

and those whom they have already known (Ampong et al., 2018). Moreover, there is no clarity link of users on SNS due to the roles they play. These are dependent on their preference since historically the structure of SNS are based on how it affects advancement of the Online Social Networks (OSN) which has to do with predicting the value of social media users and the links. Thus, the need to consider the behavior exhibited by users on each site (Sharma, Rathore, & Park, 2019).

This leads to form the behaviour EMU students exhibit when they communicate with people at home, North Cyprus and other places on SNS. The need to reduce uncertainty therefore, has been influenced by preference or choice of SNS. Thus, the Uncertainty Reduction Theory used for this study posits that in any given communication, uncertainty is always engrained; thus. it is regarded as an ongoing trait in communication, referring to it as the dark side of communication that is not manifested but hidden. Indeed, this is also common among students in the essence of preference which have reasons for such occurrence (Gehrisch, 2012). Also, the use of pictures is said to be enough information; thus. There is the slogan that "pictures speak louder than words" (Lee, Lee, Moon, & Sung, 2015) on Instagram.

Preference for pictures as well may replace communication with word. Each decision by a user is based on what they use their media for which earlier have been stated at the background of the study. There is a considerable body of literature on reasons why people tend to make this selection while some are as a result of privacy issues some are cases of how platforms are used for being multi-tasking. This research is centres on preference of SNS for uncertainty reduction among international students in respect to, uncertainty reduction strategies' (passive, active and interactive) act as mediating variables according to the type of network they use.

In addition, literature is yet to identify how use of different SNS reduces level of uncertainty when used in different places such as home (family and friends), North Cyprus, and others as well with the use of the newer social media platform like Instagram, as well as examining the moderating or mediating role of the use of SNS in between the strategies of uncertainty reduction and low level of uncertainty reduction. Hence if there are direct or there are indirect effects when use with those places. The gap, the researcher would like to fill by exploring with the international students in EMU is to establish whether tertiary students are easily influenced with any new technology introduced as stated by (Fietkiewicz, Baran, Lins, & Stock, 2016). This research, therefore, seeks to find out the frequent use of SNS, gratification when communicating with different people, at different locations and the best strategy employed by students when reducing uncertainty using SNS for social acceptance as well interaction as considered by DeWall & Bushman (2011).

1.3 Motivation for the Study

Preference of SNS, for uncertainty reduction, is a topic that interests me much comparing the older days of information dissemination to the present dispensation where there are a lot of means through which we can easily link up with our world presenting the users the problem of "choice". Based on the nature of the topic itself and what is obtainable in the present world to be specific the preference and lots of alternatives in communication that I would like to explore on how the use of SNS and how each leads to low level of uncertainty when communicating with home, North Cyprus and others since social interaction is essential.

It would be good to know the most preferred SNS by students when communicating with home, users in North Cyprus and communicating with others which appear to be

those that are our friends outside the university in North Cyprus and those who are not people from our family and friends back home. Based on certain reasons, I have studied that students no longer depend much on letter writing since I came to North Cyprus except of recent event when a bank requested a fellow whose bank account in Nigeria needs some kind of update that the bank insisted that the fellow must send a letter, inquiring further if he can send through e-mail, the bank refused. What if s/he can be connected, they said someone can pretend to be like him/her, use his/her details and sign into his/her account, to avoid such, he/she must write his bank back home, before changing his/her account, scan it and send through email.

Since communication online are full of uncertainty, "openness of a platform", "modality", and some other reasons affect the choice of a platform. The need to consider the most preferred site for communication among international students in EMU is essential, during spring semester of 2019/2020 academic session. Although my initial thesis proposal was to examine the "Effectiveness of Public Relations in Settling Dispute: Using the New Media", studying the course "Understanding Media: The Extension of Man" I, suddenly changed my topic as a result of the prophetic words of Marshal McLuhan and his concept of the "global village" with a lot of proliferation and varieties of sites to know if the prophetic words still stands and reasons behind the changes.

Currently, distance in our world today has been closed up, we communicate with our homes, family/friends and other people. There is need to know which platforms we prefer to use and the level of our social uncertainty for certainty in communication. Are we preferring the specialized media "Instagram and Snapchat" or still following the band wagon in using Facebook as a platform? For the sake of clarity this study

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picks one (old) social media platform "Facebook" and one new specialized social media "Instagram" for sake of justification.

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The major aim of the study is to investigate the influence of SNS usage by the international students, in their communication with different people at different locations in reducing their uncertainty. Also, the study seeks to explore the most preferred SNS used by international students in their communication.

Hence, this study seeks to find out:

   i.   If there is a particular SNS that the international students use most during their communication;

   ii. Whether International students have preference of a particular SNS when communicating with home, North Cyprus and with others;

  iii. If frequency use of SNS will be positively related to low level of uncertainty;

   iv. The influence of uncertainty reduction strategies by the international students on low level of uncertainty reduction;

   v.   The influence of the use of SNS in the relationship between uncertainty reduction strategies and low level of uncertainty reduction;

   vi. The relationship between low level of uncertainty reduction and social acceptance;

  vii. The demographic characteristics of the students on the relationship between the uncertainty reduction strategies and low level of uncertainty.

1.5 Research Questions

SNS have been termed as one of the mainstays of every society. Families are considering it as well as organizations in almost all endeavours of life. It will be an understatement if sites' preference is not considered with different use for different

people/places hence usability and functionality of platforms vary from one platform to the other and where they use the platforms for. Thus, this study will provide answers to the following questions:

    i.   Which of the SNSs is most preferable by the international students?

    ii.   Which SNS do the international students preferred SNS when communicating with family/friends, host community, and other acquaintances?

    iii.   To what extent does the use of SNS influence low level of uncertainty reduction among the international students?

    iv.   To what extent is there a relationship between the uncertainty reductions strategies and low level of uncertainty among the international students?

    v.   To what extent do the uses of SNS mediate the relationship between the uncertainty reduction strategies and low level of uncertainty among international students?

    vi.   To what extent do the types of SNS used by the international students' moderate the relationship between uncertainty reduction strategies and low level of uncertainty?

    vii.   Is there a relationship between low level of uncertainty and social interaction among the international students?

    viii.   To what extent do the demographic characteristics of the international students influence their uncertainty reduction strategies on low level of uncertainty?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will guide this study:

H1: The use of SNS directly influences the low level of uncertainty.

H2: Low level of uncertainty among international students is directly influenced by (a) similarities (b) active strategies (c) passive strategies, and, (d) interactive strategies.

H3: The use of SNS partially mediates the relationship between low level of uncertainty and (a) similarities (b) active strategies (c) passive strategies, and, (d) interactive strategies.

H4: The types of SNS moderate the relationship between low level of uncertainty and (a) similarities (b) active strategies (c) passive strategies, and, (d) interactive strategies.

H5: There is a positive relationship between low level of uncertainty and social interaction among the international students.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study is significant for it seeks to clarify the university most preferred platform for their interactions with different people they communicate. Although there are similar works on preference of SNS which are mainly based on motivation are conducted in relation to two platforms, with the notion of the "old social media" and the "new social media". This work focusses on two platforms: Facebook and Instagram. The study ascertains the fact if students in EMU are moving with the trend of those media that are termed as "specialized media than Facebook" which are Instagram and Snapchat as presented by Alhabash & Ma (2017), thus the work concentrates on the most popular platform and one of the specialized media platform which is Instagram.

Secondly, the work explores whether EMU students also comply with their generational influence hence the variation of use by age would be ascertained. There are work on single platform such as the one titled "Social Media as an Advertising Tool: Reaching and Persuading Audience through Instagram" (a Master's thesis by Ahmadova, 2015), another on Instagratification (by Oloo, 2013), in the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies at EMU. However, there is no work that explores

using two platforms in testing their influence in the relationship between the uncertainty reduction strategies posed to reduce or present low level of uncertainty among international students. The researcher also considers the work "My Parents are My Friends' Friends on Facebook" by Özad, & Gümüş (2014) measuring the variation by users the female and the male students thus wish to know more if open platform like "Facebook and Instagram which is having a bit secrecy are used which will the students prefer for their communication with home, which in their thinking is be suitable for communicating with students in North Cyprus and which do they think is good for communicating with others (international acquaintances)" hence the need of doing such a research.

Most of the work done on uncertainty reduction are on how to monitor relationship, and romantic relationship thus this work wants to consider the frequency use of SNSs for uncertainty reduction, and also the role of both the use of SNSs and types of SNSs in the relationship between uncertainty reduction strategies and low level of uncertainty among the international students. The study serves as a guide to those students who would like to have friends on campus as a good piece for reference on which platform to use in reducing their uncertainty based on the strategy they would like to employ hence strategy for uncertainty reduction are integrated into the research to ascertain the best students can employ when they would like to relate with those they have doubt on socially interacting with them. Management would also use it in knowing the best strategy that can be used for monitoring students' attitude when trying to handle new students.

In addition, the place of preference of platform would take another dimension because Facebook has been known to be the most popular platform. Yet, as technology

advances, numerous platforms sprung up with latest features to help compete, the most preferred platform for communicating with home, North Cyprus and with other people from various nationalities would be known which other researchers can conduct a longitudinal study to ascertain if the result is so for the period of years based on age group. The students' most preferred platform would be used in attending students' problem once they indicate it, thus, there will be management of students fear with the help of outcome of this research hence results can be used by the administrative arm of the University as a channel for fastest communication with the students too.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

There is a limitation to every research work. They serve as challenges or obstacles that a researcher is being confronted with, some are:

Time Factor: There is always a stipulated time given within which a research should start and end. This serves as one of the limitation for work to be done and finish within a time frame for a quality work. Thus, this study has been carried out from 2018 to 2020.

The context of the study: The place of the study is the Eastern Mediterranean University which is a suitable ground to conduct this type of research due to international students from different background, their use of different types of SNS from their countries and the one that are very useful in EMU, North Cyprus.

Respondents: Only registered international students in EMU are considered. The result obtained from students may not be applicable to those who are not students.

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions of concepts are important to the understanding of the situation in a research like this.

(a) Preference or choice: It is defined as a means of selecting or choosing something in place of another which can be someone or something as defined by (Farlex, 2011). Choice is also seen as preference too, which comes with a behaviour when motivated to take action.

Preference: According to Dietrich (2012), preference is a rational choice based on how a person can act on the choice that he or she is presented with and their motivation on a particular thing. As far as this study is concerned, social media platforms are used in relation to preference. SNS refer to a web service that permits users to open a profile as a means for them to be registered so that they can create content that can be share among other users they have connections with on the sites (Ellison, 2007). Lenhart and others opined that there are different types of SNS which are part and parcel of our daily living, for example Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010).

(b) Uncertainty Reduction Theory: This definition would not make sense if there are no clear understanding of the word uncertainty and the term reduction. Uncertainty deals with ones' inability to be able to predict what would happens thereby stopping one from taking a step or planning appropriately (Redmond, 2015). This led to the coining and the usage of Uncertainty Reduction Theory to reduce uncertainty in communication as presented by Berger & Calabrese, (1975).

(c) Axiom: An axiom is a statement of fact which is self-explanatory (self-evident) truth that entails no added "proof".

(d) International Students: In the present study, international students are seen as those students who are studying outside their country, in North Cyprus. EMU counts students apart from North Cyprus and Turkey, different nationalities such as: Egypt, Libya, Syria, Jordan, Nigeria, Cameroon, Swazi, Kenya, The Gambia, Iraq, Yemen, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Iran, Lesotho and Ghana to mention but a few as international students. This study concentrated on international students that are studying in EMU in North Cyprus during the 2018 spring academic term.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews all relevant literature for the study; it starts with the definitions of SNS, history of SNS, the concept of SNS, Facebook as an SNS, Instagram as another type of SNS considering the Social Networking Sites and uncertainty as a concept. Then, the concepts that are used in this study are explicitly deliberated. There are: Social Networking Sites, Uncertainty Reduction Strategies, and Social Acceptance. Secondly, the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Uncertainty Reduction Theory are reviewed in order to form the theoretical basis for this study.

It is not absolutely difficult today to find any person in this contemporary world that is not using SNS nor has nothing to do with SNS. The globe has been completely interconnected because of the vast growth of SNS, and today, SNS is the fastest way of sending and receiving messages. What is more, SNS provide opportunity for elasticity of synchrony, for instance, Facebook, Myspace, Cyword, Bebo, Twitter, Instagram, Geocities, just to name a few, their users have found gratification that they make use of these SNS on a daily basis (boyd and Ellison, 2007). There are more than 100 SNS with several technological designs that meet the various needs of their respective users. Some of the SNS only allow maintenance of pre-existing social network whereas others are more innovative in helping users to connect with friends, colleagues and families. Although some SNS go as far as helping users to connect with people of the same nationality, race, political views, sexual orientation, religion, and

common language. Also, some SNS introduce their new information and communication tools through mobile connectivity by blogging, sharing photos, and sharing videos. In this contemporary era, SNS are a multibillion dollar business across the world. Under the course of this study, this chapter is going to give an adequate background of the evolution of SNS from 1971 to 2019. Although before the historical background is given, this section is going to define what is SNS.

2.1 Definitions of Social Network Sites (SNS)

According to boyd and Ellison (2007), SNS are web-based services that allow individuals to construct profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, this enable them to view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. SNS can also be seen as web-based and mobile-based Internet applications that allow creation, access and exchange of user generated content that is ubiquitously accessible (Batrinca and Treleaven, 2014).

This study decides to use the term Social Network Sites to explain the background of the SNS instead of using the identical phrase Social Networking Site. The distinction between Social Networking Sites and Social Network Sites is that the former refers to creating a relationship between strangers on the Social Network platforms; For instance, adding someone on Facebook who is not related to you or someone whom you have never met in life, whereas, Social Network Sites is the kind of online relationship or communication that is based on "latent ties" (Haythornthwaite, 2005). This is realized among people who already know each other outside of the virtual world. In this aspect, numerous Social Network users are not looking for new people

as friends or to start up a relationship with, but they are people who only create an online relationship with people whom they have known in the real world.

The feature in which most SNS platforms have is what gives them a huge number of users. For instance, Facebook is the most used SNS with more than 2 billion active users all over the world (Statista, 2019). The reason behind why people prefer Facebook is because of the innovative platform's interface that Facebook's technical designers put into force. One of the key components of most SNS is the act of creating your profile while trying to become a member. Most of the SNS allow the profile to contain pictures, and the platforms allows users to send messages, view friends, and share contents. Although some SNSs serve only a specific purpose, for instance, the QQ began as a Chinese messaging site, Cyword as a koreanforum for communication, Skyrock (initially known as Skyblog) is a french blogging site, Lunnars serves as a community site, and Classmates.com which was launched in 1995 serves as a platform for interacting with school friends.

In addition, throughout the establishment of SNS in 1971, some SNS have gone into extinction as a result of inability to be more innovative to satisfy their users. However, in the 21st century, tremendous features have been introduced to existing SNS. When it comes to SNS, gratification that users get from the platform is always what use to lead to preference.

2.2 Background of SNS

The existence of SNS started in 1971 when the Bulletin Board System (BBS) was created. The word "qwertyuiop" (1stWebDesigner, 2016) is the first message that the BSS shared online, using two computers that were close to each other. The BBS is an

application for sending and receiving messages through a host board and most bulletin boards serve for a particular group interest. Yet, the platform performance in sending and receiving messages is relatively slow (Zhongbao and Changshui, 2003). In that same year, the Bulletin Board interface Usenet was created. The Usenet was invented by Jim Ellis and Tom Truscott. The platform created an avenue for users to post news, articles and posts which were referred to as news. "The difference between Usenet and other BBS and forums was that it didn't have a dedicated administrator or central server" (Walker, 2011). In today's world, platforms like Yahoo, and Google groups use the same ideas like Usenet. Although claims were made that the first way in which SNS instant messaging began in 1988 with Internet Relay Chat (IRC), IRC platform was used for messaging, file sharing, and basically communicating with one another (Walker, 2011). Although the claims were made that even before the anti-social world became social through the Launching of BBS, there was a platform known as "Compuseve".

The platform was invented in the 1970s, and it was a business based computer for sharing of solutions. The platform also allows users to post news, and "send a message to your friend via a new-fangled technology dubbed 'e-mail' (granted, the concept of e-mail wasn't exactly new-fangled at the time, though widespread public have access to it)" (Shah, 2016). In the 1980s, the platform decided to create a public domain. The public domain allows the users to join thousands of forums to add their opinions on the discussion forums. The popular gratification that the 'CompuServe' users preferred was clearly thousands of forums which give them the fun of giving your opinion in whatever forum discussion the user decided to join.

Furthermore, in 1994, Geocities was created and added to SNS in the form of websites. The goal of Geocities was to give its users the ability to own websites and also splitting the websites into cities according to their content. The following year in 1995, TheGlobe.com was introduced and launched. The platform is limited and only gives users the gratification of sending messages to people of the same interest and the platform also allows users to publish their content. Also, in 1995, Classmates.com was launched. The purpose of the platform was to store data and information of schools in which users tend to link up with their former school friends or mates. However, the users were not able to create a profile. Nevertheless, the users found gratification on the platform because of the ability to connect with old classmates. Today, the platform has "57 million registered accounts" (Shah, 2016).

In 1997, America Online (AOL) Instant Messenger was launched. The platform became more popular among users because the platforms interface gave its users the ability to create a profile and be friend with each other (Walker, 2011). The major feature that made users prefer AOL Instant Messenger was the profile design. The profile allows users to fill in most of their details which other users can read. Although in that same year, SixDegrees.com was launched, the platform also gave almost the same features as AOL Instant Messenger. SixDegrees.com founding is associated with the words of Kavin Bacon that "no person is separated by more than six degrees from another" (Shah, 2016). The most fascinating preference advantage that SixDegrees.com has is the platform's ability to make users create their profile, organize groups, invite friends, and go through other friends' profile. The combination of these features gave its users maximum gratification as of that time and many social media users preferred it.

In that same year of 1997, AsianAenue.com was launched, and it has more users in the Asian continent. It served as a means of communication, but it was much more for community connection. In 1999, BlackPlanet.com was launched, and in 2000 Hispanic-oriented MiGente.com was also invented. Both were offering users the same features that SixDegrees.com was offering. Although, between Hispanic-oriented Micgente.com, AsianAvenue.com and BlackPlanet.com, they were all SNS that allow users to create a dating profile. BlackPlanet.com is the only one that exists today, with up to 8 million users visiting the website each month. LiveJournal is another SNS that was launched in 1999 with the ability of the user to manage their privacy settings. The purpose of the SNS was to allow users to add each other as friends to follow have access to their journals.

Also, to shift the paradigm from the Western dominated SNS, two very powerful still existing SNS emerged in Asia in 1999. The QQ managed by Tencent in China and Cyworld SNS platform in South Korea.

The QQ SNS was launched in 1999 by the Tacent Company. In the early days of the platform, it was a "PC-based instant messaging service called OICQ, later renamed QQ" (Cantale and Buche, 2018). In 2001, QQ launched a Mobile QQ conversation or messaging platform which gave its users a lot of gratification. Furthermore, in 2005 QQ "it introduced Qzone – a multimedia social networking service. By 2010, "Qzone" was the largest social networking platform in China with 492 million active users" (Cantale and Buche, 2018). In 2011, QQ launched another messaging platform WeChat and incorporated it with online games in 2013. Instantly, the level of user's preference in China and Asia usage of QQ SNS skyrocketed. Today, QQ managed by

Tacent is a direct rival to Facebook and Instagram owner Mark Zuckerberg in the area of users' preference of SNS and in rendering gratification to users.

Cyworld, which is the most popular and used SNS platform in South Korea, was created in 1999 and officially added its features in 2001. As the SNS became much more lively in the late 1990s, in the early 2000, SNS became much more powerful and innovative. Woyke state that Cyworld is seen as "a relaxed hangout that stresses existing friendships in comparison to Myspace, which was described as a hip party where users vie for popularity and attention" (Woykee, 2006). Cyworld serves 50 percent of the demography of South Korea which is approximately 90 percent of adult from age 24-29 (SK Communications [SKC], 2006). Cyword gives another insight for scholars when it comes to computer-mediated communication (CMC). One of the basic features that Cyworld users find gratification is the ability of the platform to give its users a platform to surf through friend's profile and also leave a guest message (Kim and Yun, 2007).

Furthermore, in Europe, "LunarStorm" was launched in 2000 and it was designed by Rickard Ericsson. The SNS serve as a commercial virtual site, and sending of messages to users. LunarStorm had its bases in 1996, it served as a website for teenagers, and it was only available in Swedish language. In 2001, LunarStorm has attracted more than 600,000 users, although it was experiencing a lot of economic challenges. As such, LunarStorm started financing its platform by charging users for pay-by-SMS service and Mobile app upgrade in order to have the full features of LunarStorm (Edosomwan, 2011). The preference of LunarStorm was limited because of lack of availability to other languages aside Swedish.

