"My Guy or Girl in the Ring" and on My Newsfeed: A Study of Viewers' Uses and Gratifications of WWE Social Media

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World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) is a publicly traded global media conglomerate that has an international audience and revenues of more than $800 million in 2017 (WWE Corporate, "Investors"). The company has taken the sports entertainment industry, previously known as wrestling, from smoke-filled bingo halls and old gymnasiums into sold-out stadiums and even its own Internet-based streaming service channel. Most notably, in addition to its original programming watched by more than 650 million homes worldwide in 25 languages (WWE Corporate, "Who We Are"), WWE's far-reaching social media presence helps augment its programming and enhance the experience for viewers. In 2016 alone, WWE social media had 1.14 billion engagements over 739 million different social media accounts (WWE Corporate, "Key Performance Indicators"), numbers that helped them achieve their financial and company goals during broadcasts.

WWE live broadcasts are a unique mixture of theatre, entertainment, reality television, and gameshow. They regularly "social cast" during their live and taped broadcasts, taking fans' opinions and suggestions through engagement to help shape the on-air outcomes of the product. They routinely plug their social media handles and accounts during broadcasts to create a two-way dynamic between the "superstars" and the fans. It works so well, in fact, that the company is listed weekly among the top ten social media scores by Neilson Social Media (2017) for series and specials, outperforming other events such as Monday Night Football on social media. Each "superstar" has their own social media account, at times breaking "kayfabe" or the audience's perceived interpretation of that character to interact with fans, both during and between broadcasts. While the writers are the main authors of what the outcomes will be, the fans and their social media presence can shape the programming. WWE writers will revise sometimes long-term plans for characters based upon fan reactions on social media. WWE social

media has helped grow its outreach and engagement exponentially, and its impact cannot be ignored.

While the activity and impact of WWE social media are widely regarded as a success, the use of this technology is relatively new in the WWE's history. As with any phenomenon of using new communication technology (Ruggeiro), what requires attention is why users engage with WWE social media. This study's theoretical significance is important on several levels. Most research exists on the WWE through the critical-cultural and qualitative lenses; however, little to no quantitative scholarship exists on the sports entertainment genre. Furthermore, while there is ample scholarship on uses and gratifications (Katz, Blumler and Guretvich) and social media, this study will be the first to look specifically at the psychological underpinnings or the "why" an individual uses social media to interact with WWE performers on social media. The television product drives social media use and, in turn, social media use is often used as a barometer for the television show's programming. The study reviews uses and gratifications of legacy media, the Internet, and social media to explore the motives of WWE social media use, as phrased with this research question:

RQ1: What kinds of gratifications are most likely to be sought from WWE social media use?

The findings presented in this study not only add to the existing body of uses and gratification literature, but also provide insight to the co-viewing phenomenon with live televised events and offer predicting variables for WWE social media use. Based on prior literature, this study uses five gratifications (i.e. habit, surveillance, voyeurism, entertainment and relaxation) found in legacy media, parasocial interaction, and three psychological antecedents (i.e. contextual age, locus of control, and affinity) to predict viewers' use of WWE social media.

Uses and Gratifications

This study deals with a very constrained use of social media, specifically WWE personalities on social media, but the findings will contribute to an already rich body of uses and gratifications research literature. Before researching the cultural and societal implications of new media technologies, the reasons of why and how individuals use those new technologies (Perse and Dunn) must be explained.

When new technologies are diffused widely in society, scholars apply the uses and gratifications paradigm to understand new media use motivations and behaviors (Rubin and Bantz) and, thus, how the new technologies are being used (Rosengren, Wenner, and Palmgren).

