

The Use of Smartphones as a News Resource by Female University Students in the UAE

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Abstract : Little empirical data exists regarding smartphone usage for news consumption in the UAE, and no previous research explored undergraduate female university students' usage of smartphones. This represents a gap in the professional literature and makes it an important area to examine. Uses and Gratifications theory is used to study the motivations of consumers for adopting a particular type of communication tool. This theory is an audience-centred approach to understanding mass communication that assumes audiences are active consumers of media and explains why and how people seek out specific media to satisfy needs. This theory is particularly relevant given the rapid development of new communication technologies. Situated within this theoretical framework, this study utilised a quantitative research design to explore respondents' (N=488) how and why respondents use their smartphones. Further, this study explored the relationship between mobile news use and the use of other mediums for news access and how different gratifications predict mobile hard news use and mobile soft news use. Results revealed that smartphones often replace traditional media as a news source and have become students' primary source of news. Results also revealed that different gratifications can be used as a predictor of mobile hard news and soft news and that most students use their smartphones to access soft news. These results are fundamental in allowing us to predict possible future trends relating to news consumption in the UAE and the myriad ways in which the media landscape is changing.

Keywords : uses and gratifications, smartphones, university students, news consumption

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