In 2001, Rayze was launched as a medium of assisting individuals in leveraging business networks. The founder claims at the launching of Rayze that, he first made it known to his friends who were members of the technology community, entrepreneurs, investors in the world of SNS, and owners of businesses in San Francisco (boyd and Ellison, 2007). In 2002, Friendsters was invented by Peter Chin, Jonathan Abrams, and Dave Lee, and it took similar methods of technological design like the SixDegrees.com and Ryze. One of the reasons why Friendster was invented is to rival Match.com a business online dating network. Friendster created a platform in the form of cluster or circles of friends. Friendster also gives room for rich communities to have contact with one another and enhance their relationship (Shaw, 2016). The interface of Friendster is depicted in Figure 2.
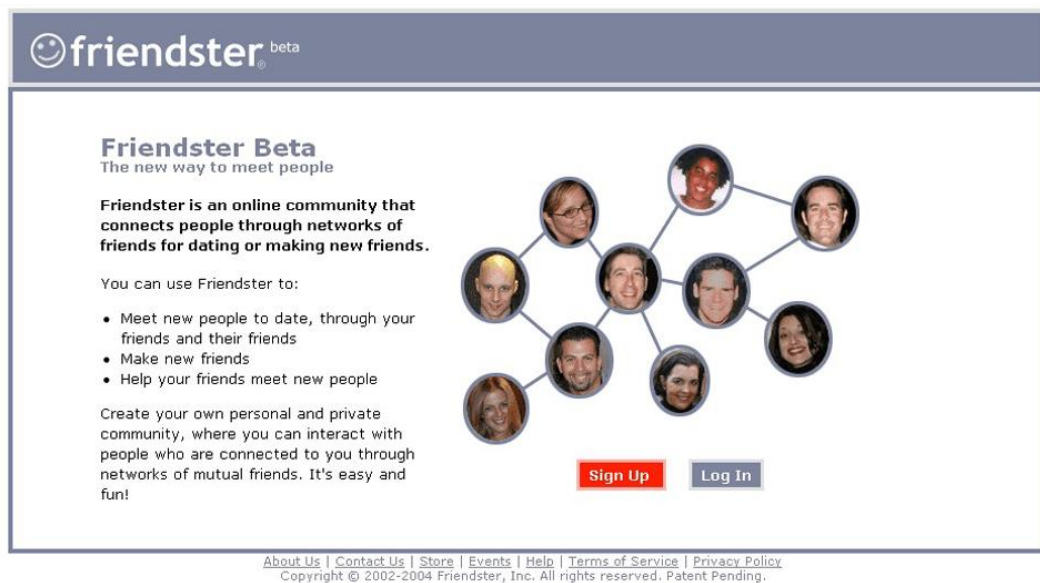
Figure 2: Friendster user's interface

Friendster's goal was to utilize the cluster circle of friends for users in the circle to meet each other, have romantic friends and eradicate the barriers of people not willing to talk to strangers. Friendster rose to fame in the 2000's because they invented three things which are "blogging, attending of the Burning Man arts festival, and gay men"

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(boyd, 2004). O'Shea further claims that the platform generated an audience of 300,000 users via communication before the appearance of the traditional press coverage started in 2003 (O'Shea, 2003). The initial users of Friendster also have the ability to add friends and view their profile, but the ability of adding was restricted to people who are only close to the users within 4 degrees away. Subsequently, the role changes as soon as the SNS started attracting more users from different continents. When Friendster was launched in 2002, the platform experienced three million users and in less than a year, the users reached 100 million (Terrell, 2019).

Despite the successful start of Friendster, the Social Network puts itself at a disadvantage when the platform introduced a fee-based system. Instantly the user's preference of the SNS fell down among users, and users started preferring other SNS like Myspace. To worsen the whole matter for Friendster, the SNS's inability to comprehend with rapid growth led to malfunctioning of the platform database, which led to malfunction of user's settings, for instance, Users had need to face their bosses and former classmates alongside their close friends (boyd and Ellison, 2007). As such, users were growing frustrated with Friendster and the popularity of the SNS began to decline. In late 2011, the platform experienced a lot of competition in the world of SNSs (Yahoo, Facebook, Myspace and many more) and went into extinction on January 1st, 2019 (Terrell, 2019).

Also, in 2002, LinkedIn was launched by Reid Hoffman, Allen Blue, Jean-Luc Valliant, Eric Ly and Konstantin Guericke. The purpose of this SNS was based on official networking. This SNS gives its users the gratification of connecting with business, school contacts, and having access to companies. Today, LinkedIn is still working on the same purpose and the SNS has attracted approximately 575 million

registered users. The Alexa Ranking ranks LinkedIn 285 among the most visited sites (Terrell, 2019). The connection or interaction between users takes place when a particular user accepts another user's request into his or her network. The Social Network Site gives users the chance of creating profiles on a professional note which always looks like a resume. The users fill in their skills, education history, and it serves as an advertisement ground. LinkedIn also gives the users the gratification of searching for jobs, creating a relationship with companies and getting recommendations from other LinkedIn users.

In 2003, Myspace was created by Tom Anderson and Chris DeWolfe. This particular SNS's major goal is to promote advertisements and also allow users to create a profile on the website. Myspace is also used to communicate with friends, new individuals and perhaps romantic partners. The major taste that Myspace offers to its users is the ability to have access to music of different artists. Myspace achieved this goal by encouraging artists to make use of the platform to promote themselves and their music (see Figure 3). The particular SNS also distinguished itself by introducing a racier profile picture design for users. Most of the Myspace users get the gratification of free online music and a stunning profile presentation to the users' friends.
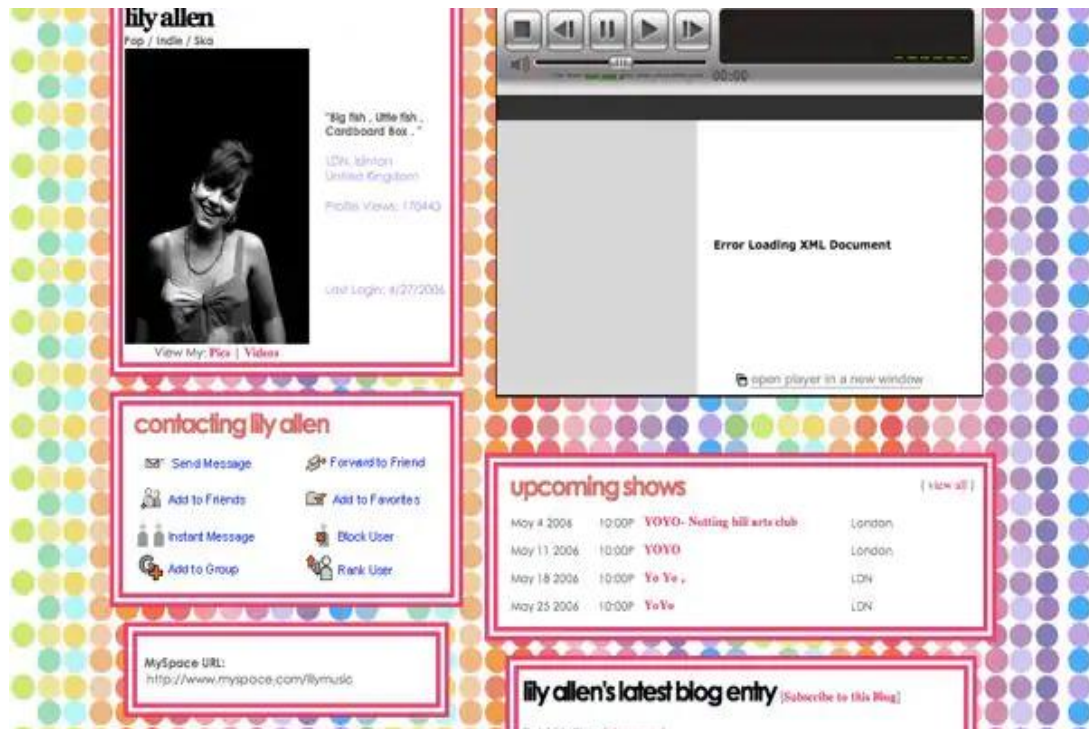
Figure 3: Myspace user's interface

As a result of these awesome features that Myspace has, most youths were the users of the SNS. Nevertheless, with all the popularity of MySpace, Anderson and DeWolfe sold the SNS to Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation for $580 million. Also, this SNS (MySpace) started signing partnership with YouTube and other companies, and the platform generated $800 million revenue in 2009 (Terrell, 2019). Although intensive competition from Facebook pushed it aside which led to the sale of MySpace to Time Inc in 2016 and to Meredith Corporation in 2018. MySpace is now ranked 4,153 by Alexa (Terrell, 2019). The general preference of MySpace by users from 2003 was high until the rivalry it faced from Facebook in 2008. To have it all, it is definitely the dream of every reader to finally come and read the background of Facebook as the most prolific and owner of the most active users in the world of SNS.

Facebook was launched on 4th February, 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, Dustin Moskovitz, Chris Hughes, Eduardo Saverin, and Andrew McCollom. Facebook found

its foundation for the use of Harvard student, subsequently; it expanded to the Ivy League, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and Stanford. In 2006, Facebook spread completely to the entire globe as long as the individual is above the age of 13, and instantly displaced MySpace in the world of SNS. Facebook is the only SNS that has over 2 billion monthly active users in the world (Kallas, 2019). In the early years of Facebook, Facebook users were not able to make their profile completely public to everyone. This is how the first Facebook interface looks like in 2006 (see Figure 4).
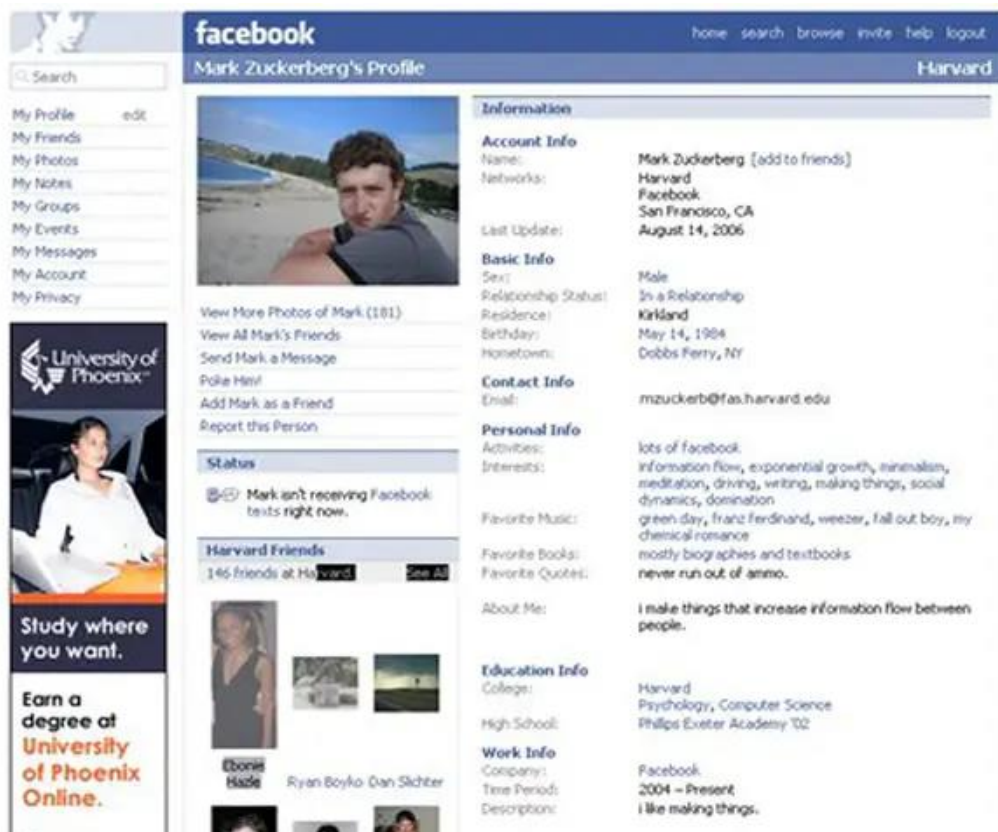
Figure 4: Facebook user's interface (Early years)

Facebook further created another feature which gives ability to outside developers to build 'Applications' which allow users to personalize their profiles and perform other tasks, such as compare movie preferences and chart travel histories. (boyd and Ellison,

2007). Today, Facebook have developed other features such as news feed, stories, live video, reactions (like, love and others), online games, and the recent Dark Mode. Below is how Facebook interface looks like today in a dark mode (Figure 5). These features have automatically made billions of people prefer Facebook because of the numerous gratifications that the users get. Furthermore, despite the undisputed leadership of Facebook in SNS, Twitter and Instagram is pulling the weight of Facebook gradually, although Instagram which is even closer to Facebook is also owned by Mark Zuckerberg the owner of Facebook.
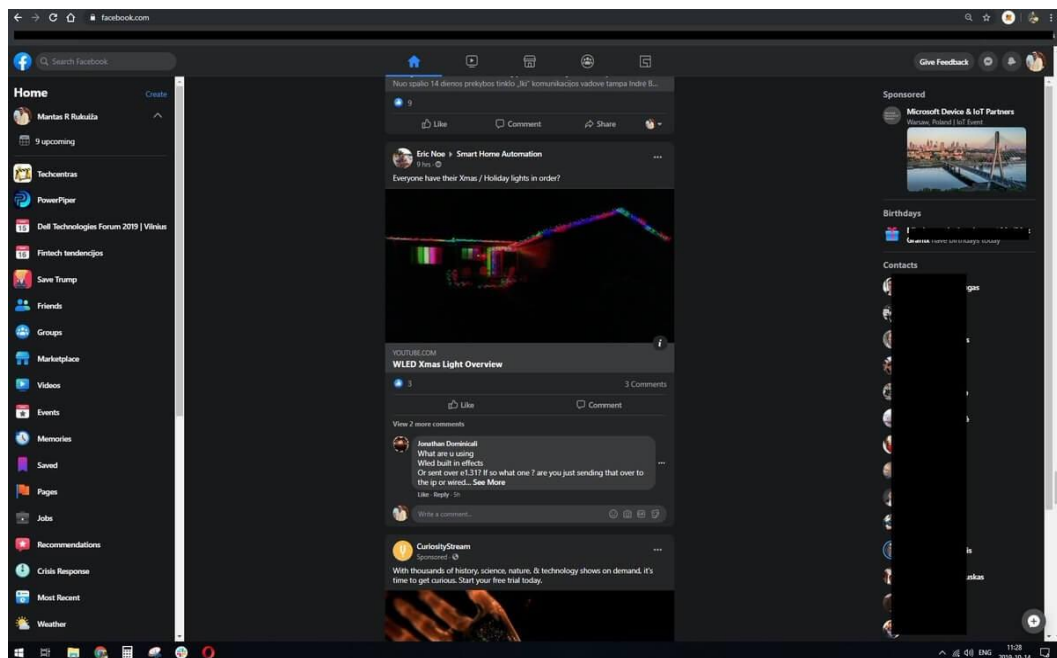
Figure 5: Facebook current user's interface

On 21st March, 2006 Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Evan Williams and Biz Stone launched Twitter. Twitter's first distinguished features are the 140 characters' word limit that it offers the users. Twitter held that policy of 140 characters' limit until 2017, when they doubled it, languages like Korean, Japanese, and Chinese did not enjoy any changes. Twitter is a SNS that allows posting of photos, short videos, live streaming, and et-al. Twitter is the sixth most monthly active users with 336,000,000 million people (Kallas,

2019). The uses and gratification Twitter offers to users is basically the fun of posting photos with a tweet or just a tweet, reading news, tracking of celebrities' movement and opinions via their post.

On 6th October 2010, Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger launched Instagram. The SNS distinguished itself for allowing users to only post photos that are squarely framed, and posting video. Instagram gained over one million users in the first year of launching. In 2012, Facebook's owner Mark Zuckerberg bought the SNS for "$1 billion in cash and stock" (Terrell, 2019). After the takeover, Instagram started introducing features such as stories, live videos, IGTV which give users opportunity to post lengthy video, tags, hyperlinks and filters which gives the users the gratification that they wanted. Today, Instagram is the second platform that has active users on a monthly basis with over 1 billion users (Kallas, 2019). In addition, September 2011, Snapchat was launched by Evan Spiegel, Reggie Brown and Bobby Murphy. The SNS has a feature of sharing photos and short video that elapses in 24 hours. Snapchat has approximately 186 million users, and it is mostly popular among youths (Terrell, 2019). The platform can be used for sending and receiving messages and video streaming, although the messages disappear within 24 hours. The above features are the reasons why some people prefer Snapchat.

On this note, some SNS are the fastest and the best way in which communication is being done these days. The emergence of SNS has been immense starting from the BBS in 1971 to the QQ and Cyworld dominance in Asia. Although in the early 2000, the emergence of Friendster which gained popularity until the technological malfunction that hits the platform, SNS was completely in full progress. The arrival of Facebook gave the SNS relevance and enhanced communication. Despite all these, the

preference of the users is what matters the most, and it has been the reasons why new social network sites have been established since the first official SNS in 1971.

2.2.1 Reasons for Preference on SNS

Psychosocial and physiological factors come into play when students select a SNS of preference. Hughes, Rowe, Batey, and Lee (2012) highlight that personality and differential relationships correlate with online socializing. A person's openness, gender, age, sociability, agreeableness and need for cognition play an important role on the level and extend of information exchange. In general preference is brought about by recommendations systems where by a network diffusion plays an important role (Rogers, 2014). The other factor that comes into play is the availability of multiple SNS to choose from. The uncertainty of selecting SNS from other alternative SNS choices could be limited by the availability of SNS. In a simple scenario, a student would select the one with the least uncertainty to communicate; which SNS aids the most in passive uncertainty reduction during penetration, which SNS is the most appealing when they chose an active uncertainty reduction approach, will the person at the other end be available? Is this medium acceptable? Will my message get through clearly? The decision tree of whether to act, what to choose or whether and how to create choices is a discomforting and agitating at times especially on what to relate and psychosocial factors are involved.

The precision of a predictable outcome becomes blissful and the choices of a rational choice become probabilistic yet variability of the outcome is a unique challenge students have to overcome. Kaplan and Miller (1987) explain that individuals and groups generally change their preferences after discussion. This influences the normative and informational basis for any choice made at a point in time present or

future. Group decision making is another factor when a group of individuals attempt to select a social network; in such a scenario the preference correlation is based on individual interaction and this brings about uncertainty. The spread of items and contents of a social network is vast while the trait on selection of each individual also varies in such a way that the outcome of a selection is also complex and uncertain. De Drau et. al, (2008) suggest that social motivation and epistemic motivation influence the interaction and the decision making process. However, the outcome of any interaction in a group in normative decisions can never be weighed nor be deterministic in nature thus uncertainty.

Hinsz (1999), comes to a conclusion that decisions' outcomes are also based on compromise instead of consensus processes on occurrence of discrete choices. Preference based on compromise for SNS causes uncertainty especially considering that a student tries to reach out to various people in different localities and with different interests of their own.

In this case, the students are bound to make decisions on uncertainties based on classes of decision schemes that include coalition, distance-influence, faction-attraction, dictator, and consensus.

When interactions bring into play multi-centric influences, the dynamic choices an individual make are complex and very hard to analyse. A student may prefer one social network at one moment yet repealing the moment after due to the faction-attraction associated. Usually during the penetration stage, interactions are generally formative while early conflicts risk discontinued interaction.

The level of common ground and agreeing can lead to mutual understanding and interest on one platform yet another platform may contain another variety of interests. The preference of a social network changes with individual interests at any point and time in such a way that a student may prefer one social network for a specific use while spending more time on another for different activities. Another factor that brings multi-centricity is the constant upgrades of the SNS. Most of the research carried out were all done on Facebook as time goes on there begin to be a research on other platforms as a result of upgrading of social media platform presenting users with many platforms for usage e.g. most of the uncertainty reduction papers reviewed were conducted using the Facebook but now there are other platforms which users can still be employed to reduce uncertainty with for the sake of social interactions.

For instance, self-identity may prevail on one SNS at one time while another SNS prevails in surveillance in one season and interchange the next. A simple scenario is when students are at school; try to keep in touch with family using WhatsApp while they spend time with peers on Instagram. The pattern may then interchange during holidays when the students visit their families back in their home countries (Fietkiewicz, Baran, Lins, & Stock, 2016). Considering the work done by some group of scholars with the advent of the social media technology, our present users tend to replace letter writing, making phones and email with those devices that seem to be faster hence pointing out messaging through text seems to be higher when compared to the use of email (Williams, Crittenden, Keo, & McCarty, 2012).

2.2.2 Purpose of Social Networking Sites

McFadden, (2019) describes human beings as social creatures who need social interaction to survive; this is aimed at producing healthy life and sound of mind. For

example, some people use the social media to entertain themselves while others depend on it for affection, while others can be encouraged through its communication. Some use communication to interact with others when they would like to. Some of the scholars emphatically stress that SNS usage is inevitable therefore on daily basis, people make use of it (Waheed, Anjum, Rehman, & Khawaja, 2017). Stressing further Waheed, Anjum, Rehman and Khawaja (2017) point out seven functions that SNS do in peoples' life such as social consciousness, use to abstain from loneliness, good for leisure and entertainment, social media also is used too for expression of ones' idea. While others are used for the purpose of being connected, thereby extending one's cycle of social life and bridging, some are used for surveillance. Lastly, SNSs are used for disclosing of one personal information on a platform has taken another dimension but then the rate of disclosure varies from privacy of a user to share more about oneself; it was realised that privacy is an important predictor. Thus, the work discovered that privacy awareness, concerns for and invasion of privacy based on experience are other important parameters in disclosing one's self (Ampong, et al., 2018).

2.3 SNS and Application

The digital age has ushered people into daily usage of computer and mobile phones which synchronises or is associated with the use of all social networking services in different areas of life. It is pertinent to note that although SNS have their benefits which include different areas which they are applied, there are also some setbacks of its usage. Itemizing the areas that the services are applied by government, non-governmental organizations and even industries, in areas like education (formal and informal education), sociology, cultural studies and health, the SNS are applied. Supportive relationships also as one of the areas which individuals are engage in on

daily basis. Some risks associated with the use of SNS are cyberbullying, privacy breaches and predation (Collins, Rahilly, Richardson, & Third, 2011).

Agreeing to the above submission, SNS are employed in different places of endeavours such as in school, use for games on-line and e-learning, use by people to alter consumer's behaviour over goods they are buying; which involve the information on those goods and the interaction between the owner of such goods and those patronizing their products respectively (Qahri-Saremi & Turel 2016; De-Marcos, Domínguez, Saenz-de-Navarrete, & Pagés, 2014; Peris-Ortiz, Benito-Osorio, & Rueda-Armengot, 2014). Thus, it can be concluded that these are the good and the other side of SNS.

2.3.1 Facebook as a Platform

With a total of 2,230,000,000 monthly active users (Kallas, 2018), Facebook is beyond doubt the most utilized social media platform on the planet. The phenomenal rise and unrivalled popularity of the platform has won the admiration and is intrigued by the scholars. The history, utility, features and psychological impact of Facebook are considered. Facebook saw the light of day on 4th February 2004 when Harvard University sophomore student Mark Zuckerberg launched what was called at the time "thefacebook.com" (Alef, 2010). The name 'Facebook' started as Facemash derived from the responds of freshmen to sheets of paper given to them to profile fellow students and staff. The website (thefacebook.com) secured 1200 members among Harvard students in the space of 24 hours (Phillips, 2007).