In the theory of uses and gratifications, "(a) media behavior is purposive, goal-directed and motivated, (b) people select media content to satisfy their needs and desires, (c) social and psychological dispositions mediate that behavior, and (d) media compete with other forms of communication—or functional alternatives—such as interpersonal interaction for selection, attention and use." (Rubin, Haridakis, and Eyal 129). The uses-and-gratifications theoretical framework thereby assumes that an individual's sociological and psychological makeup will influence an individual's media use; any effects from the mediated communication then relate to the reasons for using it (Katz, Blumler and Guretvich; Rosengren). It further assumes that (1) in using the chosen media, the audience remains active with "goal-directed media behavior"; and (2) individual predispositions, social interaction, and environmental factors shape audience members' program expectations (Wimmer and Dominick). Since this study focuses on the use of legacy media (television) in conjunction with an Internet-based media (social media), a review of literature on both is necessary.

Uses and Gratifications and Legacy Media

In a response for calls for more updated theoretical and methodological studies in uses and gratifications, Shyam Sundar and Anthony Limperos explained that studies with gratifications found in Internet-based media were similar to those found in legacy or traditional media. WWE social media would not exist without WWE television programming. Thus, legacy media gratifications, despite this study's main subject of inquiry being social media, are appropriate to use as measures due to television being the source material for social media use.

In a fraction of his abundant research of television with uses and gratifications, Alan Rubin ("Ritualized") found that media use is either ritualized or instrumental. He posited ritualized use as the habitual use of media to pass the time or to divert attention from one's reality. The opposite was instrumental use or active and goal-oriented use of the media. A look at reality television programming through the uses and gratifications paradigm (Papacharissi and

Mendelson) found the most common gratifications were relaxation, habitual use or passing time, companionship, social interaction, and voyeurism. Surveillance and habit have been found to be very significant predictors of news consumption of current events in uses and gratifications literature (Diddi and LaRose; Vincent and Basil). Of these motivations, habitual use, surveillance, and voyeurism are synonymous with WWE social media use. Users can access, with the aid of mobile or portable devices, WWE personalities on social media anytime they want to as a force of habit or simply to pass time waiting for the next task. Surveillance on social media gives them a sense of WWE programming and an opportunity to learn more about the current storylines on television. People can also observe what WWE personalities are using social media to talk about as evidenced by the links, photos, and statuses posted. In other words, social media offers voyeurism to the user of his or her WWE network partners.

With these observations in place, the following hypothesis was generated:

H1: Gratifications of legacy media (habit, voyeurism, surveillance) will be gratifications of WWE social media use.

Uses and Gratifications of the Internet

While legacy media can offer some gratifications related to this study, uses and gratifications literature on the Internet, a medium that any social media needs to operate on, can offer additional gratifications. In an early study of uses and gratifications of the Internet, entertainment, personal relevance, and information involvement were found to be the most significant motives for using the Internet (Eighmey and McCord). Barbara Kaye and others (Johnson and Kaye) strengthened those findings when entertainment was found to be the strongest motive in Internet use. Zizi Papacharissi and Rubin found that interpersonal utility, passing time, information seeking, convenience, and entertainment were the most salient motivating factors of why people used the Web. Another study (Ferguson and Perse) found more consistent motivations for audiences using the web and television: entertainment, passing time, and social information.

Paul Haridakis and Gary Hanson examined YouTube users' motives and individual differences such as social activity, interpersonal interaction, locus of control, sensation seeking, innovativeness, and affinity to predict viewing and sharing behaviors. Subjects viewed YouTube videos for information sharing, and

viewed and shared videos for entertainment, co-viewing, and social interaction. In the vein of WWE social media, videos can be viewed as entertainment as they are customized to gratify each user's need for excitement and preferences predicting viewing videos on YouTube and sharing videos.

Considering the findings on gratifications for Internet use, the next hypothesis proposes the following:

H2: Gratifications of the Internet and social media (entertainment, relaxation) will be gratifications of WWE social media use.

