



# News sharing in social media: The effect of gratifications and prior experience

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## ABSTRACT

Recent events indicate that sharing news in social media has become a phenomenon of increasing social, economic and political importance because individuals can now participate in news production and diffusion in large global virtual communities. Yet, knowledge about factors influencing news sharing in social media remains limited. Drawing from the uses and gratifications (U&G) and social cognitive theories (SCT), this study explored the influences of information seeking, socializing, entertainment, status seeking and prior social media sharing experience on news sharing intention. A survey was designed and administered to 203 students in a large local university. Results from structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis revealed that respondents who were driven by gratifications of information seeking, socializing, and status seeking were more likely to share news in social media platforms. Prior experience with social media was also a significant determinant of news sharing intention. Implications and directions for future work are discussed.

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## 1. Introduction

Recent events from the crisis in the Middle East to the earthquake and tsunami disaster in Japan have demonstrated that social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) are changing the way individuals consume and share news. Specifically, a news item can be distributed across societies and discussed by people around the world within minutes via social media platforms. For instance, news of the protests in the Middle East was spread through social media networks Twitter and Facebook. Similarly, in the earthquake and tsunami disaster, instant updates were available and shared in many social media platforms. In both situations, thousands of stories, photos and videos were posted which immediately attracted world-wide attention, demonstrating that social media platforms play pivotal roles in supporting news production and diffusion. Hence, it is not surprising that 37% of Internet users have experience in sharing new stories through social media sites and collectively, social media are emerging as a powerful news referring source (Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Olmstead, 2010). Indeed, sharing news in social media has become a phenomenon of growing social, economic and political importance. Yet, knowledge about factors influencing news sharing in social media is not well documented in the literature.

Here, a promising line of inquiry is the uses and gratifications (U&G) theory which attempts to explain what social and psychological needs motivate audiences to select particular media

channels and content choices (Diddi & LaRose, 2006; Lin, 2002; Rubin & Perse, 1987; Ruggiero, 2000). Studies on content contribution and information sharing using social media have identified some motivational factors that predict information sharing behavior. For example, both status attainment (e.g., getting attention) and information seeking (e.g., future retrieval) were found to be the main motivations driving users to contribute annotations in mobile and online media (Ames & Naaman, 2007; Goh, Ang, Chua, & Lee, 2009). Hsu and Lin (2008) also suggested that the motivations for sharing content in the blog space include establishing social relationships and reputations. Recent studies on social networking sites also highlight that gratifications such as entertainment, information searching and seeking, socializing, and establishing status and reputation are important in the usage of social media to facilitate social interaction and group discussion (Dunne, Lawlor, & Rowley, 2010; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009). Collectively, past research suggest that motivational factors driving users to share information include information seeking, socializing, entertainment and status seeking.

We contend that some gratifications identified in prior social media studies on content contribution and information sharing may still be relevant in the current context of news sharing in social media due to the inherently participatory nature of these platforms. Specifically, the advent of social media has made accessing and sharing news a social experience where users can harness their social networks and social media platforms to filter, assess and react to news. Such distinctive features of social media are likely to elicit comparable expectations and gratifications from users as these platforms enable users to access more diverse and personally relevant sources of news as well as to learn through interaction with others.

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However, we recognize that some of these factors may not be entirely applicable to explain people's news sharing intention in social media platforms because news topics are distinguished from other informational content (e.g., professional knowledge, personal information, photos) for the following reasons. Essentially, a news story is regarded as the report of recent (especially important or interesting) events or occurrences, published or broadcasted through media or interpersonal channels as new information (Simpson & Weiner, 1981). Compared to other informational content shared online, news is valued much more in terms of timeliness, accuracy, objectivity, and social responsibility (Sundar, 1999). Moreover, news content has much more impact on civic agenda, public opinion as well as individual perceptions of social reality than other forms of content in social media (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Put differently, news topics are different from other informational content in social media in terms of public opinion, agenda-setting, and social influences (McQuail, 2005).

Besides gratification factors, prior social media experience may play a role in influencing news sharing intention. According to social cognitive theory (SCT), users' behaviors may be influenced by prior experience, in addition to self-reflection which is a prerequisite of U&G theory (Bandura, 1997; LaRose, 2009). Because familiarity of social media increases with experience, users tend to form habitual use as a daily routine (Diddi & LaRose, 2006). Evidence from past studies suggests that prior Internet experience can help users master complex tasks and enhance the perception of self-efficacy (Eastin & LaRose, 2000; Hsu, Ju, Yen, & Chang, 2007). Put differently, U&G theory itself may not be enough to explain users' motivations because it assumes that users are constantly actively participating in media selection and use whereas in reality, such participation may simply be borne out of prior experience. Hence, in this study, we integrate the theoretical perspectives from SCT with perspectives from U&G to also examine the role of prior experience.