This milestone took a negative twist six days after when Zuckerberg's Harvard seniors: Tyler Winklevoss, Divya Narendra and Cameron Winklevoss brought accusations against him for the theft of their ideas towards the establishment of another campus social network website dubbed "HarvardConnection". A lawsuit was to follow by the

aforementioned seniors against Zuckerberg but ended with an out of court settlement (Bellis, 2018). By March, thefacebook.com grew to a membership of over half of Harvard undergraduates after a month of its launching and extended to Ivy League colleges and later all universities in the United States. It was changed to Facebook.com in 2005 when the said domain name was acquired for the sum of $200,000. Zuckerberg's initial working team included Eduardo Saverin on the business end, Dustin Moskovitz as programmer, Andrew McCollum as graphic artist and Chris Hughes as spoke person (Bellis, 2018). From September 2006, Facebook membership was extended to everyone across the globe aged 13 and above and having an email address (The Independent, 2018).

2.3.1.1 Facebook Interface

Under the course of this section, the thesis will examine Facebook interface and the continuous progress of updating their respective of user interface (UI) to meet the demands of their audience or users. Hayes, 2014 used the definition of UI expert Michael Cummings in his work; which he states that "user experience design is defined by looking at the bigger picture of the interface in which the user comes into contact" (Hayes, 2014, p.4). In this definition, the user interface is seen as a strong aspect to consider in the world of social media, because the applications are designed to meet the priorities of the social media application users.

Great business such as Apple, and application developers' work hard on daily basis to improve their user interface in order to improve their applications for users to facilitate ease of use. As such, Facebook and Instagram have been working tirelessly on their user interface by creating new features in order to attract and keep their users intact. One of the major reasons why we are discussing Facebook and Instagram interface is

the fact that both applications have similar functions and the accusation of Instagram in 2012 by the Facebook owner (Mark Zuckerberg).

Furthermore, the uses and gratification of Facebook and Instagram is another clear factor between the two platforms despite the fact that it is owned by the same owner. In uses and gratification among individuals, Facebook is highly preferred. According to the uses and gratification based research, there are many reasons why social media users prefer Facebook, and these reasons are (a) communicating with people, (b) having fun (entertainment), (c) getting recognition from other users, (d) reading news and getting information, (f) understanding others event through the application. (Johnson, 2008). For Instagram, users prefer it because of social interaction, seeing what other users are posting, self-presentation, easing the stress of the day and watching daily events (Lee et al., 2015; Phua, Jin, &Kim, 2017). In this regards, we can see that the users of these two platforms almost enjoy the same benefits, because they have a lot of gratification in common.

Moreover, according to Johnson, 2008 and Young, 2010, find out that Facebook gratification is entertainment. Facebook has a lot of partnerships such as business partnerships and film and music industry. As a result of these, Facebook has designed interface such as news feeds, games, live videos and Facebook messenger to enhance the posting of businesses and film and music content on the platform (Carr, 2017; Halliday, 2011; Smith & Anderson, 2018). In this context, user finds gratification by seeing business opportunities and also viewing their favorite music videos, and gratification also come from users who post their personal content such as sarcastic post, sketches, and decorated reality shows.

Furthermore, self-recognition or self-impression is another gratification that Facebook offers. According to Self Enhancement Theory, people have a habit of improving their "positive self-image" and decrease their negative self-image (Leary, 2007). As such, Facebook interface designer made the "like and comment" feature to enhance the level of gratification that users derive in using the platform. In this regard, Facebook users are prone to posting content that shows their strength. This in turn, could land them a potential job or a chance to exhibit their craft or skills if someone of interest can view the users content, which at the end could earn the Facebook user something of value (either money or popularity).

Also, the Facebook interface of recommendation algorithm feature is another interface that Facebook user finds gratification. In this regards, the feature makes suggestion for users based on what they search, view and comment on the platform. The feature makes suggestion of potential friends list in which would like to add through mutual friends (friends in common) that you share with the Facebook user that is not among your Facebook friend list. In general, recommendation algorithm saves users time and effort (Oremus, 2016). Also recommendation and algorithm help in creating advertising and in respect to social activities. This interface helps in sending recommendation of a life event like political campaign or live concert that the user might be interested.

2.3.1.2 Why Use Facebook as a Platform

From a theoretical perspective, the use of Facebook as other SNS platform can be largely explained through the Uses and Gratification Theory. The use of media (social media platforms like Facebook inclusive) according to the Uses and Gratification Theory is determined collection of important elements which include: "people's needs

and motives to communicate, the psychological and social environment, the mass media, functional alternatives to media use, communication behaviour, and the consequences of such behaviour: (Rubin as cited in Urista, Qingwen Dong & Kenneth, 2009; p. 218). As opposed to the mechanistic approach to communication where the user is passive, the Uses and Gratification Theory brings in a new dimension where the users is not only active but the communication is tailored to meet their needs and fulfil their motives.

Within the above theoretical framework, the use of Facebook as a social media platform can also be explained by the needs and motivation of users, some authors have written about the reasons why users opt for Facebook as a social networking platform. A study carried out by Hunt, Atkin and Krishnan (2012) identify entertainment as the fundamental and most salient motive for Facebook usage. Their findings show that entertainment constitute a strong predicator for self-expression, interpersonal communication and pastime leading them to the conclusion that users are primarily motivated by it (entertainment) with other motivations being secondary.

Nadkami & Hofmann (2012), on their part, arrive at a dual factor model of Facebook use which accounts Facebook usage on two basic social needs: the need to belong and the need for self-preservation. In their study on why students use Facebook Cheung, Chiu and Lee (2011; p.1340) point out that "most people use Facebook so as to get instant communication and connection with their friends." From a psychological standpoint, Ong, et al., (2011) identify narcissism as one of the factors for "self-presentation" using the medium of "self-generated content" among adolescents on Facebook.

Most famous social network sites worldwide as of April 2019, ranked by number of active users (in millions)

Facebook — 2 320
YouTube — 1 900
WhatsApp — 1 600
Facebook Messenger — 1 300
WeChat — 1 098
Instagram — 1 000
QQ — 807
QZone — 532
Douyin / Tik Tok — 500
Sina Weibo — 462
Reddit — 330

DOWNLOAD   SETTINGS   SHARE

PNG   PDF   XLS   PPT

CITATION (FAQ)

APA

99 We Are Social, & Hootsuite, & DataReportal. (n.d.). Most famous social network sites worldwide as of April 2019, ranked by number of active users (in millions). In *Statista - The Statistics Portal*. Retrieved June 20, 2019, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/.

DESCRIPTION   SOURCE   MORE INFORMATION

Figure 6: The most popular SNSs globally (Statista Research Department, 2019)

According to Statista Research Department (2019), as at the time of writing this review, Facebook appeared to be the most preferred social media platform for the year 2019. Others are YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat and Instagram as can be seen on the graph in Figure 6 above. Making Facebook to be one of the most used platforms and preferred by most users.

2.3.2 History of Instagram

Based on documentation, Instagram was launched in the year 2010 to be precise in October and two years later it was sold to the owner of Facebook. After it was sold, it was described as an avenue where photo and video lead in an online situation (Rainie, Brenner, & Purcell, 2012). Instagram was brought to light in the year 2010 by an American Computer programmers Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger to be precise in October, with the intention of coining a platform which can be liken to foursquare thus their thoughtfulness deviated to photo sharing in San Francisco (Bergström & Bäckman, 2013).

The word Instagram is the combination of two words "Instant Camera" and "Telegram". All these emerged as a result of advancement in technology which they have become mantras used by individual and for sake of business or organization (Ting, Ming, de Run, & Choo, 2015). Salomon (2013), in a research conducted in the year 2013, revels that Instagram is said to be the 3rd world leading SNS. Another research conducted by PEW recently between January 8 to February 7th show that Instagram is still maintaining its 3rd position among other social networking sites with Facebook still maintaining the lead in the US with usage dominantly among the youth (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). Thus these are the types of pictures produced by Instagram.

Instagram is a mobile photo sharing application which permits users to snap pictures and apply filter as wished by the users based on how well they user can manipulate such filters. Additionally, applications in Instagram permit users to upload pictures on the platform to share those pictures on other platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, Tumblr, Flickr, and Foursquare which other researchers observe that this can be instantly achieved (Alhabash & Ma, 2017).

2.3.2.1 Significance of Instagram

Instagram is an SNS which is a free online photo sharing site acquired by Facebook in the year 2012 but yet viewed and used by others separately; users on Instagram can upload photos, edit photos and send short videos with the help of their mobile application, this also permit users to add caption to what they post, hashtags and if possible include the location of where they are posting from, which gives other users the opportunity to know where they are posting from (Rouse, 2019). In another development, the same Instagram users appear on other Instagram feeds which allow

the post to be viewed publicly when it is hashtags or geotags sometimes users can make their posting private too, thus only those that follow them can have access to their posts. This connects us with some of the features that are very unique on Instagram as a site and also the use of the web feed which serve as a means through which they updated their information on a page.

2.3.2.2 Features of Instagram as a Platform

The use of like button: Like button is referred to as "Like Option", or "Recommended button" which a user expresses his/her support to a post, or a content in a page is one of the features that are common to the two platforms chosen for this research. Some of the features that distinguish Instagram from the most popular Facebook is the uniqueness in aspect of certain features that are updated for example, in 2013, the 15 second that was allotted for sharing videos and pictures as the length was increased to 60 seconds, thus users can upload at full size uploading their video and pictures they have.

In another development, in the year 2017, Instagram updated its users' capacity by rolling out another feature which permits the users to post multiple videos and photos at the same time, some of these features are making the platform to create a niche for itself in the SNS world available there by attracting users who believe in the slogan that variety is the spice of life. Instagram later improved its functions on how photos can be shared by adding sharing of videos and photos with messages directly to the intended user. Instagram permits users to snap photo or video where ever they are at their wish and share it with their followers be it at national or international level (Jadhav, Kamble, & Patil, n.d). According to Bevins (2014), users on Instagram can take a 15 seconds long video. They can also edit their pictures with 13 different artistic

filters that are available on the platform to enable users edit their photos. To others, there are about 16 filters which are meant to transform the pictures that a user wants to post and other features including hashtag applications interface.

The infinite scrolling of photo and video in the home button gives users the gratification of having fun and passing time, which can be seen as a stress reliever. The infinite scrolling interface also helps users to keep in touch with their cultural trends in a brief time. Scrolling interface enhances marketing on the platform and it enables online shopping much easier. On the scrolling interface, there is a save feature which users save any post of interest and the user comes back to it later to learn more about the post. In addition, storyline is another Instagram interface that users find gratification. Users use storyline to go live on the platform, posting of photos and posting of business content.

Prior to our previous work, Uses and Gratification research has proven that Instagram is well known for self-impression or self-presentation. As a result of this, Instagram designer have created the like and comment interface in order for users to find pleasure in posting their desired content. Also, Instagram designers have created an interface known as "Highlight" which is used for saving videos and photos. This interface helps in advertising and keeping of event videos on the user profile for a very long time. The highlight feature is like advancement to the storyline feature, because the storyline line only saves content for 24 hours while highlight saves the users content for a very long period of time until the user decides to delete the content.

2.3.2.3 Why Use Instagram as a Platform

Instagram messages are mostly pictures with little captions, "Nowadays people look at photos, find new photographers and show off their own photography on Instagram,

thus "the platform can be used as a virtual exhibition hall which is the gateway to photography, feeding people with the images they want to see based on what they have liked before" (Ting et al. 2015).

Although according to Lee, Lee, Moon, and Sung (2015), there are about five (5) reasons for using Instagram which they itemized as having social and psychological motives such as good for social interaction, serving as an archive, good for self-expression, used for sake of escape and also for peeking.

Instagram for Social Interaction- Instagram as a tool for social networking in our present dispensation is having the ability of linking users especially marketers in different places of business to what they want to buy, thus interacting with the customers by sharing photos and videos of what they want to sell (Huey & Yazdanifard, 2014). The link brings about connecting people since it is a global way of communication thus is referred to as a tool for social network marketing.

Instagram as an Archival Material - In 2017, as a part of development, Instagram added archive as one of its features to help in organising and also manage the content users are having. Instead of deleting pictures, the archive serves as a means through which users can store and have access to their pictures. According to Van House (2011), individual photography is mainly taken for four reasons: 1. Identification; 2. Generating and sustaining relationships, 3. Self-representation, and 4. Self-expression. "The archives have the opportunity to place themselves in the mediation junction between communication, self-presentation, and memory and offer history". They also serve as a "safe" for the pictures and the videos taken. This is also supported by another author who sees Instagram photographing as a means through which pictures can be

documented for retrieval in another time. Users participate along in sharing their pictures and serving as a museum for future reference. The place of photograph in Instagram is so important that recently in 2017, the idea of an archive sprung for sake of memory which is essential on a social media platform (Jensen, 2014).

Online presentation according to Jiang, de Bruijn, and De Angeli (2009) is defined as the manner through which individuals present their profiles, pictures and blog which serves as the yardstick through which relationship can be built online especially when using the two social networking sites such as Facebook and Windows Live Spaces. Based on our pictures, relationship is formed. Some people online consider the self-representation and the expression for relationship and its sustainability. Some of the points mentioned are interrelated thus this can simply be presented as thus:

send a picture; it represents the sender, making expression therefore interaction commences. Friendship is sent self -representation and self-expression which have become a means through which users tend to express themselves globally since photography has taken another dimension from analogue to digital. Users all over the world especially celebrities use social media to present themselves to their world, hence social media is not for information dissemination alone but also good for purpose of self-representation. Thus users also take selfie to express themselves (Celebrities, 2017). Additionally, self-presentation on social media is conducted for the sake of popularity. People adopt tactics of celebrities to be able to gain recognition online. Famous users do the same on social media platforms to maintain their images and acceptance by others (Musse, 2016).

In another perspective, the photographs we take of our selves are visual presentation referred to as "selfie" which is the most popular word with individual or group of

people who would like to take a picture of themselves. All these represent formations of identity (Barthes, 1981; Sontag, (2005); Van Dijck, (2008). Saltz (2014) opined that is a "new visual genre—a type of self-portrait formally distinct from all others in history" adding that "We live in the age of the selfie". A "selfie" is a fast self-portrait, made with a smartphone's camera and immediately distributed and inscribed into a network. It is an instant visual communication of where we are, what we're doing, who we think we are, and who we think is watching (case of active audience). Selfies have changed aspects of social interaction, body language, self-awareness, privacy, and humour, altering temporality, irony, and public behaviour. It's become a new visual genre a type of self-portraiture formally distinct from all others in history". But "Taking and sharing digital photographs is progressively understood as a form of communication and social currency" (Rainie, Brenner, & Purcell, 2012; van Dijck, 2008).

According to Koliska and Roberts, (2015) linking photograph and space can be referred to as self-representation for witnessing an event, bringing about a particular identity that is learned by the space and the self. The photographer produces pictures and witnesses making meaning out of the pictures produced.

Instagram use for escape - Research conducted on this topic suggests that users who make good use of Instagram usually can create Real Instagram user profiles (Rinsta) and Fake Instagram profiles (Finsta) with a specific motive. All these encompass self-representation, and all are aimed at social interaction with escapism (Lee et al., 2015; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Rinta and Finsta serves two different purposes and they are the possible users online; thus identity performance and users' contents serves as

factors which influence users thus serving as a means to escape from others (Vitak, 2012).

2.4 Uses and Gratification Theory

This research has been conducted in line with Uses and Gratification Theory (U&GT) which is commonly used by researchers to explain how media users consume the media content both psychologically and socially in order to satisfy their needs by choosing the channel and information since they are active. Thus audience are active and goal-oriented media users (Ruggierro, 2000).

U&GT BEFORE RESEARCH OF 1950-60: The Uses and Gratification Theory can be traced back to the 1940' when people's behaviour to their media was under study where research was conducted to user's behaviour to Newspaper and Radio. But some argue that it came as a result of the Schramm immediate reward of media usage or the delay reward users receive from their media, (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994). There are a numerous of research that have been conducted which change the phases of media effect from traditional strong limited effect to that of functional paradigm in social sciences when the 1950 and 1960's researched was explored based on effects, a lot of arguments presented too show that gratification vary from one user of the media to the other (Weiyan, 2015).

2.4.1 History of Uses and Gratification Theory (1940s –1975)

The history of the development of the Uses and Gratification theory before the 21st Century can be sub-divided into three chronological stages: Origins (1944-1954); Early Developments (1959-1974), and Later Developments (1980s and beyond).

2.4.1.1 Origins (1944 - 1954)

The origins of the Uses and Gratification Theory can be traced back to the 1940s with the work of Austrian-American psychologist and social scientist Herta Herzog on the functionalist approach to mass media. In 1944, Hertzog undertook a ground-breaking research work on the reason people listened to the radio with specific focus on listeners of soap opera in a bid to understand media gratification. The outcome was a seminal work entitled "Motivations and Gratifications of Daily Serial Listeners" in which Hertzog interviewed a hundred fans of radio soap opera and brought out three main categories of user gratifications derived from listening to radio: emotional release; wishful thinking, and a source of advice (Baran & Davis, 2009).

In her analysis of responses from respondent, Hertzog pointed out that listeners related with the radio soap operas based on their personal experiences. In this regard, she noted:

> a sick listener stresses the sick people cured by the doctor in the story. The young high school girl, who wishes she knew interesting people like Dr. Brent, picks the jealousy aspect of the story and the way Dr. Brent stands up to it. The woman over forty, with a memory of a sad childhood, insists that Dr. Brent is "doing God's work." And the mother sacrificing herself for an unappreciative family feels a common bond in the fact that "sometimes he (Dr. Brent) is left out in the cold too. (Herzog as cited in Thomas, 1977; p.14).

Generally, Herzog employed the word "gratification" to explain the specific dimension or category of satisfaction regular daytime radio program listeners reported (Eighmey & McCord, 1998).

The origins of UGT in the 1940s cannot be complete without the mention of two other prominent scholars: Paul Lazarfeld and Frank Stanton. The Lazarsfeld-Santon collections of 1942, 1944, and 1949 were some of the first studies on the gratification

provided by mass media to its audience (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch 1974). Their studies were principally focused on explaining reasons for mass media usage and the different categories of gratifications people derived from it (Siraj, 2007). In his study on radio quiz programs, Lazarfeld came out with four types of audience member gratifications: competitive self-esteem; educational function, a sense of self-rating, and sporting appeal (Eighmey & McCord, 1998).

Last but not the least, among the scholars who contributed at the inception stage of the UGT is Wilbur Schramm who in 1954 has fraction of selection formula. The purpose of this formula was to determine the how much gratification an individual is expected to gain from a particular medium against the amount of effort they have to put in (Egede & Chuks-Nwosu, 2013).

2.4.1.2 Early Developments (1959-1974)

The second stage of the evolution of UGT saw its development into a full theory. The label "Uses and Gratification Theory" is largely credited to Elihu Katz. In 1959, Katz used the U&GT framework to question what people use the mass media for. After examining a study by Bernard Berelson on individual reader's opinion on a two-week newspaper strike, Katz observed the motives of readers who used the newspaper ranged from social, informative purposes to entertainment, diversion, and relaxation (Siraj, 2007).

The conceptual foundations of the U&GT was laid in the 1970s with the publication of an article entitled "Uses and Gratifications Research" by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch. In this article, Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch laid out the basic assumptions of the Theory. They identify five main elements of the UGT: the presence of an active audience; the fact that much of the initiative to link the gratification of

needs and media choice in the mass communication process resides with the member of the audience; the fact that there is a competition between the media and other sources of need satisfaction; the ability of individual audience members to supply data from which many of the goals of mass media use can be derived; and the need to suspend value judgements on mass communication while there is an exploration of audience orientations (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1974).

The authors further underscore about U&GT that "Studies have shown that audience gratifications can be derived from at least three distinct sources: media content, exposure to the media per se, and social context that typifies the situation of exposure to different media." (Blumler, Katz & Gurevitch, 1974; p. 24). Meanwhile, Blumler (1979) came out with three principal origins of media gratification: social changes, normative influences and the reaction of audience to social situations.

2.4.2 Assumption of the U&GT

The U&GT, unlike other communication theories, permit users to opt for the media of their choice with the assumption that users have clear intent and reasons for usage. Adding that users are helpless targets of mass media produced by large corporations and individual differences perspective agreeing that knowledge and individual self–esteem serves as a driving force to individual media choice. U&GT's assumption is given as:

a) Audience are active and their media use is goal oriented

b) To gratify one needs is linked to a specific medium which are best known to the audience

c) Therefore, media compete with other available resources to satisfy this need.

d) Users have enough self-awareness of their media they want to use which the users will stand the chance of giving detail information about the motives, use and the interests of the use they may be trying to explain.

e) Only the audience can rightly tell the value of their media content.

It has been documented that the media plays a vital role in our society and therefore is known for these roles it plays: Goals for media use can be grouped into (5) five as:

a) Media inform and educate.

b) The situation media identify will characterize their environment.

c) Media entertain.

d) Media promote social interaction among users.

e) It serves as escape from daily stress of life.

Palmgreen and Rayburn, (1982) and Palmgreen and Rayburn, (1985) point out that the use of media has to do with the expectation, suggesting that this can better be explained with the expectancy value of the media use, thus the cases of what we sought is not always what we obtain giving rise to benefit cost analysis behind rational behaviour. Therefore, our media use partially form part of our expectation for gratification; thus considering the difference between gratifications we sought for and the gratification we obtained.

According to Weiyan (2015), although the U&GT was not well known in those areas of old communication, with the present telecommunication, it gets known for the revival that affected it. Therefore, it presents the audience with more media varieties, motivation and satisfaction as some of the most important factors of audience analysis.

The new media like the Internet is in control of at least three attributes of data not commonly associated with traditional media: interactivity, demassification and asynchroneity, which leave us more space to explore the new media behaviours the more a receiver and the sender of such messages are not known in some cases as given by Singer (1998).

Interactivity in new media communication is said to be the extent to which the participants in communication process take control over the exchange roles in their mutual dialogue adding that it strengthens the core concept of user active nature in U&GT (William, Rice, & Rogers, 1988, p.10). Focusing on the terms that make up the social media as a phenomenon, it was observed that interactivity among information and sociability, information is the basis which the level of interactivity and sociability depend on the users hence it was gathered that the features of each technology serve as a determinant factor for users to interact and socialize (Ariel & Avidar, 2015).

Demassification was defined as the ability of individual user to have control over the medium the use for communication selecting from the menu they have, users have a lot of things on the internet to choose from (Ruggiero, 2000).

Asynchroneity deals with the issue of time. Sender and receiver make good use of the time available to receive their message or check at wish different from the time the message was send (Ruggiero, 2000; Weiyan, 2015). These attributes of the new media make them a unique one.