Predictors of Media Use

Prior uses and gratifications literature has revealed a slew of predictors that enhance an individual's use of media in addition to gratifications of use: affinity, parasocial interaction, locus of control, and contextual age. Papacharissi and Rubin operationalized Internet use as the total number of hours spent on the Internet each day. For WWE social media use, it is logical to look at the number of hours a user consumes WWE social media: first, by looking at the number of hours one accesses WWE social media. However, social media is not simply about the hours one spends on it. More importantly, the unique nature of social media is an amalgamation of previous media interactions.

Social media is also personalized based on the user's volition to control what pictures or newsfeeds are on his or her account, meaning that users will more likely have an affinity toward social media. In their Internet uses scale, Rubin and Papacharissi adopted the Television Affinity Scale (Rubin "Examination") to assess users' liking or affinity for the Internet. Rubin ("Examination") linked affinity for television programming to several motives including arousal, habit, pass time, escape, entertainment, companionship, and information seeking. Affinity toward soap operas, which the WWE has been described as, has been related to entertainment and relaxation (Rubin "Daytime Television") as well as information seeking, escape, and voyeurism (Perse). Rubin ("Uses and Gratifications") found that habitual, less-engaged users exhibit an affinity with their chosen medium while instrumental, active users have an affinity for the selected content. Since social media users are active users because they control the information they see and consume, they will likely have affinity for certain subject matters

Along with activity level, another predictor of media use and gratification is parasocial interaction. Parasocial interaction (Horton and Wohl) is a bond of familiarity and closeness that is formed with media personalities over time. John Turner found that "attitude homophily" was the strongest predictor of parasocial interaction with different television programs. Additionally, research indicates that parasocial interaction was highly correlated with reliance on television (Rubin, Perse, and Powell), the main platform of WWE "superstars." Thus, fans may look to their superstars on television coupled with social media for emotional support.

Contextual age (Rubin and Rubin) is another possible predictor pf WWE social media use. Contextual age's dimensions consist of physical health, economic security, interpersonal interaction, mobility, and life satisfaction. Research found people lacking in those dimensions relied more on television for a variety of gratifications (Rubin and Rubin). All these factors may or may not influence the amount of use one has of WWE social media. Subjects may or may not be where they want to be in life, and as a result may rely on WWE social media to fulfill other areas in their life.

Julian Rotter's locus of control may be another predictor variable, which theorizes that people have a degree to which they believe they have control over the outcomes in their lives as opposed to external forces. Rubin ("Effect of Locus")) found that loci of control were significant predictors of aggression and satisfaction, respectively, on television. Since WWE is a violent form of programming, and fans believe they can hijack the outcomes of live shows through social media, locus of control is an appropriate predictor variable.

Given the range of potential predictors for WWE social media use, the following research question is proposed:

RQ2: What are the strongest predictors of WWE social media use?

Method

Sample

The questionnaire used in this study was administered online via Qualtrics software to 14 different WWE fan groups on Facebook with their administrators' permission from April through August 2016. It was posted in the groups'

newsfeed and their membership was composed of various geographic location, age and races. The common attribute for all members was their WWE social media use. This sampling method produced a total of 206 respondents.

General demographic questions were asked regarding gender, age, income and race. Of the 206 respondents for the survey, 189 were male (91%) while 17 were female (8%). The average age of the respondents was 33.08. Forty-one percent of the sample had earned at least a high school diploma. The largest racial category was white (36.4).

A qualifying question asking if subjects used WWE social media at all was posed first. The first section of the questionnaire examined how often subjects used WWE social media and what device they used for to access the content. Users in the sample followed WWE social media accounts the most on Twitter (M=19.63, SD=52.26), then Facebook (M=8.26, SD=13.55), Instagram (M=5.84, SD=11.74) and YouTube (M=1.42, SD=2.82). Subjects reported via an open-ended question that they actively used WWE social media on average about 6 hours (M=5.94) per week.

Motivations and Psychological Dispositions

To discover the gratifications of use of WWE social media, this study relied on prior relevant research. A total of 18 measures were taken from prior scales in empirically significant uses and gratifications research. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreements with statements concerning the reasons why they used current events on a Likert scale of 1 "not at all" to 5 "strongly agree. A principle component exploratory factor analysis using Varimax rotation was used to identify the gratifications of app use with Eigenvalues greater than 1.0. The resulting factor analysis, or gratification categories, will be discussed in the analysis section, as seen in Table 1.