In sum, the objective of this study is to investigate the gratifications and experiential factors in influencing news sharing intention in the context of social media. However, to our knowledge, there is little prior research in this area. Instead work has focused on news reading primarily in traditional media (Lichtenstein & Rosenfeld, 1983; Rubin & Perse, 1987). Further, research in social media has examined information sharing in general (Lee, Goh, Chua, & Ang, 2010; Nov, Naaman, & Ye, 2010), and not specifically in news. Hence, we extend prior work by drawing from the U&G theory to explain users' motivations, as well as from the SCT to incorporate experiential factors to understand news sharing intention in social media. Thus, the present study aims to investigate the following research question: *How do gratification and experiential factors influence users' intention to share news in social media?*

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. News sharing in social media

Social media refer to Internet-based services that allow individuals to create, share and seek content, as well as to communicate and collaborate with each other (Kim, Jeong, & Lee, 2010; Lerman, 2007). Arguably, one of the more attractive characteristics of social media is its support for user-generated content, transforming individuals from passive consumers of content to active producers (Nov et al., 2010). As these individuals share their opinions, insights, knowledge, and other content, they also create and maintain relationships with other individuals with similar needs, interests or problems (Cho, Chen, & Chung, 2010). Further, various distinct content types (e.g. photos, videos, news stories) are contributed online

and shared by users in different online communities (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) due to different gratification factors (Li, 2011). We contend that some of the factors should be relevant in the current context of news sharing in social media due to the inherent participatory nature of these platforms.

While social media share traditional media's functions of providing news stories to users, differences exist between social media and traditional media in terms of the relationships between users and news. Firstly, in social media, users actively participate in producing news content by submitting links or news stories from various sources (Szabo & Huberman, 2010). In traditional media, what people are exposed to are mainly determined by editors who have control on daily news flow. Here, people passively receive news content delivered in the media channels. Secondly, in spite of being separated by physical distance, social media users are connected with each other through similar interests and news stories can be spread across such online communities and discussed by people around the world within minutes. In traditional media, sharing news is limited due to the absence of effective diffusion channels. Thirdly, social media differs from traditional media in that audiences can customize news choices and interact with others (Chung, 2008). Here, such interactivity includes leaving comments, participating in asynchronous discussions, and voting (Dunne et al., 2010). This means that in social media, users can actively participate in agenda-setting process by submitting, sharing, and commenting news content (Goode, 2009).

In sum, social media empower individuals to create, share and seek content, as well as to communicate and collaborate with each other. These features afforded by social media have the potential to change the nature of news sharing. To investigate news sharing intention in social media, we extend prior work by drawing from the U&G theory to explain users' motivations, as well as from the SCT to examine the effects of prior social media experience.

### 2.2. Uses and gratifications

The U&G theory attempts to explain what social and psychological needs motivate audiences to select particular media channels and content choices, as well as the subsequent attitudinal and behavioral effects (Diddi & LaRose, 2006; Lin, 2002; Rubin & Perse, 1987; Ruggiero, 2000). As emerging new media, along with traditional media, provide users with a wider array of media selection and contents, the U&G theory is considered one of the most effective paradigms for identifying motivations underlying media use in mass communication studies (LaRose & Eastin, 2004). From a U&G perspective, selecting a media channel is an actively involved procedure in which audiences evaluate the potential benefits from the media usage. It is argued that media audiences are goal-directed and purposefully attempting to achieve those goals by using specific media channels and content (Armstrong & McAdams, 2009; Rubin & Perse, 1987).

The primary difference between the U&G approach and traditional media effects research is that from the former perspective, audiences actively utilize media to fulfill their needs, whereas media effects research regards audiences as passive receivers on whom mass media can exert direct influence (Rubin, 2009). With regard to news reading, it is assumed that people actively choose among news sources owing to the sources' ability to gratify their different needs, such as information seeking, entertainment, social interaction, and escapism (Diddi & LaRose, 2006; Rubin, 1986). This theory has been widely applied to investigate audience's gratifications in a variety of media channels and content, including print media (Gantz & Trenholm, 1979), television (Rubin & Perse, 1987), pagers (Leung & Wei, 1998), etc. However, these early studies mostly examined news consumption in traditional media (Gantz & Trenholm, 1979; Lichtenstein & Rosenfeld, 1983; Rubin

& Perse, 1987) and studies on the gratifications associated with news sharing were far more uncommon. We contend that the gratifications identified from studies on news reading in traditional media may be less applicable in news sharing because these activities are fundamentally different. For example, research on mobile content sharing has suggested that the perceived gratification factors for mobile content contribution were different from those for mobile content retrieval (Chua, Goh, & Lee, 2012).