2.4.3 Uses and Gratification Theory on SNS

Social media which encompass SNS are seen as very vital area in our lives today (Garcia-domingo, Aranda, & Fuentes, 2017). This is because lots of scholars have

emphasized that social media is used by many for their personal or group gratification. This is emphasized by a research study by Whiting and Williams (2013). There are at least 10 uses and gratification for using the social media. These are: Interaction socially, seeking of information, use of social network to pass time, it entertains, use for relaxation, serves as a communicatory utility, and the convenience in communication. Other uses include the expression of opinion, use in dissemination of information, keeping surveillance and knowledge about others, (Ibid.).

Some of the following researchers are of the opinion that users stick to SNSs because it assists in meeting "users" (students) need of searching information, need to entertain, maintaining relationships, meeting new people to share with others and additionally need to share their media and the need to connect (Wei, Lin, Lu, & Chuang, 2015; Froget, Baghestan, & Asfaranjan, 2013; Karimi, Khodabandelou, & Ahmad, 2014).

2.4.4 Uses and Gratification Theory and Application by Users

The Uses and Gratification Theory is applied by present users on social media, in different ways for obtaining different gratification. According to the research conducted the social media platforms when applied in Mauritius are used for eight (8) different motives to predict the application on Facebook as a platform. Using 392 Facebook users by sending a survey online questionnaire, it predicted that the platform was used for meeting people, good for entertainment, use in maintaining relationships with existing friends, applied during social events and additionally excellent for sharing of those content produce by the media, among others like good for inquiry, employ for discussion purposes and in informing thus during correlation the eight factors are revealed to be positively correlated with the use of Facebook (Froget, Baghestan, & Asfaranjan, 2013).

Elaborating the U&GT as the main theory of mass communication which makes emphasis of what people do with their media, with the coming of the new media, the Theory gained recognition thus trying to investigate what students use their media for in Nigeria using focus group. The results revealed that Facebook and WhatsApp were the most preferred by students. However, it was asserted that the students also used the social media for their research, collaboration, investigation and sharing the news (Musa, Azmi, & Ismail, 2015).

In a different manner, describing the SNS as a way of staying connected, using different platform such as Facebook, Flicker, Twitter and Pinterest among others it permits the users to create and exchange content which thus enable groups to be created for specific attributes where they can share their diverse knowledge during interaction. Using Pinterest, as an example, where their results revealed that the boards shared are got on webs with women dominating the platform and having less of the men category using the uses and gratification as yardstick for gratification of membership. While in Bahraini, the research conducted sought the use of social media for gathering the news among young adults of 18-29 years, research revealed that among the 522 Bahraini youth, news gathering was on the increase using the SNS at different places using their mobile phones. Although it was noticed that only a few time was allotted for the news and less for local news, other events feature on social media (Alsridi, 2018).

To this end user applied their social media for different motives for accessing the news, meeting friend's investigation and also connecting with existing friends thus social media is plays divergent role in the life of the users, with different users and different groups also applied it for professional purposes. Supporting that the media is not as

powerful as people think rather users serve as sole determinant of their media with the use of new media, associated with interactivity, demassification, being hypertextual and the asynchroneity which differentiate it from the traditional media (Ruggiero, 2000).

a) **Interaction purposes:** Speaking on interaction among people and their locations, the social networking sites are employed in marketing to determine locations in satisfying customers based on social distance, and also to change people's decision based on those that have earlier knowledge on issues to favor or suit their expectations (Hesley & Zenou, 2014; Galeotti, Ghiglino, & Squintani, 2013). Interaction is not limited to marketing alone but to other areas like health, (Martire & Franks, 2014); In communication, it is seen as an effective means of interaction (Vukasović & Strašek, 2014); and our present communication is applicable to general form of using SNS in interaction since all users can attest to it of their daily usage to create virtual communities and also relate freely (Amato, et al., 2018).

b) **Information seeking:** Researchers have carried out investigation on the role SNS play by its users, stressing that people use the site for information seeking in different ways about happenings around them like the case of flood. SNS are also used for seeking information on sensitive, political and casual issues (Ryan, 2018; Osatuyi, 2012).

Additionally, it is used for seeking information academically, and the behaviour exhibited by international students to seek information with the challenges they encounter (Adigun, Odunola, & Sobalaje, 2016; El-Maamiry, 2017).

c) **Pastime:** Cited in Fiester, (2016) they observed that the gratification obtained from SNS is good for relaxation whenever they are free and would want to share with other users.

d) **Entertainment:** More also among other themes listed as one of uses and gratification enjoyed by the users of the new media is entertainment which is interactive in nature where the user share film, participate and create fan. Because users of the new media entertain themselves using the social media to be specific on Facebook, (Whitining & Williams, 2013).

e) **Relaxation:** McCain (2017) in his research findings reveal that social media is used for relaxation, leisure and social participation after busy activities of the day. Thus social media is good in managing stress aside information giving.

f) **Communication Utility:** Bala (2014) describes the new media as a democratic means of communication against the old media where its having direct effect on all means of communication terming it as "over communication" age which develop socially by strengthening communication with the public and weakening Face to Face type of communication as a results of its affordances and availability in usage. More also, it is seen as part of our daily lives and aid in easy dissemination of information and assisting people to interact with one another those they have common interest even in other fields (Ellison, Lampe, & Steinfield, 2009).

g) **Convenience purposes:** Describing the generation as "Always On" world, users are always with their means of communication. There is never a time that passes without communication to ensure connection, and because of the technologies

which have made it possible for easy communication people are solely dependent on their media. This made contact to friends, family and their fellow workers to get fulfil in handling activities they carry out in a day (Paullet, Pinchot, & Rota, 2010).

h) **Surveillance:** Surveillance is described as one of the needful activity in society. Every form of information seeking can be seen to be surveillance in nature. Users of the social networking sites utilize the opportunity to search information online about their environment to help them to be alert. These are unique with media websites where users try to source for information: Twitter, Google+ and YouTube (Brown, 2015). Good example is the use of the US National Security Agency to curb some of the activities of terrorist with the help of the online mass surveillance since the 2011 incident as documented by these authors Stoycheff, Wibowo, Liu, and Xu (2017). Surveillance is also used by individuals to maintain their relationships.

i) **Expression of opinion:** The use of social media is seen as a tool used for freedom of expression by users since it can be used as a tool for mobilizing and strengthening communicating among participants on a platform. A good example for the use Facebook and other SNS is for campaigns and protests where users make use of them to air their opinion (Viswam, 2018).

2.5 Uncertainty Reduction Theory

Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) was conceived by Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese in 1975 (Berger, 1975). The theory aims at examining initial interaction between people before the actual stage or process of communication. It is based on the notion that during interaction, the interlocutor needs information about his/her

conversational partner to attenuate their uncertainty. Knobloch defines URT as a Theory that attempts an explanation of the thoughts and behaviors of people they exhibit at the early stages of the development of relationships (Knobloch, 2008). Gudykunst notes that URT is an interpersonal communication theory that was conceived to provide understanding on initial interactions between two strangers from the same one culture. A significant amount of interpersonal communication on SNSs occurs between individuals who are meeting themselves for the first time: new online friends, followers, new online dating partners, group chats among others. For example, a student can continue to relate with those people they met back home, family members and having tendencies of others they have never met or relating with those friends they come across during the course of study in North Cyprus.

Beard (2015) defines URT as a "heuristic theory" that posits that at the elementary stage of face-to-face relationship interaction, people sense the need to reduce uncertainty in a bid to feel secured to further develop the relationship. He outlines three factors and seven variables that influence the necessity of uncertainty reduction. The factors include: deviance, anticipation and incentive value while the variables cover: information seeking, similarity, amount of communication, reciprocity, liking, non-verbal affiliate expressiveness and intimacy level of communication content.

Still concerning relationships, Bar-Anan, Wilson and Gilbert (2009) predict that an intensification of uncertainty in which the experience of uncertainty in an emotional activity simultaneously strengthens the intensity of unpleasant and pleasant events. From four experimental research studies conducted people's reaction to positive and negative film clips, the authors put forward what the termed an **uncertainty intensification hypothesis**. Under this hypothesis and as proven by the research study

the conducted, uncertainty renders "pleasant events more pleasant" and "unpleasant events more unpleasant".

URT as developed by Berger and Calabrese (1975) is based on seven different axioms and 21 theorems. The seven axioms on which both scholars predicated their theory are:

> Axiom 1: Given the high level of uncertainty present at the onset of the entry phase, as the amount of verbal communication between strangers' increases, the level of uncertainty for each interactant in the relationship will decrease. As uncertainty is further reduced, the amount of verbal communication will increase.
> Axiom 2: As nonverbal affiliative expressiveness increases, uncertainty levels will decrease in an initial interaction situation. In addition, decreases in uncertainty level will cause increases in non-verbal affiliative expressiveness.
> Axiom 3: High levels of uncertainty cause increases in information seeking behavior. As uncertainty levels decline, information seeking behavior decreases.
> Axiom 4: High levels of uncertainty in a relationship cause decreases in the intimacy level of communication content. Low levels of uncertainty produce high levels of intimacy. (p. 103)
> Axiom 5: High levels of uncertainty produce high rates of reciprocity. Low levels of uncertainty produce low reciprocity rates.
> Axiom 6: Similarities between persons reduce uncertainty, while dissimilarities produce increases in uncertainty.
> Axiom 7: Increases in uncertainty level produce decreases in liking
> (Berger & Calabress, 1975, pp. 101-103; 105-107).

In addition, with the coming of the new media, there are two extra axioms that make up the 8th and 9 against the then 7 or initial axioms. These are shared Network and communication satisfaction, thus giving regard to the use of social media when reducing uncertainty in communication (West &Turner, 2014).

All of the aforementioned axioms present useful tools in analysing uncertainty reduction on SNS which are the focus of this study. Some attention will be given, in the course of this study, to an examination of how the seven axioms of URT can be

applied in the case of uncertainty reduction in interactions on SNS among international students from different background when communicating home, with people in North Cyprus and others. Of equal relevance to this study are also the 21 theorems on which URT is based (Berger & Calabress, 1975; p. 107-109). These are:

1. Amount of verbal communication and nonverbal affiliative expressiveness are positively related.
2. Amount of communication and intimacy level of communication are positively related.
3. Amount of communication and information seeking behavior are inversely related.
4. Amount of communication and reciprocity rate are inversely related.
5. Amount of communication and liking are positively related.
6. Amount of communication and similarity are positively related.
7. Nonverbal affiliative expressiveness and intimacy level of communication content are positively related.
8. Nonverbal affiliative expressiveness and information seeking are inversely related.
9. Non-verbal affiliative expressiveness and reciprocity rate are inversely related.
10. Non-verbal affiliative expressiveness and liking are positively related.
11. Nonverbal affiliative expressiveness and similarity are positively related.
12. Intimacy level of communication content and information seeking are inversely related.
13. Intimacy level of communication content and reciprocity rate are inversely related.
14. Intimacy level of communication content and liking are positively related.
15. Intimacy level of communication content and similarity are positively related.
16. Information seeking and reciprocity rate are positively related.
17. Information seeking and liking are negatively related.
18. Information seeking and similarity are negatively related.
19. Reciprocity rate and liking are negatively related.
20. Reciprocity rate and similarity are negatively related.
21. Similarity and liking are positively related.

2.5.1 Uncertainty Reduction Theory and SNS

In our relationship with others, it brings us into exchange of information one to another thereby forming a system where those involved will want to reduce uncertainty, but not known which aimed at survival in communication since there are instances that we are confronted with uncertain in our lives which we seek for how to interpret what the information mean by gathering more information or knowledge on either those

involved, as concerning individuals, others and our relationships with people (Redmond 2015). Amidst all these interaction, some level of uncertainly filters in.

Redmond (2015), asserts that uncertainty can be self, partner and relational considering the number of persons involved. There are certain factors that affect communication - what one is thinking and what the other person is thinking - in this case, cognitive and behavioural uncertainty features. A lot of scholars have written on uncertainty such as relational uncertainty, psychological view of uncertainty and the linguistic, psychological and aspect of philosophical uncertainty as studied by (Turner & West, 2003; Smithson, 2008; and Zuczkowski, 2013).

Uncertainty Reduction Theory has featured in online severally making use of different platforms to reduce some levels of uncertainty among users and in different relationships.

On the subject of online dating based on URT and the warranting principle, Gibbs, Ellison and Lai (2011) examine the connection between uncertainty reduction behaviours, concerns over privacy and self-disclosure among participants in online dating. The authors carried out a nation-wide sample of online dating participants with two principal outcomes: first, that there are three sets of online dating preoccupation on which the recurrence of uncertainty reduction strategies are predicted on. Secondly, the authors emphasize on the relationship between the aforementioned variables and the level of self-disclosure among possible online dating partners is mediated by the frequency of uncertainty reduction strategies.

Although Morgan, Salitsky, Stutzer, and Thomas (2016), on their part probed into the future of a relationship and its satisfaction and in connection with monitoring relationship on Facebook and how it goes between friends who are dating through a survey carried out with a sample of 77 volunteer participants across the US, they found credence to their three-pronged hypothesis: those involved in Facebook activity monitoring of a romantic partner tend to feel less fulfilled in their present relationship; that a heighten level of Facebook monitoring correspond with higher uncertainty in romantic relationships, and that higher uncertainty level in relationship will negatively affect the quality of the relationship.

Fox & Anderregg (2014) focus on Uncertainty Reduction Strategies and perceived relational norms on romantic relationship stages on Facebook. Their study examines how SNS is used for information seeking about potential or current romantic partner. Dawkins (2010) underscores uncertainty can take both a proactive and retroactive dimension with a combine goal of uncertainty reduction and predictability enhancement. A proactive approach involves actions like Google search, asking information from others all geared towards reducing uncertainty before communication. Meanwhile, a retroactive approach involves talking about an experience with friends which enable us to gain an understanding of events that have already taken place.

Authenis, Valkenburg, Peter (2010) test a model of online uncertainty reduction and social attraction on acquaintance through SNS to ascertain the relationship between uncertainty reduction strategies and level of social attraction.

In addition, the romantic relationship and uncertainty involving surveillance in a relationship using the SNS to monitor target people, gathered that Facebook as a platform can be used to know or monitor users' information hence there are profiles and lots more. Also, they can be followed not necessarily having the fellow following back how it was on Facebook as platform (Antheunis, Valkenburg & Peter, 2010; Kim and Kim, 2019): romantic relationship and uncertainty reduction management in communication (Romo, 2015); SNS use for surveillance during post break up during romantic relationship (Lukacs & Quan-Haase, 2015) and many more hence a lot have been on SNS with the trend in communication.

Also research done with the help of social media in reducing uncertainty have also been recorded thus: to this effect, Streck (2015), observes that while Facebook permits connecting with friends, Instagram support snapping and sending of pictures. Thus, users on Facebook may be more passive as those on Instagram may be active based on what they present to users on the platform (Streck, 2015).

With respect to geographical location of the researchers, most of the research conducted are carried out in Europe; for example, the work in Netherlands Antheunis, Valkenburg, & Peter (2008); United Kingdom by Marshall (2012); Tong (2013) too, researched in the United States Fox, & Anderegg (2014); Fox, J., Osborn, J. L., & Warber, K. M. (2014), Lukacs, V., & Quan-Haase, A. (2015); Fox, J., &Warber, K. M. (2014) did their research on uncertainty reduction.

In another development with regards to the methodology employed, most of the researchers applied quantitative methodology such as Stewart, Dainton, & Goodboy, (2014), using 281 undergraduate Facebook users, 110 Facebook users were engaged

to gather information about their ex-partners by Tong (2013). Others on the list are Fox, & Anderegg (2014). They administered a survey to 517 Facebook users and 328 online surveys too were carried out by Fox & Warber (2014). But with just few using the qualitative approaches, these made use of focus group interview and the use of mixed method in their research. For example, Fox, Osborn & Warber (2014), use 6 groups with 10 participants in each set. Meanwhile Lukacs, & Quan-Haase (2015), utilize mixed method with 107 respondents and administering of questionnaire with in-depth interview using narrative data as means for gathering data, thus quantitative dominates.

It is established in the literature that some of the users on SNS are passive while some of the users are often going through their follower's wall being extra-active (Gauttier and Gauzente, 2018). This view supports the argument of Wise, Alhabash & Park (2010) who opine that if students are not using the same network they may not have access to each other's information. Similarity of users is best described based on their connections. Hence, SNS is capable of connecting users either they are close by geographical location or are far apart by relating online (Tariq, Saleem, & Shahbaz, 2019). This could possibly influence their level of uncertainty. Based on the above, it is proposed that the use of SNS could possibly mediate the relationship between similarities and uncertainty reduction.

It is on basis that the research tends to consider reduction of uncertainty by preference of sites since there are dearth of literature with regards to students' behaviour in reducing their uncertainty on SNS for communicating with different places such as home, North Cyprus and others.

2.6 Social Networking Sites and Uncertainty

In another dimension, the influence of the social media is greeted with mixed satisfaction as Subramanian, (2017) poses that although social media have no restrictions which enable people to voice their opinions, and satisfy their social need at their own time, social media interaction has weakened relationship among people in that the level of avoidance by people are notice stressing that "people are now married to their mobiles". In a related development, Jimenez & Morreale (2015), study how the social media have destroyed the rate of relationship between people on one to one basis. Although it is seen as the fastest means of all communication, adding that technology have adverse effect on interpersonal communication. It is also seen as online version of interpersonal communication, but relationship on Face to Face basis is neglected hence the topic "Social Media use and the Impact on Interpersonal Communication".

Uncertainty reduction starts with interpersonal communication in initial interactions Berger and Calabrese (1975). But this phenomenon can also be obtainable in our new means of communication, as cases of perception Antheunis, Valkenburg, & Peter (2010); Fox & Anderregg (2014) conduct a research to that effect. What people do with their media these days serve as a pointer to this case hence "perception" dealing with how people select from the communication they are exposed to, organized it and therefore interpret the media messages based on how they perceive them (Wood, 2007).

Fox & Anderregg (2014) focus on URS and perceived relational norms on romantic relationship stages on Facebook. Their studies examine how an SNS is used for

information seeking about potential or current romantic partner. Anthenius, Valkenburg, & Peter (2010) test a model of online uncertainty reduction and social attraction on acquaintance through social networking sites to ascertain the relationship between uncertainty reduction strategies and level of social attraction. From another perspective, Gibbs, Ellison, & Lai (2011) examine the link between one's privacy, uncertainty reduction behaviour and self-disclosure among participants in an online dating using the uncertainty reduction theory. Shin, Lee, and Yang, (2017) probe into the influence of uncertainty reduction strategies on visits of company fan page emphasising how uncertainty reduction strategies, loyalty and satisfaction impact continuous visiting behaviour.

This study tries to fill a gap in literature concerning the application of Uncertainty Reduction Theory and Strategies in interpersonal communication on choice of SNS (popular Facebook/ specialized Instagram the New social media). As demonstrated in the foregone analysis, much of the existing literature on URT and URS on SNS have been focused different aspects of interpersonal communication like romantic relationship, online dating, organizational behaviour, and interactions in multi-cultural societies. This study is the first attempt to evaluate the reduction of uncertainty on SNS with preference of sites among students in a multicultural and multinational community. The interactions of international students at EMU on the Facebook/Instagram as platforms to explore how URS can be used to enhance acquaintance and relationship among students from different nationalities, their family, friends and other international acquaintance.

2.6.1 NS and Similarities of Online Users

Similarity based on a research is said to be the main reasons that can attract one socially, thus it serve as a predictor to any kind of relationship which cannot be neglected the users in an online situation seek information they perceive from the target person whom they are socially attracted to, that is why similarity is positively related to social attraction during information seeking behaviour, thus, it is not capable of affecting the other user but rather have a way of structuring social uncertainty (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Clatterbuck, 1979; Gudykunst et al., 1985; Kappes, Nussberger, Siegel, Rutledge, & Crockett, 2019). Antheunis, Valkenburg, and Peter (2010) assert that in case of similarity of users in online meeting is dependent on availability of information which reduces the level of uncertainty to enable friendship culminate thus, based on the different strategies of uncertainty, they tend to reduce their level of uncertainty online before any meaningful communication can take place among users online making most of the users active or extremely active (Redmond, 2015).

The pervasiveness of technological use of sites for interaction heightens while some people are compile by applying them for their communication yet some use them but in a passive manner, thus in an empirical research conducted classified the users into 3 categories; those that chooses not to use the SNS (non-users), those who are occasionally connecting and those who are heavily using the sites, based on their categorization, they hinges their argument on attitude and behaviour of users on SNS making emphasis with the acceptance theory when faced with different media for use (Gauttier & Gauzente, 2018).

Similarity of the users on SNS is inevitable, although different platforms exist there are similarity in profiles, behaviour and interest exhibited by the users on platforms. In a research conducted empirically, the researcher base their arguments on a platform. Based on entries, there are five (5) things that are common which a user can display on a page as their behaviour such as: "like as an entry, commenting on a post, post an entry, sharing of an entry that has already existed and joining a group", thus in this case the group member is in one of these categories (Nguyen, Tran, Dam, & Nguyen, 2018). Nguyen, et al posit that asides the categorization given above, similarity can be grouped into 2 major groups which are based on the features of the text, and secondly among sets of their expression thus some are features and some clearly written, showing the characters of users on SNS during interaction.

In supporting the point above, some of the users on SNS are passive while some of the users are seriously going through their follower's wall being extra-active thus the essence and application and consideration of the same use of network based on the argument that if students are not using the same network they may not have access to each other's information (Wise, Alhabash, & Park, 2010). Similar to this, since attitudes and behaviours of users constitute a yardstick for similarity in accepting media use, in another research conducted, the authors focus on similarity of network and similarity in profile by users considering Facebook use, Epinion, YouTube and DBLP, the research hinges on user's characteristics exhibited online (Akcora, Carminati, & Ferrari, 2013).

Akcora et al, essence of research is based on an experiment in testing the measures that will be able to forecast, in establishing a new association, thus the essence of the thesis topic on preference of sites to establish a relationship with home, new

environment and acquaint themselves with others. This made Spertus, Sahami, and Buyukkokten (2005) in their assessment and research, they opine that similarity of network can be traced back to sorting of file by (Deshpande & Karypis, 2004). This implies grouping of different platforms since some are specialized and utilized as new SNS. Deshpande and Karypis, in their submission, using the Markov model, stress that web sites are generally use and serve as forecasting the behaviour exhibited by users which is important for the user to personalize and consider the user surfing knowledge using different variation of the Markov models, adding that the higher the variation, the higher the level of accuracy will be predicted on web although higher model can be difficult.