Affinity, parasocial relationships, contextual age, and locus of control were measured to develop a coherent scale for each. Cronbach's alpha (α) was calculated for all scales and deemed them acceptable for use.

Affinity (α=0.824) was measured through four questions using a 5-point Likert scale to measure agreement with the following statements: "I would rather use WWE social media than other social media accounts"; "I could easily do without WWE social media for several days"; "I would feel lost without WWE

social media"; and "WWE social media is one of the most important things I do every day."

Parasocial relationship (α=0.868) was measured using 10 questions using a 5-point Likert scale to measure agreement with the following statements: "WWE social media shows me what the superstars are like"; "When the superstars joke with one another on WWE social media, it's easier to watch"; "When my favorite superstars posts about how they feel about something on WWE social media, it helps me make up my own mind about the same thing"; "I feel sorry for my favorite superstars when someone says something bad about them on WWE social media"; "When I'm using WWE social media, I feel as if I'm part of the WWE"; "I like to compare my thoughts to what my favorite WWE superstars post on social media"; "The WWE superstars make me feel comfortable on WWE social media, as if I'm friends with them"; "I see my favorite superstars as a natural, down-to-earth person on WWE social media"; "I like seeing what my favorite superstars post on social media"; and "I like to watch videos of my favorite superstars doing different things on social media."

Contextual age (α=0.737) was measured using 11 questions using a 5-point Likert scale to measure agreement with the following statements: "I've been successful in achieving my aims or goals in life"; "I find a great deal of happiness in life"; "I am very content and satisfied in life"; "I have enough money to buy things I want, even if I don't need them"; "I live quite comfortably now and have enough money to buy what I need or want"; "I have no major financial worries"; "I usually drive my own car or bus to get around"; "I usually don't travel more than a few blocks from my home each day"; I spend enough time communicating with family or friends by phone"; "I get to see my friends as often as I would like" and "I often visit with friends, relatives or neighbors in their homes."

Locus of control (α=0.717) was measured using nine questions using a 5-point Likert scale to measure agreement with the following statements: "My life is chiefly controlled by powerful others"; "I feel like what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful people"; "Getting what I want requires those people above me"; "When I make plans, I am almost certain to make them work"; "My life is determined by my own actions"; "I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life"; "It's not always too wise for me to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune"; "Often there is not a chance of protecting my personal interest from bad luck happenings"; and "When I get what I want, it's because I'm lucky."

Analysis

Social Media Repertoire and Engagement

Respondents were asked to report approximately how many official WWE social media accounts they follow. The cumulative total of these sites was summed for a social media repertoire score, suggesting on average respondents followed 5-6 accounts (M=5.58, SD=7.78, α=0.553). The measures were used in multiple hierarchical regressions to predict WWE social media use.

For social media engagement of WWE social media, respondents were asked "When watching a live WWE show or event" how likely they did each of the following: follow WWE social media, interact with the social media, comment about it, or search what is being discussed online. Each item used a Likert scale to measure the frequency for which they did so, from "never" to "always." Responses were summed and averaged (M=2.96, SD=64.39, Cronbach's Alpha α=0.857) to form composite variables for analysis.

Gratifications of Social Media

The 18 Uses and Gratifications items were analyzed with a principle component factor analysis with Varimax rotation to answer RQ1 and to test H1 and H2. Statistical tests were calculated to verify how these 18 items grouped together to coalesce into the gratifications for this sample.[1] Thus, Table 1 indicates presents the five main reasons WWE fans gave for why they followed WWE social media accounts.

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[1] The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (0.828) indicated that the sample was adequate for factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated significant correlations among the items for analysis (X^2=961.86, df=153, p<.000). A five-factor solution, with Eigenvalues greater than 1.0, accounted for 68.94% of the total variance being explained.

