

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through our group's research on uses and gratifications theory as it pertains to the Internet, we found an abundance of different types of studies and sources. This executive summary will act as a general review of the material our group reviewed. It will also include a brief discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of uses and gratifications theory that were articulated in various articles, as well as of some of the individual research projects cited.

Many of the articles in our annotated bibliography can be classified as quantitative in nature. They acted as reports of quantitative research projects and utilized textual structures of hypotheses and/or research questions, methods, results, and discussion. Some articles, however, seemed to be more editorial or commentarial in nature, such as the articles by Haridakis and Whitmore (2006) and Westerik, Renckstorf, Lammers, and Wester (2006).

Several of the articles cited in our bibliography explored the issue of the strengths, or lack thereof, of uses and gratifications theory.

In terms of an advantage of uses and gratifications theory, Flanagin (2005), citing Ruggiero, declared uses and gratifications theory as having "strength in assessing new media given their specific technical attributes (Ruggiero, 2000)."

As for disadvantages of the theory, we turn to the article by Westerik et al. (2006). According to them, and also as mentioned in our annotated bibliography, uses and gratifications theory is linked to various paradigms rooted in economics which consequently weaken the theory. They proposed integrating what they termed discrete-time event history analysis as well as the approach of action theory with uses and gratifications in order to address its disadvantages.

Many of the authors of the articles found during our research also conceded weaknesses in their own research endeavors.

Dimmick, Chan, and Li (2004), for instance, noted that a pitfall of their study of the interactions between news services in old media and new (Internet) media was the fact that their sample size (211 randomly-selected people) was too small. Because of this, they acknowledged an inability to speculate beyond the sample population.

Furthermore, Kaye and Johnson (2004) admitted one weakness of their experiment to ascertain reasons of Internet use for political items. They wrote that their sample was not randomly selected and call on future research to devise a way to randomly select participants. According to their article, the reason why Kaye and Johnson were unable to work with a random sample was because they wanted only “politically interested Internet users” (p. 202).

In conclusion, uses and gratifications theory has both advantages and disadvantages, but, according to Ruggiero cited in Westerik et al. (2006), it is “still the standard perspective for studying audience activity” (p. 140).