Meanwhile, considering a situation in a large world environment, based on past behaviour of users, another group of author presented 6 different measures that serve as yardsticks for similarity online community to take place, users always put in consideration: these are tendency to visit a site and join a community, thus ordering of the users are capable of influencing the selection of other users while the social issues of interest gives rise to recommending a community in a real SNS (Spertus, Sahami, & Buyukkokten, 2005). Similarity of users is best described based on their connections hence a graph is capable of depicting connections of users showing the connection between those who are close by geographical location and those who are far apart by relating online, hence forming another graph for networking with others based on how close users online connect and how apart they are thereby forming their groups (Tariq, Saleem, & Shahbaz, 2019).

2.6.2 SNS and URS Active

Digital Social Networks are not a new phenomenon in the world of internet, but each new communication device that comes alters the entire arrangement of the interaction between network users. In order words, SNS have not opened a novel communication but changed communication procedures, configuring the relationship space-time and how things are organized around the world. The use of social media in communication have made all manner of communication possible, this is so because technologically, there are different ways through which communication can take place hence it permits co-operation among the users, ensuring that users also socialize, express themselves, respond to different messages at their wish, hence uses and gratification plays an important role confirming the "MASA model" Media use as Social Action using the media the way they want to gratify their needs hence users are said to be active (Eginli & Tas, 2018; Ruggiero, 2000).

SNS are regarded as the most popular means of communication nowadays as communication advances with technology. In an interpersonal communication, the use of SNS appears to be the most effective and most used in the 21st century (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). The worldwide web has given us various tools to communicate and one of them is SNS. There are numerous Social Networking Sites over internet and SNS permit interactivity at different levels hence when apply in reducing uncertainty, different phases and stages are involved, one among the strategies is the active strategy as this will be consider on this phase of the work (Thelwall, 2009).

The Uncertainty Reduction Theory which is an integral part of uncertainty reduction strategies, was first coined by (Berger and Caabrese, 1975). The theory asserts that in

information seeking, there are three types of URS these are: (active, passive,and interactive strategies) which are employed to reduce uncertainty in communication by a user in initial interaction (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). URT assists information seekers to be able to predict the attitudes of the fellows they are interacting with. Thus, the information seekers tend to have a fair knowledge of the fellow they communicate with. This may assist them in creating an "emotional ideal" that will help them in predicting the behaviour of the interactants based on the impression they may create, their intentions, emotions and likely behaviour they may exhibit assist during communication (Antheunis, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2010).

In addition, the above research conducted revealed that in getting acquainted with someone whom the interactants meet not quite long considering which of the URS will be more effective, it was shown that the interactive strategies were very effective, during reducing of uncertainty with their object for social attraction which serves as a mediator in online situation (Antheunis, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2010).

Amidst the three levels involved in communication, that is sharing of information and its networking namely: entry level, personal level and exit level are the most essential thus communication online is shrouded with uncertainty. At entry stage, the interactants knows little or nothing about each other during the process of interaction. At personal level, the interactants have known each other and familiarized with each other. Finally, at the exit level, the interactants parted to meet again at the future date. At the entry stage, the level of uncertainty is very high because the interactants do not know themselves, while at the personal stage when each other's profiles had been made known, the level of uncertainty reduces. Finally, at the exit stage when pleasantry must have been exchanged, the degree of uncertainty reduces to the barest minimum.

Based on the above speculations, Montuori, (2014) opines that human existence is amidst uncertainty as long as the world exist. He further stresses that nothing is steady neither are they normal situation since we have move from jobs, relationships, identities, demographics, gender roles, global power dynamics, all these seems to be changing rapidly, fuelled in large part, but not exclusively, as a result of technological innovations. To this effect, while Facebook permits connecting with friends, Instagram supports snapping and sending of pictures thus different functions users on Facebook may be more passive as those on Instagram may be active based on what they present to users on the platform (Streck, 2014). Using the SNS to monitor target persons, it was gathered that Facebook as a platform can be used to know or monitor users' information hence there are profiles and lots more and in addition, they can also be followed not necessarily having the fellow following back how it was on Facebook as platform. This promotes observation by users who may not be friend but know what is really going on.

2.6.3 SNS and URS Passive

The passive uncertainty reduction strategy permits the user of an SNS to make some observation about the target in gathering the information hence, in this case on SNS the informant can only counter to also intermingle with different person while carrying out the observation (Berger & Calabrese). Harrison et al. (2013), observe that the advent of mobile devices is presented with some challenges in the aspect of usage hence users cannot model the traditional way of using the applications. Some of the preferred platforms during usage are: Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Skype, Pinterest, Viber, Tango, LinkedIn, YouTube and others. This is also supported by another research on relational uncertainty reduction stages where the passive strategy is mostly used for screening during relationship at the entry

stage of the relationship as submitted by (Fox & Anderregg, 2014). Thus the stages vary from one relationship to another. Hence in cases of social attraction and perceived relational norms, which are relational in nature, the passive strategy is the most prominent.

In a romantic relationship when considering relational norms on Facebook as a platform, it was also documented as relationship heightens, there is always behavioural changes that comes with it too from both partners but then women tend to be more passive and interactive than their males in a particular stage, hence the case of stalking and creeping are made active during online relationship (Fox & Anderegg, 2014). For example Facebook is seen as a platform which permits users to gain information from the other person's wall or using the nodes that is the connectivity by others not really meeting with the person in real life situation and having access to the information about the person, this there is visibility of other people's information just as stated that they use the platform for surveillance and monitoring of people's relationship and break-ups by partners and the ex-friend to seek for information on the other partner (Fox & Tokunaga, 2015; Fox & Warber, 2014; Tong, 2013).

Gathering information about a friend, with which teenagers want to relate with, it was obvious that the SNS play an important role for knowing the right partner and foundation which they can avoid uncertainty. It was noted that the passive uncertainty reduction strategy is use while monitoring the background and also interactive seems to be active thus SNS are useful for uncertainty reduction during friendship as sources of information as well affect self-disclosure when URS is applied when trying to make a new friend. But SNS are seen to play an essential role by providing the information needed for a friendship to culminate, that it permits making new friends and also

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connecting with old friends during interpersonal communication to be specific online (Courtois, All, & Vanwynsberghe, 2012).

Stewart, Dainton, and Goodboy (2014), in a related development opine that information gathering to maintain a relationship is sourced through the use of SNS, thus the relationship is maintained on Facebook by partners who try to monitor their partners when jealousy is said to be associated with level of uncertainty and seeking for satisfaction. Hence, SNS are used to gain information to sustain their relationship for gratification. Once uncertainty is noticed, the FB is used to monitor such relationship serving as an assurance, in this case the SNS play the role of being used to monitor situation surrounding their relationship thus it is passive. Additionally, monitoring attachment style with romantic relationship are also carried out with 328 using interpersonal electronic surveillance (Fox & Warber, 2014).

2.6.4 SNS and URS Interactive

The interactive URS calls for communication between the observed and the other partner who wants to inquire, thus meeting the person in face to face or using the SNS is possible. According to Berger, self-disclosure brings about seeking the information in this situation (Berger, Gardner, Parks, Schulman, & Miller, 1976).

In the case of fan visiting, interactive strategy seems to have more influence over the passive and active strategies based on research conducted when examining the role played by fans in continuous visiting behaviour on being loyal and for their satisfaction. However, it is a bit different from country to country and from organisation to organisation. Thus, in Netherlands, passive strategy is mostly used and interactive seems to be more dominant in use by fans, (Shin, Lee, & Yang, 2017). This paper employs two theories as the framework for its analysis: Uses and Gratification

Theory (U&GT) and Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT). These theories shall be elaborated upon in relation to research findings.

In conclusion, this review of literature has laid down the background of SNS, which (boyd & Ellison, 2007), say that SNS is Web-based service that gives people the ability to create a profile, and have access to friends on the website that they share common information. The two SNS in this review of literature are Facebook and Instagram. Both SNS (Facebook & Instagram) give a lot of gratification to users because of their reach user interface (Nadkami & Hofmann). This review covers how Facebook and Instagram are used by international student to reduce their level of uncertainty in communication. Hence, this thesis would concentrate on how Facebook and Instagram are used by international student to reduce their level of uncertainty in communication.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents a comprehensive description of the research paradigm for this study, the methodology employed and the research design used. Others are the population and sample, data collection instrument, data analysis, research procedures and validity and reliability of the study.

3.1 Research Paradigm

For this study, the positivist paradigm which is based on objective epistemology is used. The positivist paradigm employs quantitative research methodology which applies mostly to natural sciences to discern the study of social science (Crotty, 1998, p8-9). Phenomena are measured by evidence in real life; thus it is objective not subjective (Hammersley, 2013, p22-23). To this effect, the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables that are studied to explore the influence of one on the other during the research are calculated (Cohen, Manion & Marison, 2011).

The paradigm assists the positivist researcher to be able to understand the type of test s/he would like to carry out as well the method of sampling and the questions that can be designed in line with the measurement to be considered. This implies that the positivist researcher gives attention to validity and reliability if the questions are consistent (Cohen, 2007) and the work is to be generalized based on the large population chosen (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

For the purpose of this research, survey is adopted as the data collection method. Survey is defined as a method which permit systematic collection or gathering of information from the targeted population which a sample is taken in constructing quantitative description of the population thus the information gathered reflect the attitudes, behaviour perception and the believe which cannot be directly observed. In the present study, Quantitative research methodology is used; thus, it has been carried out mathematically with a particular way of doing things in a mathematical way (Krauss 2005).

According to Sukamolson (2007), quantitative methodology permits the results to be generalized, which calls for prediction. The accuracy of the result is enhanced by test of reliability and the validity that was carried out to that effect based on cause and effect. Buttressing on the above permits that the study can be replicated based on the results earlier obtained and in addition, the researcher can use the study for future study to predict (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Additionally, since the data is collected for objectivist epistemology, findings can be reliable which will assist the researcher to make scientific assumptions (Johnson, 2014). Having the full knowledge of the positivist paradigm used for the study, it is also good to acknowledge that this present dispensation we are in, is a multiple paradigmatic era thus researchers are at liberty to choose which of the paradigm to use.

3.2 Research Design

This particular study has been designed as a case study. Research design is seen as the general plan on how the entire research will be executed stressing on the lay down plans for the researcher to achieve his/her plan for the task he/ she sets before him or her (Van, 2012). He added that the research design is made up of the plans on the data

required, the method that can be employed to collect the data and then analysing it on how effectively it will answer the research questions posed. In supporting this, De Vaus, (2001) sees research design as the whole strategy that has been put in place by the researcher which encompasses the "logical" and "coherent" way in addressing the research problem regarded as the "blue print" applied in collecting the data, measuring the data and also use in analyzing the data based on the research problem posed to guide the research.

Creswell and Creswell (2017), consider research design to be the structure of the whole research work which is believed to "hold" or to "glue" the whole work together. These are the design to the work, population, sample and the instrumentation. This is also agreed by the author as s/he perceives, design shows major aspects of the research being conducted. In order words, the population, sample and its size, measures and other vital areas in the work (Flannelly & Jankowski, 2014) are explained.

With the above understanding, the study will be exploratory in nature since the cases of preference of SNS are not certain in the Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU). The context identified for the study is EMU and the preference of the use of SNS in reducing uncertainty among students from different backgrounds. In this case as earlier on said, the survey is used for data collection and large number of students who study in different faculties of the EMU, will be sought for the response to the questionnaire. This means that the research design will serve as blue print on how to carry out the entire research as earlier stated by that it will serve as "glue" holding the work together literally (Creswell, & Creswell 2017). Meanwhile, Maxwel (2012) explains that research design improves the researchers' work based on its outcome to be better from the data collected, therefore questions that are posed and the data analysis must be

carefully considered. All are on the guidelines of the entire work hence they are presented to guide in achieving results and less confusing while conducting research.

Thus, because of the methodology adopted for the design chosen the outcome of the study will be generalized. This will serve as a means of minimizing the problems that comes with validity and reliability that are capable of presenting problems during any research (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). This goes with careful selection of students from the population in EMU via simple random sampling technique from different faculties. Thus sample the sample size is to be taken into consideration as well as the structure of the questionnaire which serves as an essential part of the plan. This is summarized as thus: the study makes use of simple random sampling which every member of the population stands the chance of being chosen to represent. It is chosen because it is the basic principle of sampling and thus it is said to be easier to understand (Frerichs, 2008). Based on the methodology and design of this study, the outcome of this research would be generalizable. As such, there is need to minimize the level of problems associated with validity (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

3.3 Population and Sample

The research aimed at exploring the preference of SNS by international students during communication with different places since in some research conducted earlier are drifting from certain platforms for certain reasons. This research work tends to consider the international student population and their choice of platforms hence there are new platforms that continue to spring up with the assumption that the students may be certainly active on those platforms.

To this effect, the international students at EMU as at 2019/2020 academic session were considered as our study population; hence the sample size can be determined from the population.

The Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) was established in 1979 as Higher Technological institute for Diploma awarding purposes after which engineering courses were introduced. It got converted into a state university in the year 1986 with the approval of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus with the name EMU. Subsequently other faculties like those of Engineering, Arts and Science, Business and Economics with those of computing Engineering were introduced in the year 1990 thus the University continued to enlarge. In the year 2019/2020 EMU is having 20,000 students who are from different countries numbering 106 with 1,100 academics staff from 35 different countries thus this serves as reflection of the world view hence making it a good ground for the research to take place (About EMU, 2019). Being in a Turkish environment some courses are taught in English where as some in Turkish. As a result, consideration will be given to those students whose language of Instruction is in English alone, thus the sample is chosen from those Faculties.

Although there are a lot of research and studies that opined if sample size is chosen from 10% of the total population thus this work depends on the submission that in some cases the actual sample size will be very difficult to be considered, once the aims of the researcher and the type of the statistical manipulation can be chosen to carry out a research (Taherdoost, 2017). This is in agreement with the submission by another scholar that these three (3) things can be considered: they are level of precision, level of risk which is also considered as the confidence level and the variability by degree of the attributes being measured (Israel, 1992). On this ground, this work will consider

400 EMU students. Since 400 is large enough to serve the purpose of the research and mostly, almost all the students are on the two platforms hence any students stands the chance of being chosen based on chart and graph of (Crecy & Morgan, 1970).Given that:$s = X^2 NP(1-P) + d^2(N-1) + X^2 P(1-P)$ according to (Krejcie & Morgan 1970). Where; x^2= Chi square value at 5% level of significance (95% confidence level) which is 3.841and N= population size and P is the population proportion which is 50% of the population and d= is the degree of accuracy or level of precision (5%) $s = 3.841 (14000) (0.5) (1-0.5) + 0.05 (14000-1) + 3.841 (0.5) (1-0.5) = 399.95$ Approximately 400 will be used as the sample size based on the calculation above and the submission (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

3.4 Data Collection Instrument

An in–house questionnaire was designed by the researcher to collect the data. (See appendix A). The questionnaire serves as a means of linking up with the respondents. This also helps the respondents to be sure that they are guaranteed of their confidentiality, personality and their identity on the process of information gathering (Brace, 2008). The questionnaire drafted serves as a guide to assist the researcher to carefully answer all the research questions put in place for testing. This serves as a clear guide for understanding the aim and the objectives of the study. Close-ended questions limit the respondents from what they may wish to add while the researcher goes straight to pick what s/he wants. It is worth knowing that while structuring a questionnaire, the researcher too ensures capturing all the questions that will be needed to be answered based on the questions (Burgess, 2001).

As for the sampling techniques and procedure, the probability sampling technique was adopted in which simple random sampling techniques was utilized. This type of

sampling techniques was deployed in this study because any student stands the chance of being selected, essence of using probability sampling techniques and also due to the nature of this study where a large number is involved. For the questionnaire, consent of the EMU Ethical Committee is obtained (See Appendix B).

3.4.1 Questionnaire Items and Measures

Items on the questionnaire were designed to answer the research questions thus the essence why the questions were framed in such a manner to elicit responses from the respondents that will appropriately help in answering the questions and show clearly the relationship between the variables based on the hypothesis postulated. Measures were adopted from various scholars where some were carefully structured to suit the expected answers. In all, there are 42 questions in all with six (6) sections. The questions are clearly structured for easy understanding by the respondents.

Section one (1) seeks to collect demographic information on the respondents. The section is having 5 questions in all. This consists of the age, gender, educational level, students Faculty and their marital status as the demographics of the respondents. Section two (2), consists of information on the most preferred platform use for communication: and years that they have been using the two platforms (Facebook and Instagram) and the hours they stay connected communicating or doing some activities on each platform. Most preferred platforms used in different places were sought-after (home, North Cyprus and others). And there is another question on the most used Uncertainty Strategy by students. Section three (3) is mainly on the frequency of the two platforms, Facebook and Instagram for which questions were adopted. Although only for Facebook but since they are SNS, they are applicable to Instagram. There are 7 items in all Facebook and Instagram are merged together using the Likert scale.

Questions were asked on their frequency of activities online ranging from scale of "Always to Never" The questions are "I check my account on Facebook" ,"I post events on my Facebook page", "I browse the Newsfeed on Facebook", "I send private message on Facebook chat", "I check my account on Instagram", "I post things on my Instagram page", "I send private message on Instagram", from (Kuru, Bayer, Pasek & Campbell, 2017).

In addition, section four (4) is on the similarity of users on what they think make them feel like the other person which will. This question was adopted to the scale of "Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree". "The students think like me", "The student behaves like me", "This student is similar to me", "This student is like me" adopted from McCroskey (Richmond & Daly 1975). Section five (5) is on the Uncertainty Reduction Strategy used by students in North Cyprus to help them reduce their level of uncertainty as it encompasses all the three levels of uncertainty (Active, Passive and Interactive) strategies, thus ranging from "strongly agree to strongly disagree". Having twelve items (12) in all, "I use Social Networking Sites to know more about students' private life from my university", "I find out the behavior of students from their friends from my university", "I ask other students that are my friends about issues from my university", "I give thumbs up to some information on my page generally" "I give heart to those who are dear to me from my university". "I sometimes read through information on a post from my university", "Warm smiles on a profile picture easily attract me to some students online", "I ignore students that are not from my country in my university", "I easily interact online with students that I know from my university", "I call to chat with students that we are friends from my university", "I engage students who are from my Faculty in online conversation", Sometimes we have interactive

session online with my course mates.". Section six (6) consist of five (5) questions on how as a student you can predict each other Strongly Agree, 4=Agree= 3, Undecided=2 Disagree and 1 = SD Strongly Disagree are the scale used the following are the questions "I can predict very well how students can behave online", "I can predict very well the things students cherish online", "I can predict very well students' attitude online", "I can predict from students post when online", "I easily understand students online", and the items were all adapted and modified from Claterrbuck (1979).

3.5 Data Analysis

In this study data is analysed using the "Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software package for the descriptive statistics, while the model testing was performed using structural equation modelling (SEM) techniques with the use of SmartPLS3. In developing SEM for this study, "variance-based structure equation modeling" with "Partial Least Square" (PLS-SEM) was utilized for the study model analysis. According to Garson (2016) and Petter (2018), PLS-SEM which is a parametric techniques" is suitable for prediction with the aim of maximizing the variance explained in dependent variables, most especially if the data is not in conformity with normality assumption. Thus, this PLS-SEM techniques is found appropriate for this study due to its great statistical power that is expected to identify the significant relationship that are indeed available in this study. Subsequently, SmartPLS3 as suggested by Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2015) was employed for the assessment of both the measurement properties and structural models of the study.

In this study 5 hypotheses were tested, the hypotheses serve as wise guesses or a mere explanations with the intention of trying or testing if the hypothesis can be accepted or disproved (Kothari, 2004). It is paramount that a researcher must be capable of

upholding or falsifying a hypothesis postulated; this will depict its scientific procedure and show the dependent and independent variable (causal and effect relationship). Research questions were structured to help give a comprehensive understanding of why the topic is coined so that we can advanced the discussion on the influence of SNS when preferred in communicating with different places (home, North Cyprus and others) when uncertainty sets in, for not being sure of a platform to use during communication. The significance of the question tested was .578. Additionally, in testing the hypothesis, descriptive statistic was also carried out to support the quantitative statistics posed for the study. Inferential statistics were also conducted such as correlation. In addition, the mediation and moderating influence in the model were examined.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument

To be sure of the validity and the reliability of the data used for the research, a pilot study was first conducted, the pilot study helps in assessing the uniqueness of the instruments used by providing an understanding of the work ahead.

The essence of the pilot study is:

1. To be able to dictate grey areas especially when the questionnaires are designed and given out for the pre-test. Through pilot studying the researcher will know the time taken to answer a question, the length of respondents are not complaining and also their observation on the questions can easily be presented (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001).

2. Van Teijlingen & Hundley observe that, some of the questions that are not clear are easily identify during pilot studying to be handled during the process.

3. It helps to improve the internal validity and be sure the questions have been responded adequately; hence it helps confirm if questions are all answered by respondents.

4. This will assist the researcher to work on the questions and also to recast or reframe the questions that are not answered all for the e sake of clarity (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002).

5. Enabling the researcher to re-pilot the study again in checking the questions that are not clear to be precise, straight and concise (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001; 2002).

6. To this effect, the researcher can try which of his work is clearer and more result yielding then concentrate on such questions (Woken, *In Press*).