Table 1: Gratifications of WWE Social Media

Measures	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha	Eigenvalue of Rotated Factor	Variance Explained	1	2
Habit	**3.86**	**.875**	**.86**	**6.96**	**38.66**		
It's part of my daily routine	3.71	1.25				.796	-.0
It's a habit of mine	3.46	1.32				.765	.1
I always do	4.10	1.08				.751	.0
I find what the Superstars post fascinating	4.08	1.14				.604	.3
I can learn more about my favorite superstars	3.64	1.29				**.540**	.4
I always have access to them	3.71	1.28				**.536**	.0
Voyeurism	**3.53**	**.820**	**.72**	**1.732**	**9.62**		
I enjoy reading about others' people	3.85	1.14				-.057	**.8**
I like to watch events in others' lives	4.01	1.07				.175	**.7**
I can see how others interact with the accounts	3.79	1.13				.151	**.5**
Entertainment	**3.88**	**1.08**	**.85**	**1.59**	**8.86**		
WWE programming amuses me	4.18	1.13				.117	.0
WWE programming entertains me	4.00	1.13				.112	.1
I can see what is going on with the WWE	3.69	1.19				.412	.4
Relaxation	**3.61**	**.89**	**.89**	**1.12**	**6.22%**		
It relaxes me	3.73	1.18				.176	.1
It allows me to unwind	3.91	1.08				.262	.1
It's a pleasant break in my day	3.52	1.18				.192	.1
Reality	**3.44**	**1.04**	**.623**	**1.0**	**5.58**		
I find the superstars more fascinating than what's on fictional programming	3.20	.91				.109	.1
I find the WWE more enjoyable than fictional programming	3.21	1.28				.081	.0

Table 2: Hiearchical Multiple Regression Analysis Summary Predicting WWE Social Media Use (N=206)

Variable	B	SEB	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1				.000	.000
(Constant)	6.485	2.15	.008		
Contextual Age	.149				
Step 2				.326	.326
Constant	-10.960	10.838	-.027		
Contextual Age	-.518	1.948	.115		
Locus of Control	2.515	2.145	-.192		
Parasocial Relation	-3.420	2.067			
Affinity	**9.356**	**1.583**	**.644*****		
Step 3				.360	.035
Constant	-8.475	10.69	-.034		
Contextual Age	-.659	1.91	.123		
Locus of Control	2.699	2.105	-.243*		
Parasocial Relation	**-4.310**	**2.07**	**.596*****		
Affinity	**8.653**	**1.59**	**.206***		
Social Media Repetoire	**.340**	**.166**			
Step 4				.388	.028
Constant	-5.730	10.63	-.058		
Contextual Age	-1.141	1.90	-.096		
Locus of Control	2.100	2.10	-.306*		
Parasocial Relation	-5.431	2.13	**.536*****		
Affinity	7.785	**1.63**	-.185		
Social Media Repetoire	.305	.164	-.209		
S.M. Engagement	3.051	1.631			
Step 5				.420	.032
Constant	-11.274	12	-.044		
Contextual Age	-.867	2	.088		
Locus of Control	1.94	2.24	-.431**		
Parasocial Relation	**-7.66**	**2.60**	**.518*****		
Affinity	**7.53**	**1.78**	**.152**		
Social Media Repetoire	.251	.169	.158		
S.M. Engagement	2.31	1.77	.140		
Habit	2.28	2.42	-.038		
Voyeur	-.552	1.74	-.020		
Entertainment	-.326	2.08	-.006		
Relax	-.080	1.82	.185		
Reality	2.904	1.93			

*p<.05, ** p<.01, **, p<001 ***

Discussion

This exploratory study examined the consumption of WWE social media by viewers through a uses-and-gratifications theoretical framework (Katz, Blumler, and Guretvich). This study adds to the existing body of uses-and-gratification literature and can provide insights to the rapidly evolving entertainment environment as social media becomes more than a complement of legacy media, but rather a routine part of the viewing experience. The findings for each hypothesis and research question will be discussed in numerical order.

To answer RQ1, the first factor, "habit," was created from the six items (α=0.863).[2] The second factor, "voyeurism" was created from the three items (α=0.720).[3] The third factor, composed of two entertainment items and one surveillance item, created an "entertainment" scale (α=0.85).[4] The fourth factor contained three items to form the "relaxation" scale (α=0.89).[5] The final factor that emerged from analysis was composed of three items, two of the items were entertainment items, while one was from voyeurism: "reality" (α=0.623).[6]). The categories of entertainment, voyeurism, and habit were dominant in their respective groupings after their respective factor analysis, thus providing empirical support for H1 and H2.

To answer RQ2, a series of multiple regressions were conducted in the following order of variables: contextual age, locus of control, parasocial

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[2] Eigenvalue of 6.96 and explained 38.66% of the total variance.

[3] Eigenvalue of 1.732 and explained 9.62% of the variance.

[4] Eigenvalue of 1.59 and explained 8.86% of the variance.

[5] Eigenvalue of 1.12 and explained 6.22% of the variance.

[6] Eigenvalue was 1.0 and it accounted for 5.58% of the variance.

relationship, affinity, social media repertoire, social media use, and gratifications.[7] Such tests can indicate the extent to which any one variable can predict the presence of another variable. The dependent variable was the number of hours one spent on social media. The final equation was found to be statistically significant (F (11, 72)=4.734, p=0.000). It accounted for 31% of the variance. Parasocial interaction (ß= -0.431, p=0.004) and affinity (ß=0.518, p=0.000) were the two statistically significant predictors of the equation (Table 2).

RQ1 asked what kinds of gratifications are most likely to be sought from WWE social media (Table 1). The concept of habit was a dominant gratification in this study. WWE social media users habitually engaged with WWE social media because it was part of their routine when WWE live programming is on. This finding is important for several reasons. First, it is unique from Rubin's ("Ritualized and Instrumental") concepts of ritualized and instrumental use of media. The activity is routine, meaning it is not done consciously or with a guided intent; it is, rather, part of a WWE viewer's daily activity. Social media accounts can be accessed anywhere and at any time, further easing any difficulty a WWE viewer would have to make WWE social media a part of their daily routine.

Voyeurism was the second prevalent gratification found in the factor analysis. It is logical to hypothesize that users of WWE social media would want to see what these "larger-than-life" performers or personalities do when the broadcast is not on—be it workouts, social activities or other content that let users "peel back the curtain" to see behind the scenes. Because WWE programming is a mixture of reality television and athletic contest, voyeurism (a gratification found by Papacharissi and Mendelson in reality television use) would make inherent sense. Thus, H1 displayed weak evidence of being true. Surveillance became parts of other factors.

H2 had statistical evidence to support it. Since social media by and large runs on an Internet connection, it would make sense that Internet gratifications would also be present for WWE social media use. Both entertainment and relaxation were represented strongly in the factor analysis, making up the third and fourth

[7] All regression models were tested for multicollinearity and not one variable scored more than 4.0 in the variance inflation test (VIF) during analysis. Assumptions of linearity, normally distributed errors and uncorrelated errors were checked and met for all regression analyses.

factors. Social media offers a blend of entertainment and relaxation for its users, especially with entertainment-based programming.

The concept of "reality," the fifth factor discovered because of the factor analysis, is unique to WWE social media. With the unique avenue of programming that constitutes WWE live programming as an amalgamation of theatre, entertainment, reality television, and gameshow, the on-air product seems more "real" to users than traditional fiction programming as the content is live and the story is unfolding before the viewers' eyes. Even though outcomes are predetermined, users feel as if they are watching the next tragedy or triumph play out before their eyes. Perhaps, because they use WWE social media concurrently with live programming, users may feel as if they have some say in the outcome if their "guy or girl" wins that evening. Overall, most gratifications of legacy media and the Internet appeared in the factor analysis. Perhaps the most important finding was the creation of a new gratification that is specific to WWE social media—"reality."