Based on all the above submission it also indicates if the method that the researcher wants to use for results is workable. To this effect pilot study was conducted first with about 30 students at random other international students who are also schooling in North Cyprus but in different university from EMU across all levels of education regardless of age or gender. Reliability test was conducted to ensure there is consistency during measurement of the instruments. The reliability test is aimed at ensuring that there is equal authentication and balance in measurement of instruments which cuts across the items and time in instrument of the study when a study is being replicated or adapted for use in another research (Carcary, 2009). Yet some not all affirm with the dependable nature of the validity and reliability of cases when replicated for a case study but yet tries to accept it the way is presented hence the validity and reliability results help in ascertaining the consistency and worth of a data and how they are acquired (Riege, 2003).
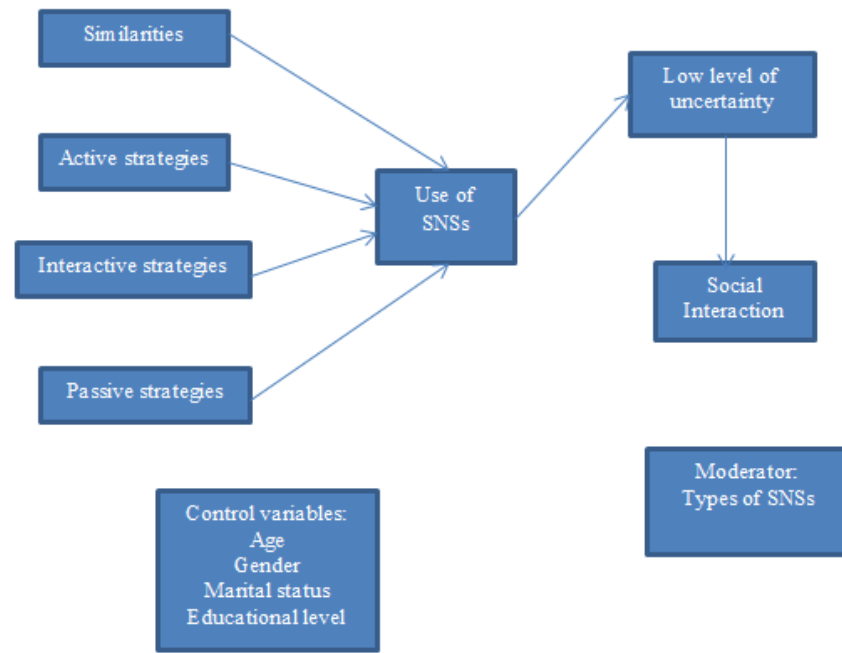
Figure 7: Model for the research

An all-over all Cronbach Alpha α was generated of which the result is .919 for the reliability test. See Table 1 as thus based on number of items pull out from the constructs. Each of the construct group before the final entry for the pilot study has these as the Cronbach worked out like this: Cronbach Alpha during pilot study of each of the Cronbach as presented in:

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha of the Construct

Constructs	α	No of items	Tag
Facebook/ Instagram frequency use	.813	7	FIFU
Similarity of users and Network	.884	4	SIM
Uncertainty reduction strategies	.757	12	URS
Low level of uncertainty	.893	5	LLU
All items	.919	28	

According to Orel and Kara (2014), items that are less than 10 with 0.5 Cronbach value can be accepted hence generally they are accepted at .0.75, based on the analysis all the results are above. 75 therefore they have good Cronbach to be accepted for the research.

Chapter 4

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter provides a breakdown to answer the research questions and is divided into 3 sections. The first section gives a breakdown to the demographics of the respondents to help in understanding the entire study. In the second section, further answers are provided through descriptive analysis of the responses while the third section is the inferential analysis where relationships are tested.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents as presented in Table 2 show that the gender of the respondents to be, male ($n = 257$; 57.2%) while females are ($n = 192$; 42.8%). Respondents were within ages of 18-22 ($n = 160$; 35.6%), 23-27 ($n = 164$; 36.5%) and 28-32 ($n = 70$; 15.6%), and 33-37 ($n = 36$; 8.0%) while 38 and above were (n=19; 42%). While accessing the educational background of the respondents' data indicates that ($n = 243$; 60.8%) are undergraduate, ($n = 92$; 23.0%) are master students while ($n = 65$; 16.3%) are Ph.D. students. The respondent's faculty varied as follows: Architecture ($n = 21$; 5.3%), ($n = 63$; 15.8%) Arts and Sciences, ($n = 64$; 16.0%) Business and Economics, ($n = 41$; 10.3%) Communication and Media Studies; ($n = 8$; 2.0%) Dentistry, ($n = 18$; 4.5%); Education, ($n = 64$; 16.0%); Engineering, ($n = 30$; 7.5%); Heath Sciences, ($n = 35$; 8.8%); Pharmacy, and ($n = 20$; 5.0%); Tourism and Hospitality Management ($n = 20$, 5%). As for the marital status of the respondents ($n = 215$; 53.8%) are single, ($n = 114$; 28.5%) in a relationship, ($n = 61$; 15.3%) are married, ($n = 6$; 1.5%) are divorced, ($n = 4$; 1.0%) fall in the category of others.

Respondents were asked which Social Networking Sites they preferred using most when communicating ($n = 115$; 28.8%) said they preferred to use Facebook, while ($n = 285$; 71.3%) said they preferred to use Instagram.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Female	192	59.5
	Male	257	40.5
Age	18-22	160	35.6
	23-27	164	36.5
	28-32	70	15.6
	33-37	36	8.0
	38 and above	19	4.2
Educational Background	Undergraduate	243	60.8
	Masters	92	23.0
	Ph.D.	65	16.3
Faculty	Architecture	21	5.3
	Arts and Science	63	15.8
	Business and Economics	64	16.0
	Communication and Media Studies	41	10.3
	Dentistry	8	2.0
	Education	18	4.5
	Engineering	64	16.0
	Heath Sciences	30	7.5
	Pharmacy	35	8.8
	Tourism and Hospitality Management	20	5.0
Marital status	Single	215	53.8
	In a relationship	114	28.5
	Married	61	15.3
	Divorced	6	1.5
	Others	4	1.0
Which SNS do you prefer using most when communicating?	Facebook	115	28.75
	Instagram	285	71.25

Moreover, respondents were asked how long they have been using Facebook. Their answers ranged between 0-11 months ($n = 22$; 5.5%), 1- 2 years ($n = 74$; 18.5%), 3-4 years ($n = 64$; 16.0%), 5-6 years ($n = 88$; 22.0%), and 7 years and above ($n = 152$; 38.0%). While accessing how long respondents have been using Instagram, they say 0 to less than an hour ($n = 16$; 4.0%), 1 hour- 2 hours ($n = 111$; 27.8 %), 3-4 hours ($n = 120$; 30.0%), 5-6 hours ($n = 98$; 24.5%), 7 hours and above ($n = 55$; 13.8%). Also respondents answered how long they stay connected on Facebook, which is presented in Table 2. Answers ranged between 0 to less than an hour ($n = 55$; 13.8%), 1 hour- 2hours ($n = 208$; 52.0%), 3-4 hours ($n = 86$; 21.5%), 5-6 hours ($n = 30$; 7.5%), and 7 hours and above ($n = 21$; 5.3%). With regards to understanding how long respondents stay connected on Instagram 0 to 59 minutes say ($n = 30$; 7.5%), 1 hour- 2 hours representing ($n = 174$; 43.5%), 3-4 hours representing ($n = 124$; 31.0%), 5-6 hours representing ($n = 47$; 11.8%), and 7 hours and above representing ($n = 25$; 6.3%).

Among the platforms used for communication, respondents were asked which one they prefer to use when communicating with while interacting with people at home, while communicating with family and friends (people back home) those who use Facebook are ($n = 210$; 52.5%) while those who use platform like   Instagram are ($n = 190$; 47.5%). While communicating with people in North Cyprus (host community) those who use Facebook are ($n = 136$; 34.0%) while those who use Instagram are   ($n = 264$; 66.0%). Those who communicate with other categories of people like (international acquaintances) and use Facebook are ($n = 143$; 35.8%), while those who use Instagram are ($n = 257$; 64.3%).

The study also measured the strategy the respondents prefer to use mostly when they want to reduce uncertainty on social networking sites, respondents say "I observe and

ignore messages on SNS" because it is not important (passive)" ($n = 102$; 25.5%). In addition, "I sometimes ask other people who are my friends on the platform (active)" ($n = 143$; 32.0%), "I ask the fellow who is directly involved (Interactive)" ($n = 46$; 35.8%), "Sometimes I become (extremely-active) by checking through my followers' wall ($n = 124$; 31.0%). In addition to the descriptive statistics, Table 3 presents the correlations among the variables.

Table 3: Inquiry about SNS Use

	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
How long have you been using Facebook	0-11 Months	22	5.5
	1- 2 years	74	18.5
	3-4 years	64	16.0
	5-6 years	88	22.0
	7 years and above	152	38.0
How long have you been using Instagram	0 to less than an hour.	16	4.0
	1 hour- 2hours	111	27.8
	3-4 hours	120	30.0
	5-6 hours	98	24.5
	7 hours and above	55	13.8
How long do you stay connected on Facebook	0 to less than an hour	55	13.8

	1 hour- 2hours	208	52.0
	3-4 hours	86	21.5
	5-6 hours	30	7.5
	7 hours and above	21	5.3
How long do you stay connected on Instagram	0 to 59 minutes	30	7.5
	1 hour- 2hours	174	43.5
	3-4 hours	124	31.0
	5-6 hours	47	11.8
	7 hours and above	25	6.3

Among the platforms you use for communication, which one do you prefer to use when communicating with?

Places and people like

Family and Friends (People back home).	Facebook	210	52.5
	Instagram	190	47.5
People in North Cyprus (host community).	Facebook	136	34.0
	Instagram	264	66.0
Others (international acquaintances).	Facebook	143	35.8
	Instagram	257	64.3

Which strategy do you prefer to use mostly when you want to reduce uncertainty on social networking sites?

	I observe and ignore messages on SNSs because it is not important (passive).	102	25.5
	I sometimes ask other people who are my friends on the platform (active).	128	32.0
	I ask the fellow who is directly involved (Interactive).	46	11.5
	Sometimes I become (extremely-active) by checking through my followers' wall.	124	31.0

Table 4: Means, Standard Deviation and Correlations among Variables

Variable	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	2.09	1.10										

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
2. Marital status	1.72	.86	.43 **								
3. Use of SNS	1.68	.47	-.29 **	-.22 **							
4. Gender	1.43	.50	-.05	.15 **	.07						
5. FIFU	3.83	.86	.21 **	.19 **	-.15 **	.02					
6. SIM	3.69	.88	.09 *	.17 **	-.12 *	.02	.50 **				
7. UR	3.72	.89	.08	.10 *	-.08	-.01	.37 **	.48 **			
8. Active	3.75	.86	.19 **	.12 *	-.15 **	-.09	.53 **	.50 **	.57 **		

9. Passive	3.64	.91	.13 **	.08	- .15 **	- .01	.50 **	.51 **	.50 **	.59 **	
10. Interactive	3.84	.81	.12 *	.04	- .13 **	.02	.45 **	.42 **	.50 **	.53 **	.52 **
11. Social acceptance	3.59	.82	.04 **	.11 *	- .09 **	.07	.16 **	.38 **	.54 **	.49 *	.47 **	.51 **

Note: **, * denotes 1% and 5% confidence level respectively

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

In measuring the means and attitudes of the respondents I adopted the measurement suggested by Balci (2004), who sets his scale with: where 1 = Strongly Agree, (1-1.79), 2 = Agree, (1.80-2.59), 3 = Undecided, (2.60-3.39), 4 = Disagree (3.40-4.19), and 5 = Strongly Disagree (4.20-5). Due to my setting, my scales are inversely to Balci, 1=Strongly Disagree (1-1.79), 2= Disagree (1.80-2.59), 3= Undecided (2.60-3.39), 4=Agree (3.40-4.19) and 5= Strongly Agree (4.20-5). This is what I used in analysing the report got from each statement.

4.2.1 Means and Attitudes

To measure the means and attitudes of the respondents the research adopted measures as suggested by Balci (2004), but a little disparity due to how I set my measures as stated earlier. Table 5 shows the means and attitudes for items measuring Facebook

and Instagram usage. According to the findings, majority of the respondents Agree with most of the statements. "I check my account on Facebook" (M = 3.80, Attitude = Agree), "I post something on my Facebook page" (M = 3.39, Attitude =Undecided), "I browse the Newsfeed on Facebook (M = 3.57, Attitude = Agree), "I send private message on Facebook chat" (M = 3.64, Attitude = Agree). In addition, "I check my account on Instagram" (M = 3.78, Attitude =Agree), "I post things on my Instagram page" (M = 3.99, Attitude = Agree), and "I send private message on Instagram" (M = 3.66, Attitude = Agree).

Moreover, Table 4 shows the means and attitudes of respondents with regards to their use of SNS. "Student from EMU think like me while using SNS", (M = 3.55, Attitude = Agree), "Student from EMU behaves like me when using SNS" (M = 3.67, Attitude = Agree). In addition, "Student from my EMU act in a similar way to me when using SNS" (M = 3.69, Attitude = Agree), and "Students from my Faculty are like me when using any of the SNS" (M = 3.50, Attitude = Agree). Also Table 4 shows the means and attitudes of respondents with regards their URS with regards use of SNSs. "I use Social Networking Sites to know more about students' private life from my university" (M = 3.50, Attitude = Agree), "I find out the behaviour of students from their friends from my university on SNS" (M = 3.80, Attitude = Agree),"I ask other students that are my friends about events from my university using SNS" (M = 3.73, Attitude = Agree).

Table 5: Items Means and Attitude

Items	Mean	Attitude
Use of SNS		
I check my account on Facebook.	3.80	A
I post something on my Facebook page.	3.39	U

I browse the newsfeed on Facebook.	3.57	A
I send private message on Facebook chat.	3.64	A
I check my account on Instagram.	3.78	A
I post things on my Instagram page.	3.99	A
I send private message on Instagram.	3.66	A
Similarities		
Student from EMU think like me while using SNS.	3.55	A
Student from EMU behaves like me when using SNS.	3.67	A
Student from my EMU act in a similar way to me when using SNS.	3.69	A
Uncertainty Reduction Strategies		
I use Social Networking Sites to know more about students' private life from my university **(ACTIVE).**	3.50	A
I find out the behavior of students from their friends from my university on SNS **(ACTIVE).**	3.60	A
I ask other students that are my friends about events from my university using SNS **(ACTIVE).**	3.73	A
I give thumbs up to some information on my page generally **(ACTIVE).**	3.73	A
I give heart to those who are dear to me from my university **(ACTIVE).**	3.93	A
I sometimes read through information on a post from my university **(PASSIVE).**	3.90	A
Warm smiles on a profile picture easily attract me to some students online **(PASSIVE).**	3.60	A
I ignore students that are not from my country in my university **(PASSIVE).**	3.24	U
I easily interact online with students that I know from my university **(INTERACTIVE)**.	3.78	A
I call chat with students that we are friends from my university **(INTERACTIVE).**	3.83	A
I engage students who are from my Faculty in online conversation **(INTERACTIVE).**	3.77	A

Sometimes we have interactive session online with my course mates **(INTERACTIVE).**	3.72	A
Low level of uncertainty		
I can predict very well how students in EMU can behave online.	3.72	A
I can predict very well the topics students in EMU cherish online.	3.76	A
I can predict very well EMU students' online attitude.	3.62	A
I can predict from EMU students post when online.	3.57	A
I easily understand EMU student's conversation online.	3.63	A
Social acceptance		
This person is pleasant to talk to.	3.55	A
This person is pleasant to be with.	3.57	A
This person fits well in my circle of friends.	3.62	A
We get along well together.	3.68	A
It feels comfortable when he/she is around.	3.52	A

Furthermore, "I give thumbs up to some information on my page generally" ($M = 3.73$, Attitude = Agree), "I give heart to those who are dear to me from my university" ($M = 3.93$, Attitude = Agree), "I sometimes read through information on a post from my university" ($M = 3.90$, Attitude = Agree). Also, "Warm smiles on a profile picture easily attract me to some students online" ($M = 3.60$, Attitude = Agree), "I ignore students that are not from my country in my university" ($M = 3.24$, Attitude = Undecided), "I easily interact online with students that I know from my university" ($M = 3.78$, Attitude = Agree), "I call chat with students that we are friends from my university" ($M = 3.83$, Attitude = Agree). In addition, "I engage students who are from my Faculty in online conversation" ($M = 3.77$, Attitude = Agree), "Sometimes we have interactive session online with my course mates" ($M = 3.70$, Attitude = Agree).

Table 5 shows the means and attitudes of respondents with regards to their level of uncertainty and use of SNS. "I can predict very well how students in EMU can behave online" ($M = 3.72$, Attitude = Agree), "I can predict very well the topics students in EMU cherish online" ($M = 3.76$, Attitude = Agree). In addition, "I can predict very well EMU students' online attitude" ($M = 3.62$, Attitude = Agree), "I can predict from EMU students post when online" ($M = 3.57$, Attitude = Agree), "I easily understand EMU students' conversation online" ($M = 3.63$, Attitude = Agree). Lastly, the means and attitudes for social acceptance show that all the five items fall into Agree with the mean values ranging between 3.52 and 3.68 (see Table 5).

4.2.2 Psychometric Properties of the Items and Constructs

Firstly, in order to ensure that the model measurements fulfil all the required criteria as suggested in the literature (Hair et al. 2019). The measurement model is evaluated and the results presented in Table 6. The results as presented in Table 5 reveals that all the items for the constructs has a loading factor that is above the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al. 2019). All the items have factor loading above 0.70 except for one item in both interactive construct and use of SNS, while one item has a factor loading below the threshold for uncertainty reduction, active and passive strategies and use of SNS. Meanwhile, uncertainty reduction, similarities, active, use of SNS and social acceptance has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84, 0.87, 0.822, .0.90 and 0.792 respectively which are above recommended threshold of 0.70, while passive and interactive strategies constructs has an alpha value of 0.631 and 0.509 respectively. Meanwhile, this thesis accepted the alpha value that is less than 0.70 in line with suggestion of Orel and Kara (2014) who have the opinion that Cronbach's alpha sometimes might not be a good indicator of the unidimensionality of the construct because a low value could be as a result of sample homogeneity. Orel and Kara (2014)

suggest further that, a low Cronbach's alpha could be considered if other properties' values are favourable, thus a low alpha value would not pose a challenge, most especially where the items are less than 10, a 0.5 Cronbach's alpha value is acceptable (Orel and Kara, 2014). In addition, Hair et al. (2019) argue that Cronbach's alpha has a low precision when compared with composite reliability (CR). Therefore, the CR value for all the construct as presented in Table 6 shows that all the constructs has a CR value that is greater than the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Dijkstra and Henseler, 2015). The result implies that the items in our model constructs are reliable.

In addition, the convergent validity of each of the construct is evaluated. The results are presented in Table 6 reveals that all the constructs have an average variance extracted (AVE) values that are greater than 0.5 as recommended in the literature (Hair et al. 2019). This is an indication that the construct has a convergence of the items that explain at least 50% variation of its items.

Table 6: Items and Constructs Reliability Test

Constructs	Items	loadings	CR	α	AVE
Use of SNS	FIFU1	.732	**.85**	**.90**	**.790**
	FIFU2	.710			
	FIFU3	.854			
	FIFU4	.899			
	FIFU5	.838			
	FIFU6	.871			
	FIFU7	.798			
Similarities	SIM1	.804	**.87**	**.85**	**.612**
	SIM2	.796			
	SIM3	.758			
	SIM4	.767			
Active	URS1	0.767	**.874**	**.822**	**.583**

			CR	α	AVE
	URS2	0.811			
	URS3	0.810			
	URS4	0.732			
	URS5	0.690			
Passive	URS6	0.708	**.799**	**.631**	**.573**
	URS7	0.72			
	URS8	0.827			
Interactive	URS10	0.682	**0.737**	**.509**	**.501**
	URS11	0.710			
	URS12	0.802			
Low level of uncertainty	LLU1	.732	**.96**	**.84**	**.735**
	LLU2	.810			
	LLU3	.854			
	LLU4	.899			
	LLU5	.840			
Social acceptance	SA1	0.770	**.857**	**.792**	**.546**
	SA2	0.793			
	SA3	0.710			
	SA4	0.732			
	SA5	0.678			
Model fit statistic: SRMR = 0.077, standard chi-squared = 15.44 (p<0.001), average full collinearity VIF = 1.602. NFI = 0.91					

Note: CR = composite reliability, AVE = average variance extracted, α = Cronbach's alpha. NFI = normed fit index.

Subsequently, we evaluate the discriminant validity of the constructs in our model with the aim of assessing the degree of constructs uniqueness from each other in the structural model. As proposed by Fornel and Larker (1981), the square root of the AVE value on the diagonal should be greater than the correlations between the constructs, thus the results presented in Table 7 reveals that the value in the diagonal are greater than the correlations in between the construct, and as such it implies that for both

samples the constructs are discriminately valid. But the Fornel-Larker Criterion was criticized and another measure for assessing discriminant validity of construct was developed by (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2015). Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) was developed to complement Fornel-Larker and it was proposed that presence of discriminant validity among the construct will be established when the HTMT value for the construct is less than 0.9. The HTMT result as presented in Table 8 shows that none of the values in the table is higher than 0.9, which is an indication that there is presence of discriminant validity of our construct. Finally, variance inflation factor (VIF) as presented in Table 9 is used to examine the collinearity of the formative items (Hair et al. 2019). As recommended by Hair et al. (2019), a VIF value that is not greater than 5 indicates the absence of collinearity, but it has been suggested that it is more appropriate if the VIF is close to 3 as close as possible. In line with the recommendation, our result as presented in Table 9 shows that there is absence of collinearity in our model.

Table 7: Discriminant Validity: Fornel-Larcker Criterion

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Active	**0.763**						
2. Low level of uncertainty	0.551	**0.822**					
3. Interactive	0.414	0.469	**0.698**				
4. Passive	0.567	0.462	0.520	**0.757**			
5. Similarities	0.451	0.415	0.414	0.475	**0.842**		

| 6. Use of SNS | 0.536 | 0.468 | 0.549 | 0.594 | 0.664 | **0.703** | |
| 7. Social acceptance | 0.512 | 0.493 | 0.556 | 0.654 | 0.613 | 0.689 | **0.701** |

Table 8: Discriminant Validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Active						
2. Low level of uncertainty	0.627					
3. Interactive	0.705	0.759				
4. Passive	0.822	0.614	0.801			
5. Similarities	0.522	0.461	0.636	0.663		
6. Use of SNS	0.636	0.524	0.867	0.819	0.796	
7. Social acceptance	0.88	0.79	0.659	0.719	0.789	0.856

4.3 Model Testing Results

Subsequent to the certification of the model measurement properties and it has been found that they are fit for further analysis. Then, the model structural testing is performed. Firstly, in line with the suggestion of Hair et al. (2017), our data has been resampled to 5000 for bootstrapping so as to establish the statistical significance and

size of the variable. The direct relationship between the URS and low level of uncertainty have been evaluated first. The model fits statistics as presented in Table 6. The table 6 reveals that the model is fit with the SRMR value (0.077) which is less than 0.08. This shows the appropriateness and fitness of the model, and the result is in agreement with Henseler, Hubona and Ray (2016) who argue that a cut-off value of SRMR that is less than 0.08 is acceptable for model fitness in PLS path model. Another criterion for assessing the model fitness as suggested by Henseler, Hubona and Ray (2016) is "Normed Fit Index" (NFI). It is suggested by the authors that a NFI value close to 1 show the model is fit, but sounded a warning that the NFI should be interpreted with caution, because it's still rarely used in PLS analysis. Even at that, the NFI value of the model as presented in Table 6 shows that NFI value is 0.91 and this suggests fitness of the model. The value is close to 1 and this complements the evaluation using SRMR to show the fitness of our model. As for the coefficient of determination (R^2) for the variance explanation of the constructs in our model, the analysis shows that similarities, passive, active and interactive strategies contribute about 41% explanation variations in determining the low level of uncertainty reduction (see Figure 8).

Table 9: Model Testing Result

Hypotheses	Interaction	Coefficient	P Value	Decision
H1	Use of SNS → low level of uncertainty	0.47	0.01	Supported
H2a	Similarities → Low level of uncertainty	0.191	0.001	Supported
H2b	Active → low level of uncertainty	0.329	0.001	Supported

H2c	Passive → low level of uncertainty	0.120	0.005	Supported
H2d	Interactive → low level of uncertainty	0.163	0.001	Supported
H5	Low level of uncertainty → Social interaction	0.97	0.01	Supported

In the bid to determine the validity or otherwise the relationship between strategies of uncertainty reduction employed by the international students on the reduction of uncertainty, the model structure as depicted in Figure 8 and 9 have been tested. The results as presented in Table 9 show that the use of SNS which was formulated to have a direct influence on the uncertainty reduction was found to have positive and significant impact on the low level of uncertainty (($\beta = 0.47$, p-value = .01). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is accepted. Moreover, similarities were found to have a positive and significant relationship with low level of uncertainty ($\beta = 0.191$, p-value = .001). This implies that similarities have positive influence on the uncertainty reduction and thus hypothesis 2a is sustained and concludes that a change in level of similarities among the international students will enhance the level of their uncertainty reduction. Hypothesis 2b is put forth to determine the direct influence of active strategies deployed by the international students in reducing their level of uncertainty. The results as presented in Table 9 and Figure 8 reveal that a positive and significant relationship exists between the two variables ($\beta = 0.329$, p-value = .001). Thus, hypothesis 2a is accepted and the study concludes that an increase in the level of active strategies will positively influence the uncertainty reduction of the international students. Similarly, hypotheses 2c and 2d are formulated to investigate the direct influence of passive and interactive strategies on the level of uncertainty reduction by

the international students. The results show that passive strategy has positive and statistically significant influence on uncertainty reduction *(β = 0.120, p-value = .005)*. Also the interactive strategy is found to have positive and significant influence on uncertainty reduction *(β = 0.163, p-value = .001)*. Therefore, the hypotheses 2c and 2d are accepted and concluded that a change in the level of passive and interactive strategies will positively influence the reduction in the level of uncertainty reduction of the international students. Finally, the relationship between low level of uncertainty and social interaction among the international students which as stated in hypothesis 5 is tested and the results are presented in Table 9. The results indicate that there is a positive and significant relationship between the low level of uncertainty and social interaction (β = 0.97, p = 0.01). Thus, hypothesis 5 is sustained. This implies that a change in reduction in the level of uncertainty among the international students, would lead to more improved social interaction among them.
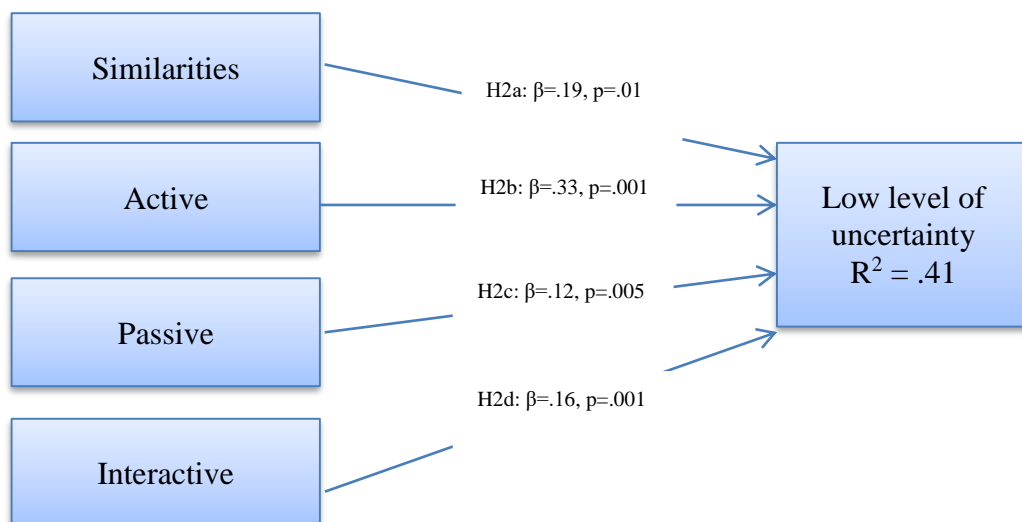

Figure 8: Relationship between strategies and low level of uncertainty

4.3.1 Mediation Analysis

Hypotheses 3a-d are formulated in this study to investigate the mediation influence of the use of SNS in the relationship between similarities and low level of uncertainty

reduction. The results as presented in Table 10 show that the interaction between similarities and low level of uncertainty reduction *(β = 0.085, p-value < .01)* is positive and statistically significant, thus H3a is supported and concluded that the influence of similarities in contributing to the low level of uncertainty reduction is partially mediated by the use of SNS. Similarly, H3b which states the use of SNS partially mediates the relationship between active strategies and low level of uncertainty reduction is confirmed to be true from the results presented in Table 10 *(β = 0.093, p-value < .01)*. Therefore, H3b is supported and concluded that the contribution of active strategies to the reduction of uncertainty will be partially mediated by the use of SNS. In addition, hypotheses 3c and 3d were also found to be statistically significant. This is an indication that passive strategies' relationship with low level of uncertainty reduction *(β = 0.065, t = 3.194, p-value < .01)* and interactive strategies' relationship with low level of uncertainty reduction *(β = 0.06, t = 3.112, p-value < .01)* will be partially mediated by the use of SNS. Thus, both H3c and 3d are supported and concluded that the passive and interactive strategies contribution to low level of uncertainty reduction will be partially mediated by the use of SNS.

In addition, as presented in Figure 9, the strategies (similarities, active, passive, and interactive) are found to contribute about 51% explanation variations in the use of SNS ($R^2 = 0.51$), while the use of SNS have been found to have about 22% explanation variation in determining the low level of uncertainty ($R^2 = 0.22$) among the international students.

Table 10: Mediation Analysis

| Hypotheses	Interaction	Coefficient	p-value	Decision
H3a	similarities -> use of SNS -> low level of uncertainty	0.085	0.000	Partial mediation
H3b	Active -> use of SNS -> low level of uncertainty	0.093	0.000	Partial mediation
H3c	passive -> use of SNS -> low level of uncertainty	0.065	0.001	Partial mediation
H3d	interactive -> use of SNS -> low level of uncertainty	0.06	0.002	Partial mediation
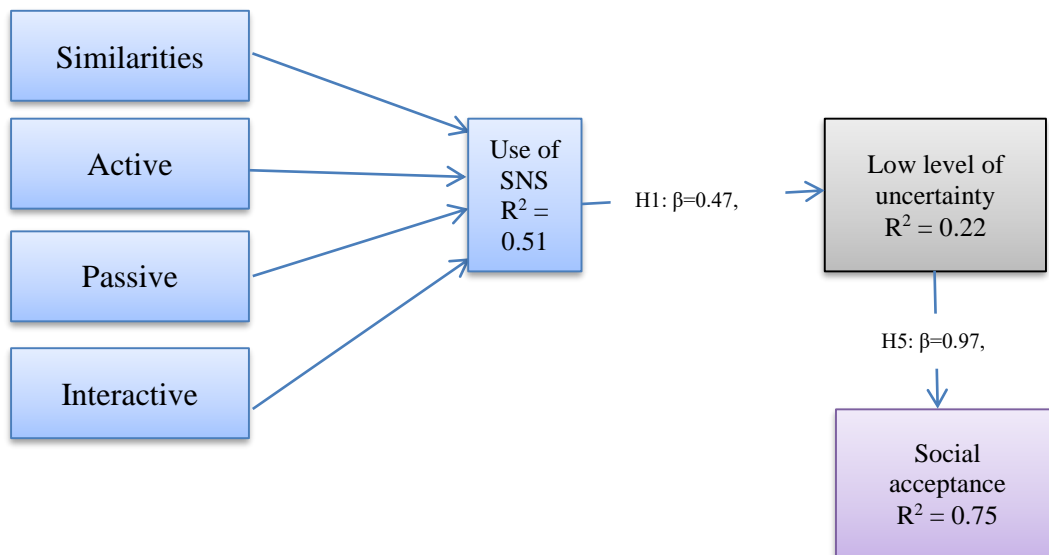
Figure 9: Mediation testing

4.3.2 Moderating Analysis

Further analysis has been conducted to investigate the moderating influence of the types of SNS used by the students on their efforts of reducing uncertainty. Four hypotheses (4a – 4d) are formulated. Hypotheses sort to explore the types of SNS used to moderate the influence of strategies employed by the international students to reduce their level of uncertainty. Multi-group analysis is performed. This is because two types of SNS are considered in this study and thus MGA is the appropriate analysis to perform in investigating the significant of the difference of the type of SNS used as it affects the uncertainty reduction. The result presented in Table 11 shows t the difference observed in the types of SNS used by the student do not influence the contribution of similarities to uncertainty reduction (β = -0.091, p-value > .05). Therefore, H4a is not supported and then it is concluded that either the use of Facebook or Instagram does not influence the similarities on uncertainty reduction. Similar result is found for hypotheses 4b and 4c. The results as presented in Table 11 indicate that active strategies influence the uncertainty reduction (β = -0.055, p-value > .05) and passive strategies influence on uncertainty reduction (β = 0.06, p-value > .05) are not

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significantly moderated by the types of SNS used. Meanwhile, the types of SNS used is found to significantly moderate the contribution of interactive strategies on uncertainty reduction (β = 0.273, p-value < .05). Thus, H4d is supported and concluded that the influence of interactive strategies on uncertainty reduction is significantly moderated by the types of SNSs.

Moreover, an interesting finding from our study is the individual moderating influence of both Facebook and Instagram as presented in Table 11. The results show that while Facebook moderates the influence of active (β = 0.27, t-value = 2.929, p-value < .01) and interactive strategies (β = 0.376, t-value = 5.029, p-value < .01) on uncertainty reduction, Instagram is found to moderate the influence of similarities (β = 0.221, t-value = 3.457, p-value < .01), active (β = 0.325, t-value = 5.457, p-value < .01) and passive strategies (β = 0.162, t-value = 2.755, p-value < .05) on uncertainty reduction.

Table 11: Path Coefficient Estimation and PLS Multi-Group Analysis Comparison

Hypo-theses		Facebook			Instagram			Path Coefficient Differences (Facebook vs Instagram)	
	Effect	Path Coefficient	*t-value*	*p-value*	Path Coefficient	*t-value*	*p-value*	Path Coefficient	*p-value*
H4a	Similarities → low level of	0.13	1.376	0.169	0.221	3.457	0.001	-0.091	0.419

	uncertainty							
H4b	Active → low level of uncertainty	0.27	2.929	0.003	0.325	5.457	0	-0.055	0.606
H4c	Passive → low level of uncertainty	0.051	0.661	0.509	0.162	2.755	0.006	-0.111	0.271
H4d	Interactive → low level of uncertainty	0.376	5.029	0	0.102	1.744	0.082	0.273	0.006

4.3.3 Respondents Demographic Characteristics Controlling on URS Relationship

This study probed further to investigate the possibility of changes in the strategies of uncertainty reduction on the low level of uncertainty when controlling the demographic characteristics of the international students. In order to achieve this, multilevel analysis is performed using age, gender, marital status, educational level and preferred network as control variables. The results as presented in Figure 10 show

some slight changes in the coefficients of the strategies (similarities, active, passive, and interactive), but still remains significant. However, the p-value of all the control variables reveals that none of the control variables has a significant control on the influence of uncertainty strategies and low level of uncertainty (see Figure 10).
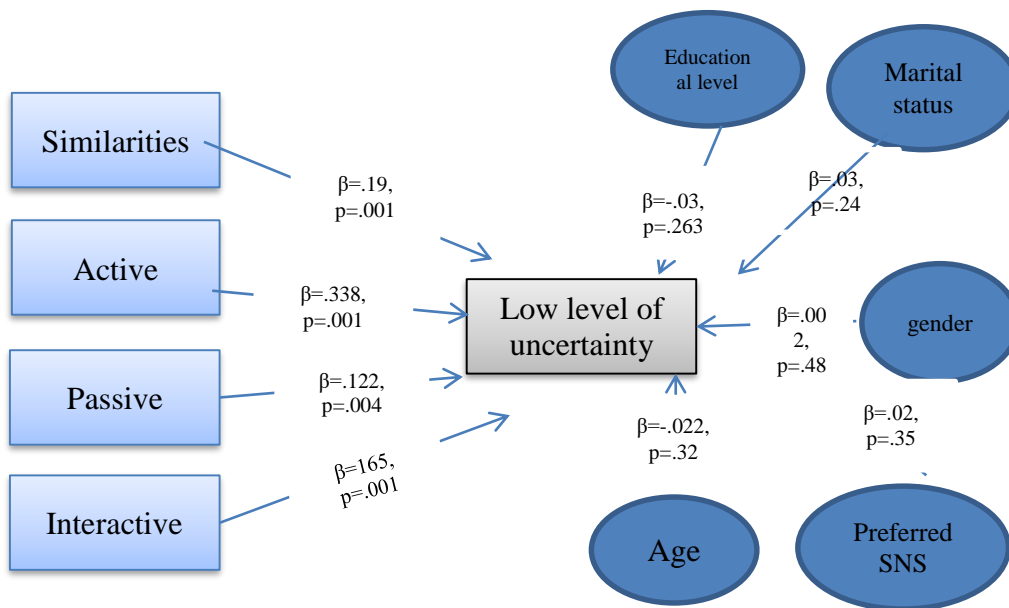

Figure 10: Relationship between URS and Uncertainty Reduction with control variables.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter contains the summary of the research, conclusion drawn from the study and the theoretical contributions with the submissions and reference for future studies.

5.1 Summary of the Study

This research work is an empirical study that evaluates the influence of SNS such as Facebook which is regarded as the old or the most popular sites and the newer version of the SNS, Instagram choice of usage by international students in reducing their level of uncertainty. The major aim of the study is to find out if there is a shift when a newer platform is being introduced for interaction with different places which solves the problem of the user based on the gratification they obtain.

The research used an international sample, which gives it an international outlook and serves as the strength of the work, to be specific during the distribution of the questionnaires to the international students in the Eastern Mediterranean University, in North Cyprus. The sample of the study consists of about 400 international students of EMU. This study employed the use of structured questionnaire, which is found in the literature to be appropriate for this kind of study. According to the literature, two main types of SNS seem to be dominant. The first and foremost, the Facebook usage and the Instagram usage seem to be almost the same activities for checking what has been posted and what they also post a (Kuru, Bayer, Pasek, & Campbell, 2017;

McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1975; Antheunis, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2010; and Clatterbuck, 1979).

In order to have a fair representation of the international students in EMU, the sample size selection procedure recommended in the literature is adopted and thus 400 sample sizes are selected to be appropriate for the study. Due to the nature of the study, a probability sampling technique was found to be appropriate. The techniques have some advantages over the non-probability sampling techniques which address some of the shortcomings of the probability sampling techniques. Therefore, purposive sampling procedure was employed in distributing the questionnaires to the student. This was adhering strictly to by the author in ensuring that only EMU students are given the questionnaire to fill.

The analysis for this study is done using "Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling" (PLS-SEM). In doing this, both the SPSS the "Statistical Package for Social Sciences" which enabled the use of descriptive and inferential statistics to be carried out for analysis, and the Smart-Partial Least Square Smart-PLS 3 are used for the data processing. The analyses conducted are grouped into two as descriptive and inferential statistics. Thus the descriptive statistics section covered the aspect of frequencies, means, and the standard deviation, while the inferential statistics encompassed the factor analysis, correlation analysis, the Cronbach Alpha and the outlier analysis. Also Andrew Hyes Process Analysis is conducted. This enhanced the research with the large sample size of 400 since the results can be generalized.

The results from the research conducted make theoretical contribution, based on the results obtained. This would enhance the knowledge of the other researchers and also

aid other readers in the field of Communication and Media Studies particularly on the U&GT and URT on students' choice of platforms with diverse or numerous alternatives thus discussion is made and conclusions are drawn from the results.

Thus the study makes contributions to both theories with respect to further research which involve international students and their level of uncertainty with students that they are very close not really in a new environment.

5.2 Conclusions Drawn from the Study

Conclusions drawn from the study have been observed to add new findings as well as supporting numerous research that have been conducted in the field earlier. Although not all hypotheses are supported, thereby making different discoveries, to the literature, findings also are able to contribute to the theories in the field of communication and Media Studies during online communication with those known and those who are not known for social interactions. This section seeks to reconsider the research questions in order to provide answers to them.

This study shows that there is choice of social media platforms when communicating with different places based on the availability of the SNS, thus results show that there are differences by age and also by gender when trying to make a choice of platform to use for communicating with different places but supporting the fact that was since predicted by Marshall McLuhan's claims that once there is a new medium, the older media will be out dated and obsolete. The new one will come with the attributes of the older one but it would enrich the means of social interaction and thus competition or preference would arise. Thus it has observed that the use of Instagram with some improved features aided the gradual replacement of the most popular Facebook

although using the Facebook at home is still very strong. Thus, Facebook and the family usage is said to be good for relating with family and friends. One of the most important claims is that students or youth may not wish to be on the same platform with which their families are using the essence of the question (which platform do you prefer to use when communicating families and friends)? The response shows that the students are not leaving Facebook, as about 52.5% of them still use it to communicate with family and friends, while some (47.5%) rather prefer to utilize the newer platforms to be specific in their socialization with their families instead of leaving Facebook which some of the students also claim it is crowded and popular, but their patronage to Facebook is still high.

Although adolescents who's their category is not too considered during this research are observed that they may be careless about privacy and so have no problem when using the Facebook based on intensity of Facebook usage (IFU) but still some authors argue that it is the medium that serves as predictor (Dhir & Tsai, 2017).

Yet some researchers predict uses and gratification to be the predictor having some impact which are significant since users are active and their choice of platforms are goal oriented (Dhir & Tsai, 2017). Dhir and Tsai further explain that though the adolescents use the same Facebook and do not fear about what they post; as a result of privacy the younger adult will fear what they put on a page hence their intensity of Facebook usage may be less when compared to the adolescent.

Another observation is the use of the newer platform with all new places like host community and the use of older medium for other international communications hence the results reveal the students prefer to use the newer SNS. Thus the use of new

platform, in this case, Instagram seems to be higher than the use of Facebook indeed earlier it has been the have been stated that newer media replaces the old one based on the Marshal McLuhan law of the media, stressing that media are "utter or outter" (extension of our selves) which means when we learn about our media we also learn about ourselves (Sandstrom, 2012). The use of Instagram can best be described as the "tetrad of Marshal Mcluhan" for one media replaces the other. For example, with the radio, it replaced the voice of man. When Television came, it replaced the radio and so the internet also displaced the TV, through those unfolding stages, it is shown that the advancement in technology, making the internet interactive which up to date there is a considerable body of research which indicates that we can feel each other's presence without touching.

In line with the URT axioms, which suggest that the non-verbal communication tend to increase the level of uncertainty, leads to verbal communication which can reduce the level of uncertainty as such, information seeking becomes relevant whereas users tend to disclose some of the information presenting on SNS even when they are not requested. Those who are similar to each other attract as well those who in the same field like tribes, community, the same country, they like themselves, thus when this happened, reciprocity sets in which either they open up to each other or the refrain (Redmond, 2015).

The use of different platforms may have different reasons attached to it. While the younger ones prefer the newer SNS, according to researchers conducted, people and different types of relationship correlates with online socialization. Users' openness, age, sociability with the gender and their agreeableness in conjunction with their need

for understanding play some vital role in information they exchange (Hughes, Rowe, Batey, and Lee, 2012).

In general, there are certain recommendations that users put into consideration, which the network they use also pay an essential role by (Rogers, 2014). This is in support of the newly added axioms (8 and 9) that shared networks reduce uncertainty and communication satisfaction respectively as the new axioms added by Turner and West (2010). Based on the theoretical perspective, openness which can be liken to one's self-disclosure during the uncertainty reduction plays a vital role in cases of users' hiding their identity or not opening up will affect the choice of a platform, which surrounds their security too. Age is a factor during conversation too. Sociability with gender plays another key role that some prefer to relate with same gender on a platform thus the axiom on similarity counts during preference.

Based on the discussion why students go online, results revealed that although they may be considered for two purposes, categorizing the reasons into two for intention social action which social influence is examined. Also social presence is another based on the U&GT. The result has it that the "we- intent to use social networks" is positively related to "cases of social presence" Thus, this can serve as a reason for choosing a platform like Facebook. This on the other hand may be different with another platform like Instagram (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011).

But the most important thing is that information is the vital and most central to any means of communication, be it on Facebook or Instagram. Hence the essence is to pass the information across to the receiver, thus regardless of the platform, only that some platforms are preferred to others for certain reasons based on user's discretion adding

that the features of a platform determine the level of its usage for interaction and sociability (Ariel & Avidar, 2015).

This is supported by the assumptions of uses and gratification that users are active and based on the platform available that compete with user's attention, they use them for their satisfaction not for the sake of influence or as a result of bandwagon effect.

In relation to the research questions posed, here are the answers to the questions based on responses by the students.

RQ.1 Which SNS do you prefer using most when communicating generally?

The results reveal that for general communication, students prefer the use of Instagram with 71.25% and Facebook 28.75% this therefore, means that students are thrilled with any new technology. In a report submitted by statista.com, in US, Snapchat is leading with Instagram as the second most preferred SNS among teens thus, this reveals that Facebook as the most popular is now taking the fourth position with the following percentage since Fall 2018 with 46% on Snapchat, Instagram with 32%, about 6% of users are on Twitter while other group of users constituting another 6% are on Facebook. But in a spring, there was a little change from the number recorded, Snapchat dropped with about 5% and Instagram increased with 3% which Twitter and Facebook remain on the same figure maintaining 6%, respectively (Clement, 2019).