RQ2 asked what were the predictors of WWE social media use (Table 2). The psychological antecedents of parasocial interaction and affinity were the predictors of WWE social media use, but parasocial interaction had an inverse relationship. This finding indicates psychological attachments are the strongest predictor in explaining why people use WWE social media. A variety of possible explanations exist for this finding, but one possible rationale is the image in which users view the WWE superstars—as gladiators. Users may not view the on-screen characters and their social media personae as not being real humans with emotions, pain, and feelings, but rather as "products," seeing the superstars as ultimately expendable. Perhaps it's the blurring of these lines regarding what is "real" and what is not "real" that creates this inverse relationship for parasocial interaction. Users would develop an affinity towards the superstars that they identify with on some level, yet may dislike another superstar who may prevent their "guy's" or "girl's" in-ring success, but they still feel as if they have some idea of what that superstar is like both on and offline. The less a parasocial interaction happens, the more a user would base their affinity for that superstar on why or why not they want his or her superstar to win. Ultimately, in a gladiatorial contest, one participant is picked over another based upon a variety of factors. On WWE programming and social media, maybe the superstar is an underdog in the storyline that a viewer identifies with or maybe they have resentment towards authority.

Limitations

This study, while as comprehensive as possible, does have its limitations. Limitations are discussed to clarify this study's contribution to uses-and-gratifications literature and offer suggestions for future research. This study only examined why WWE social media is used, and not the live programming or other media WWE employs to distribute content. More work can be done to understand how uses for and gratifications from WWE social media relate to other WWE-related media uses and gratifications.

The sampling method for this study was appropriate and accounted for cultural differences as it was posted in places where one would expect to find WWE social media users: on social media, specifically Facebook WWE fan groups. The study was also conducted in English, the primary language of WWE content; however, WWE programming is presented in 24 other languages, suggesting that nuances in gratifications, and their predictors, may not have been measured. Also, the sample size and location does not allow for statistical generalization to the entire population of WWE social media users.

Another limitation concerns the self-report nature of the questionnaire used in the study. Sometimes capturing truly cognitive responses without any other confounding variables can be a less than perfect science in uses-and-gratifications research. Some researchers have argued that such studies routinely rely too much on self-interpretation rather than observable behavior (Rosenstein and Grant). Subjects may not be aware of the higher-order cognitive processes that control their behavior (Nisbett and Wilson) and self-report based on whatever stimuli, including some effect of social desirability (Catania, Gibson, Chitwood and Coates). Sundar and Limperos also argued that gratifications are "conceptualized and operationalized too broadly" and miss more refined gratifications in new media.

Since this study attempted to identify the "why" people use WWE social media and a very preliminary "what" they are doing, more research would call for more of the "what" and the "how." An online ethnography would also help examine WWE social media users' culture. This method would allow for more rich data to be collected and preserve the form of online interaction. This would also account for any lack of validity in self-reported responses.

Conclusion

This study adds to the existing body of literature of uses and gratifications, but with a focus on a specific and burgeoning audience: WWE social media. Five gratifications were found of WWE social media, four of which were found to be gratifications for other tangentially related mediums in legacy and the Internet. Most importantly, this study found a new gratification unique WWE social media— "reality."

Perhaps no single entertainment entity incorporates social media into its programming and characters more than WWE, making this study currently unique. The WWE's use of social media will only continue to grow, especially with younger generations becoming the next wave of news consumers that will drive the platforms and content of tomorrow's entertainment decisions. In addition, other television programming may follow suit, as more television shows promote themselves through social television practices such as livetweeting. Further, as the lines between reality and performance of the celebrities, like the WWE superstars, on social media become blurred, so does this study's significance.

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