This result is in line with the observation made by other authors that as a result of technological changes in upgrade of the platforms, based on functions they offered and their design, these will motivate users which will present another change in the pattern of usage, with self-motivation Instagram is still leading while usage with family and friends, Snapchat is the most preferred hence Facebook is overtaking as a results of

upgrading (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Cases of newer social media replacing the old social media as opine by the above authors.

RQ.2 Which SNS do the international students preferred most when communicating with families/friends, host community, and other acquaintances? When communicating with home, results reveal quite a different answer from the respondents that the Facebook is the most preferred by students when they would like to communicate with their parents.

Facebook is used by 55.7% while Instagram is 44.3% depicting that what is best for communicating is not Instagram but Facebook among international students. Earlier, Instagram is documented to be known for self-discourse. Most of the research conducted reports Facebook as the most used platform for students' communication with home, seeking for social support hence the reason for Facebook use as the most reliable for communication between parents and students, adds to that the popular nature of Facebook as Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS) in communicating with home (Sin & Kim, 2013). Based on research we can argue that before the introduction of Instagram as a means of communication in 2010, there wasn't other means that was much common among students, so that most of the research then, concentrate on Facebook (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009).

For the sake of communication with students and others in North Cyprus, results reveal the students prefer Instagram instead of Facebook. Based on the above results, 62% of the students prefer the use of Instagram to Facebook. This means that students are moving with the trend that once there is a newer platform introduced they tend to use it agreeing with (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). The bandwagon effect could be another

reason for affecting the students' preference and use of a platform. The bandwagon which is having a "contagious effect" based on what is existing and having popularity, thus they users are many tend to influence the students use (Schmitt-Beck, 2015). This may be one of the reasons for preference influence by other students as it is seen as the most used SNS within Campus.

Although findings reveal that the use of Instagram is mostly preferred by students for their communication, but in school when communicating also, aside the use of Facebook as a platform, there are other means like web search and online maps aside friends assisting international students too when in a strange place. This is a research study conducted in United State on how international students cope. Thus it is concluded that different platforms are available now to serve their different purposes (Oh, Butler, & Lee, 2014). Aside the most popular platform, students are hooked up with so many means to assist in their communication among students themselves. This is agreeing with the URT axioms that similarity attracts; and also the cases of shared network plays an important role as they are part of the new axiom added to communication theory based on changes that abound, thus having the belief that shared network can reduce the level of uncertainty (Turner & West, 2010).

Others category of the study represent people who are neither students nor parents but still communicate with the international students. As a matter of reducing uncertainty within the confine of their networks, results revealed that the students prefer to use the Instagram too. This shows that all of the conversation will be better when images are used thus pictures they said speak louder than words. Having different results for the motivation of using Instagram and why users are so fanatical about the platform, it has been stated earlier that Instagram is used for interacting socially, good for glancing or

taking a look at things, to express one-self and also served as an archival platform which users can easily refer to (Lee, Lee, Moon, & Sung, 2015). Pictures compliment words which is another argument by some group using the same topic that "pictures can speak better than words", stressing that pictures documented do not create barriers hence the give the real image of the story they ought to especially in the absence of the other interactants', thus the pictures ginger believability (Henley & Général, 2017). Aside backing, pictures also are documented to improve the use of reading with lots of text, adding to ones reading and easy understanding thus the use pictures when teaching; with pictures, this remove stress of readings as a task (Erfani, 2012). Backing the axiom 9 to satisfy the communication need of those who chooses to use the platform which they need, in line with the U&GT users are active, but choices for media are value judgemental.

RQ.3 To what extent does the use of SNS influence low level of Uncertainty reduction among the international students?

The results revealed that use of SNS is positively related to low level of uncertainty based on the outcome. It is a normal occurrence that when someone uses the SNS, it is aimed at trying to reduce their uncertainty. Based on the hypothesis, the results reveal that there is positive relationship between frequent uses of SNS to low level of uncertainty. Going by axiom 3 that when there is high level of uncertainty, the need to seek for information will increase once the need for information seeking increases, level of uncertainty will decrease too. This is supported by the axiom.

RQ.4 To what extent is there a relationship between uncertainty reductions strategies and low level of uncertainty among international students?

It is expected that similarities most times predict any kind of relationship. This is supported with this study's findings that show a positive and significance influence on uncertainty reduction. According to Antheunis, Valkenburg and Peter (2010), when information is available to an online user, the probability of having a low uncertainty is high. This view was corroborated by Redmon (2015) who opined that meaningful online communication can be established if the users share some similarities.

The result from this thesis reveal a positive relationship between passive level of the uncertainty strategy to low level of uncertainty. Hence if someone is engaged in observation, there will be a reason why the user engages in such an observation, though his/her level of uncertainty will be reduced except if the information sought for is not available. This is in line with communication satisfaction axiom (9). Antheunis, Valkenburg, & Peter, (2010) argue that the use of SNS for information seeking is not dependent on the quantity of the information got but on information available. This therefore implies that when there is scarcity of information, the level of uncertainty will rise. But because users on SNS have the time for checking through the wall of friends and those who are "friend's friend", there will be availability of information, hence, users are "extremely active" supporting what Beard suggested when he said uses are more than active alone (Beard, 2015). It is very certain that people will use that platform that is very clear when s/he has a specific target thus the uses and gratification, is audience centred.

The present study reveals that indeed the users are extra-active. The acquire information from written online comments of individual" aside the active, passive and interactive strategies that have been given as the three major URS, thus this research

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acknowledges the aspect of users being extra- active, thus the need to include it in number of strategies.

As for the passive strategy, the result from this study support the argument of a positive relationship between passive strategy and uncertainty reduction. Based on the result got from the analysis, the finding is in agreement with some studies earlier conducted that the passive uncertainty reduction strategies is more active on SNS than any type of URS, which in their separate result, 98.9% of their participants are actively using the passive strategy and 83.9% of the participants are using interactive, while 19.7% are using the active strategy based on research conducted in Hyves (Netherlands) (Antheunis, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2010). More also in correlating the three (3) URS with low level of uncertainty, it was also clear that they are positively correlated thus the hypothesis is supported.

Similarly, interactive strategy is found to have positive and significant relationship. The literature suggests interactive strategy to be more influential than other strategies because it enables a direct information seeking. Even though it is opined by Shin, Lee and Young (2017) to be vary from country to country, however, the results from this study supported the argument that in reducing uncertainty, interactive strategy shows to have a positive and significant impact. For the international students who are in a different country from their home country, there is possibility of uncertainty, but this study has proved that low level of uncertainty could be achieved with interactive strategy.

RQ.5 To what extent do the use of SNS mediate the relationship between the uncertainty reduction strategies and low level of uncertainty among international students?

This study investigated the uncertainty reduction strategies and low level of uncertainty reduction in a novel context and explicated the role of SNS in international students' efforts for reducing uncertainty. The findings from our study demonstrates that the strategies influence on the uncertainty reduction is partially mediates by the use of SNSs.

First, this study found that similarities influence on uncertainty reduction will be partially mediates by the use of SNSs. Though previous studies that are similar to these findings was tilted towards the direct relationship between the similarities and uncertainty reduction (Antheunis, Valkenburg and Peter, 2010; Kappes et al. 2019; Redmond, 2015). Besides our path coefficient shows a positive mediating influence in the relationship between similarities and uncertainty reduction. This implies that the similarities in the user's profile, behaviour and interest exhibits on the platform will influence the uncertainty reduction among the international students but will be partially mediated by the use of SNS. This is the confirmation of the fact that the use of SNS is inevitable (Gauttier and Gauzente, 2018). Meanwhile, the difference in the choice of SNSs was found not to significantly influence the relationship between similarities and uncertainty reduction, which implies that though the international has preference when it comes to the types of SNS to be used, but the difference was found not to be statistically significant.

Secondly, we found that the three strategies of uncertainty reduction (passive, active and interactive) relationship with uncertainty reduction are partially mediates by the

use of SNSs. This finding corroborates the study of Fox and Anderregg (2014) who found a direct relationship between passive strategies and uncertainty reduction. Similarly, the study of Antheunis, Valkenburg and Peter (2010) shows a direct relationship between interactive strategies and uncertainty reduction. Meanwhile, the types of SNSs used by the international students was found to moderate only the relationship between interactive strategies and uncertainty reduction, while it is found not to significantly moderate the relationship between similarities, passive and active strategies and uncertainty reduction.

Furthermore, the mediating influence of the use of SNS found in our study to partially mediate the relationship between similarities, active, passive and interactive strategies is in agreement with some previous studies that opined that SNS play a major role in uncertainty reduction by providing the information needed for a friendship to culminates, that it permits making new friends and also connecting with old friends during interpersonal communication. Therefore, in order to allay the fear of Beard (2015) on the Eurocentric nature of URT, the strategies will be effective in reducing uncertainty in a multicultural environment but through the use of SNS.

RQ.6 To what extent do the types of SNS used by the international students moderate the relationship between uncertainty reduction strategies and low level of uncertainty?

The result from this study shows that individually Instagram was found to moderate the relationship between similarities, active and passive strategies on uncertainty reduction, while Facebook was found to moderate the relationship between active and interactive strategies and uncertainty reduction by the international students.

The theoretical implication of our study is the extension of URT by incorporating the use of SNSs as a mediating factor. This hence extends previous studies that focus solely on the strategies influence on uncertainty reduction and the individual types of SNS. This study suggests that previous works might have exaggerated the effectiveness of the strategies without factor in the use of SNS, instead the effectiveness of the strategies on the uncertainty reduction by the international students may depend on the use of SNSs.

In addition, this study suggests that the only relationship between interactive strategies and uncertainty reduction is moderated by types of SNS. It is then argued in this study that the reduction strategies for uncertainty reduction will be effective among the international students through the use of SNS, so that they will be able to predict the attitude of the fellows they are interacting with. This will enable them to create an emotional idea that will assist them in predicting the behaviour of the interactants based on the impression they may create, their intention, emotions and likely behaviour they may exhibit.

RQ.7 Is there a relationship between low level of uncertainty and social interaction among the international students?

It is logical that social interaction becomes visible when an individual's utility from an action is improved by others that are taken the same actions. In the context of uncertainty, this study predicts that a low level of uncertainty could possibly have a positive relationship with social interaction. The result from this study sustained the hypothesis with the positive and significant result achieved. Thus, among the international student, when employed any of the strategies of uncertainty reduction

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through the use of SNS, this study show that low level of uncertainty is achievable and could possibly leads to social interaction.

RQ.8 To what extent do the demographic characteristics of the international students influence their uncertainty reduction strategies on low level of uncertainty?

This study could not establish the influence of any of the demographic characteristic of the international students on the relationship between the strategies of uncertainty reductions and the low level of uncertainty. This requires a further study to possibly explore the categories in each of the control variables employed in this study.

Finally, with the theme of uncertainty being a great concern for the international students who are in another environment, the clear emerging framework for this study is uncertainty reduction. There are four distinct takeaways that is revealed from this study. These includes: (i) the significant influence of all the strategies on the low level of uncertainty, (ii) the significant mediating influence of the use of SNS in the influence of uncertainty reduction strategies on the uncertainty reduction by the international students who needs to adapt to their new environment and initiate a new relationship, (iii) the moderating influence of types of social network sites used by the users on the interactive strategies influence on uncertainty reduction, and (iv) indeed, it is revealed in this study that Instagram moderates the influence of similarities, passive and active strategies on the uncertainty reduction, while Facebook moderates only the influence of active and interactive strategies on uncertainty reduction.

5.3 Theoretical Contribution

The findings from this thesis give credence to the (U&GT). The findings are major steps advancing the U&GT. It is propounded in the theory that when mass media is deployed in some circumstances, large numbers of people are influenced. This is through the message that will stimulate their desired response. In the case of this study, it is believed that technology has changed the face of communication and as such, the various means that is in use requires adequate investigation to ascertain its contribution to the modern day challenges.

 SNS have been with us for a while, but the application keeps changing, and becomes more sophisticated and user' friendly which makes it possible for people to be more interested in one application than the other. In line with the postulation of gravitation theory, it is believed that the media have direct effect on the people. Based on this, when an international student finds himself/herself in another country, s/he expected to interact, and this interaction requires communication with both the host community and the people from his/her origin country. But in the course of communication, there is need to source for information about the people in the new environment or sending information to his/her people in the origin country, thus most times brings some kind of uncertainty. For instance, there is need to know about the new people and the need to also ensure that information sending to either the new people or old acquaintances are secured. This view is in agreement with this study as it is evident that international students are experiencing some uncertainty in this regard.

According to Wurff (2011), one of the postulation of users' gravitation theory is the consideration of how people utilize media to gratify their social and psychological

needs. This postulation is significantly supported in this study as the assumption stated that the use of SNS (Facebook and Instagram) enable the international students to reduce their level of uncertainty. This assumption is validated in this study, as it is established from the findings that when the international students deploy the use of either Facebook or Instagram for their communication, they reduce their level of uncertainty. It is concluded in this study that the higher the use of SNS, the lower the level of uncertainty. This further translated to how the people use communication through media to gratify their psychological needs. Part of their need as an international student is to have social interaction. The use of SNS has helped tremendously in this area, as the findings in this study affirmed it that when international students reduced their uncertainty through SNS, it facilitates their social interaction which is one of their psychological needs as international student.

Though, the user gravitation theory helps gratifying one need to a particular medium which the audience finds convenient. However, the aim of the gravitation theory is for communication through media, but the initial interaction between the people before the interaction requires examination, this is where the URT becomes imperative. In this case of international student, who is new to a particular area, there is possibility of high level of uncertainty, and in spite of the uncertainty, s/he expected to communicate with both the new acquaintances at the new place, and the friends and family back home. It was postulated in the URT that in the course of interaction (which could be through any medium), the interlocutor needs information about his/her communicating partner to attenuate their uncertainty. In doing this, it is expected of the international students as the respondents in this study to examine initial interaction about the people they are going to communicate with. It is further elaborated in the

URT that three (3) strategies (active, passive, and interactive) are embedded in the theory to be deployed in overcoming the challenge of examining the initial interaction before communicating with their communicating partner.

Though, the focus of the URT is on provision of understanding on initial interactions between two strangers either from the same culture or not, the preference or medium through which the interaction occurs is not the target in the theory. The postulation of URT is put to test in this study to investigate the impact of the strategies of uncertainty reduction on how the international students can reduce their level of uncertainty. It is established in this study that the deployment of active, passive and interactive strategies assists the international students in overcoming the challenge of uncertainty reduction among the international students has not been exhaustively investigated previously in the literature.

Meanwhile, with the continuous development of SNS and studies have revealed their effectiveness in providing succour to some human challenges. This study makes a great contribution to the literature by looking at how the use of SNS which is the modern means of communication (from gravitation theory) to mediate the relationship between the uncertainty reduction strategies (as postulated in URT), and the ability of international students to reduce their level of uncertainty. It is established in this study that although there is a direct relationship from the strategies (active, passive and interactive) and the uncertainty reduction, the relationship is found to be partially mediated by the use of SNS. In addition, another theoretical contribution of this study is in the moderating effect of types of SNS (Facebook and Instagram) in the relationship between interactive strategy and low level of uncertainty.

Finally, the theoretical contribution of this study to the literature on Communication and Media studies is significant, as revealed that the use of SNS plays a pivotal role in how international students can make initial interaction with strangers, reduce their uncertainty and facilitates social interaction.

5.4 Direction for Future Studies

This study provides opportunity for future research and avails significant information which serves two purposes: to gain understanding on the needs and behaviour of international students in deploying SNS to reduce their uncertainty, and establishes the foundation to develop an ongoing research with respect to SNS and uncertainty reduction. It is no doubt that SNS will continue to evolve, and as a result of globalization, students will be going outside their domain to study and need to adapt and integrate into their host environment. Thus they would require well-suitable strategies of reducing their uncertainty.

In the future, qualitative research can be used to find deeper understanding about what international students do to reduce uncertainty when they travel for their higher education. The case of the married can be focussed on to be specific the Tertiary Educational Trust Fund (TETFUND) scholars can be put into consideration on what the married do to reduce uncertainty in communication with their families back home.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Greetings!

This questionnaire is for the purpose of gathering information on preference of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) used for communication among students in EMU, North Cyprus. I will be grateful if you can answer the questions appropriately. However, you may choose to refrain from participating if you decide to. All information given is for sake of this research know that it shall be kept confidential.

Note: Uncertainty in our research is conceptualized as "difficulty to make a choice or having lots of alternatives from which one can make a choice".

Thank you.

SECTION A

Demographics of users

1. Age (a)18- 22 (b) 23-27 (c)28-32 (d) 33- 37 (e) 38 and above

2. Gender a) Male (b) Female

3. Educational level (a) Undergraduate (b) Masters (c) Ph.D

4. Please tick the name of your faculty

a) Architecture (b) Arts and Science (c) Business and Economics (d) Communication and Media Studies (e) Dentistry (f) Education (g) Engineering (h) School of Computing and Engineering (i) Pharmacy (j) Tourism and Hospitality Management (k) Others please specify…

5. (a) Single (b) In a relationship (c) Married (d) Divorced

Background information

6. Which SNS do you prefer using most when communicating? (a) Facebook (b) Instagram

How long have you been using Facebook, Instagram?

How long have you been using	(a) 0	(b) 1- 2 years	(c) 3-4 years	(d) 5-6 years)	(e) 7 years and above.
7. Facebook					

8. Instagram					
How long do you stay connected on these platforms.	(a) 0	(b) 1 hour-2hours	(c) 3-4 hours	(d) 5-6 hours	(e) 7 hours and above.
9. Facebook					
10. Instagram					

Among the platforms you use for communication, which one do you prefer to use when communicating with?

QTNS	Places and people like…	Facebook	Instagram	Snapchat	Others platforms please specify …
11.	Family and Friends (People back home).				
12.	People in North Cyprus (host community).				
13.	Others (international acquaintances).				

14. Which strategy do you prefer to use mostly when you want to reduce uncertainty on social networking sites?

(a) I observe and ignore messages on SNSs because it is not important (passive).

(b) I sometimes ask other people who are my friends on the platform (active).

(c) I ask the fellow who is directly involved (Interactive).

(d) Sometimes I become (extra-active) by checking through my followers' wall.

FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM FREQUENCY OF USAGE

Please tick the appropriate answer to the following questions

5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree= 3, Undecided=2 Disagree and 1 = SD Strongly
Disagree

No.	statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
15.	I check my account on Facebook.	S				
16.	I post something on my Facebook page.	5	4	3	2	1
17.	I browse the newsfeed on Facebook.	5	4	3	2	1
18.	I send private message on Facebook chat.	5	4	3	2	1
I9.	I check my account on Instagram.	5	4	3	2	1
20.	I post things on my Instagram page.	5	4	3	2	1
21.	I send private message on Instagram.	5	4	3	2	1

Similarity

Please tick the appropriate answer to the following questions

5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree= 3, Undecided=2 Disagree and 1 = SD Strongly
Disagree

NO		Strongly Agree	Agree	undecided	Disagreed	Strongly Disagree
22.	Students from EMU think like me while using SNS.	5	4	3	2	1
23.	Student from EMU behaves like me when. using SNS.	5	4	3	2	1
24.	Students from EMU act in a similar way to me when using SNS.	5	4	3	2	1

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25.	Students from my Faculty are like me when using any of the SNS.	5	4	3	2	1

Uncertainty reduction strategy Measures

Please tick the appropriate answer to the following questions on how as a student you can reduce your uncertainty when in North Cyprus (Active, Passive and Interactive)

5= Strongly Agree, 4=Agree= 3, Undecided=2 Disagree and 1 = SD Strongly Disagree

RQ.	STATEMENTS	SA	A	U	D	SD
26.	I use Social Networking Sites to know more about students' private life from my university (**Extra Active**).	5	4	3	2	1
27.	I find out the behavior of students from their friends from my university (**Active**).	5	4	3	2	1
28.	I ask other students that are my friends about issues from my university (**Active**).	5	4	3	2	1
29.	I give thumbs up to some information on my page generally (**Active**).	5	4	3	2	1
30.	I give heart to those who are dear to me from my university (**Active**).	5	4	3	2	1
31.	I sometimes read through information on a post from my university (**Passive**).	5	4	3	2	1
32.	Warm smiles on a profile picture easily attract me to some students online (**Passive**).	5	4	3	2	1
33.	I ignore students that are not from my country in my university (**Passive**).	5	4	3	2	1
34.	I easily interact online with students that I know from my university Interactive ((**Interactive**).	5	4	3	2	1

35.	I call chat with students that we are friends from my university **(Interactive).**	5	4	3	2	1
36.	I engage students who are from my Faculty in online conversation **(Interactive).**	5	4	3	2	1
37.	Sometimes we have interactive session online with my course mates **(Interactive).**	5	4	3	2	1

Level of Uncertainty

Please tick the appropriate answer to the following questions on how as a student you can predict each other Strongly Agree, 4=Agree= 3, Undecided=2 Disagree and 1 = SD Strongly Disagree

		SA	A	U	D	SD
38.	I can predict very well how students can behave online.	5	4	3	2	1
39.	I can predict very well the things students cherish online.	5	4	3	2	1
40.	I can predict very well students' attitude online**.**	5	4	3	2	1
41.	I can predict from students post when online.	5	4	3	2	1
42.	I easily understand students online.	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix B: Ethics Committee Approval

Eastern Mediterranean University / Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi

Etik Kurulu / Ethics Committee

Reference No: ETK00-2019-0264   11.12.2019
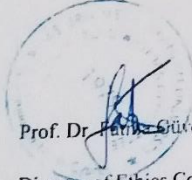
Subject: Application for Ethics.

RE: Sarah Gambo (15600095)
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies

To Whom It May Concern:

On the date of **11.12.2019.** (Meeting number **2019/28-08**), EMU's Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee (BAYEK) has granted. Sarah Gambo from the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies to pursue with her PhD thesis work **"Preference of Social Networking Sites (SNS) for reducing uncertainity among international students: Case of Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) North Cyprus"** under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Bahire Efe Özad. This decision has been taken by the majority of votes.

Regards.

Prof. Dr. Fatma Güven Lisaniler
Director of Ethics Committee

FGL/ns.

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