With the prevalence of social media, these emerging news platforms have attracted much interest from U&G research, for not only can content that used to be distributed by traditional media channels be delivered, but new features to make news consumption more personalized and participatory are also integrated (Diddi & LaRose, 2006; Dunne et al., 2010; Tewksbury & Althaus, 2000). Some prior studies have attempted to explore the gratification factors that are associated with news consumption based on the Internet as well as in social media. For example, Lin, Salwen, and Abdulla (2005) proposed that the perceived gratifications of online news were entertainment, interpersonal communication, information seeking, and information learning. Dunne et al. (2010) proposed several gratifications, such as entertainment, information search, peer acceptance, and relationship maintenance, were related to use of social networking sites. Similarly, Park et al. (2009) proposed four gratifications derived from social media use, including information seeking, socializing, entertainment, and self-status seeking. Of the few studies that relate to content sharing on social media, Chiu, Hsu, and Wang (2006) found that social interaction and socializing were related to knowledge sharing behaviors, while Lee et al. (2010) revealed that users' sharing of mobile media content was an attempt to seek for gratifications such as entertainment, information seeking, and socializing.

Our review of U&G and its related studies on information sharing highlights two important points. First, these studies demonstrate the appropriateness of the U&G approach in the context of the online environment and its potential explanatory ability in predicting individuals' news sharing behaviors. Second, although media usage motives vary among individuals, situations, and media, most U&G studies on social media deal with the following gratifications: entertainment, socialization, entertainment, information/surveillance, and status seeking (Diddi & LaRose, 2006; Dunne et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2010; Lin et al., 2005; Park et al., 2009). Here, we adopt a parsimonious approach by identifying potential gratification factors that will be most relevant in our context of news sharing in social media. The gratification factors identified from our review are information seeking, socializing, entertainment, and status seeking. Each of these four factors is discussed in the following sections.

### 2.2.1. Information seeking

Information seeking refers to the extent to which news shared in social media can provide users with relevant and timely information (Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005; Luo, 2002). Prior studies have found that this gratification is associated with users' media consumption behavior. For instance, both Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) and Luo (2002) demonstrated that information seeking was a main motivator driving Web use. With regard to news consumption activity, Lin et al. (2005) noted that information scanning was significantly associated with online news use due to one's desire to stay up-to-date with current events. In social media, news content can be collectively shared by users with similar interests (LaRose & Eastin, 2004). Once shared, such content can later be retrieved when the need arises. Prior studies on mobile content sharing applications have shown that people are able to anticipate theirs or others potential information needs and they share content so as to facilitate future information seeking (Low, Goh, & Lee, 2010). This means that social media can help users to seek

information and satisfy future information needs. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H1.** Information seeking will be positively associated with users' intention to share news in social media.

### 2.2.2. Socializing

According to U&G theory, individuals interact with each other to achieve a sense of belonging (Rubin, 1986). Specifically, past research on the Internet has elaborated about the social gratifications such as the enjoyment of forging social ties that Internet users derived from using the Internet (LaRose & Eastin, 2004). Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) further found that individuals used the Internet as an alternative to interpersonal communication. Several scholars have uncovered possible relationships between the socializing gratification and media consumption. For instance, Howard and Corkindale (2008) found that socializing was positively related to consumption of online news services. In terms of social media use, Park et al. (2009) noted that socializing was regarded as one of the gratifications that motivated college students to participate in Facebook groups. In line with this finding, Dunne et al. (2010) concluded that maintaining relationships was a key driver for using social networking sites. Taken together, we argue that as social media platforms offer features that potentially foster the development and maintenance of relationships for social media users, news sharing in social media becomes a shared social experience. Therefore, we present the following hypothesis:

**H2.** Socializing will be positively associated with users' intention to share news in social media.

### 2.2.3. Entertainment

Entertainment refers to the way social media serves as a means for entertaining and escaping pressure. The value of media entertainment is attributed to the ability to satisfy users' needs for escapism, enjoyment, emotional release, and anxiety relief (McQuail, 2005). In particular, Nov et al. (2010) proposed enjoyment as an intrinsic motivation to encourage users to share photos within an online community. Conversely, research on content contribution on mobile applications also suggest that contributing content on such platforms provide a good source of entertainment (Chua et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2010). With regard to news consumption, research has also shown that entertainment is positively related to individuals' Internet news reading but not with newspaper reading (Diddi & LaRose, 2006). A possible explanation is that the Internet not only satisfies basic information needs but also provides enjoyment through interactions with others such as discussions and gossip. For example, after sharing news stories such as those with entertainment-oriented content, users may be involved in discussing, gossiping, and making fun of persons and issues that were reported. These would help users find release from stress in their daily life. Thus we state that:

**H3.** Entertainment will be positively associated with users' intention to share news in social media.

### 2.2.4. Status seeking

Status seeking describes how sharing news in social media helps one to attain status among peers. Specifically, research has shown that people share knowledge to obtain peer recognition (Hew & Hara, 2007; Kaiser & Müller-Seitz, 2008) or to establish status (Mauß, 2002). Further, status attainment has been shown to be a strong motivation for participation in the online environment (Marlow, 2006). LaRose and Eastin (2004) also found that social

status was one of the prime motivators driving Internet usage. Park et al. (2009) demonstrated that there existed a substantial and positive correlation between status seeking and social outcomes (e.g., civic participation) among social media users. In the case of social media, status could refer to the feeling of being important and being admired among peers. That is, by sharing content and exchanging ideas in online communities, users may enhance their reputation and popularity among peers (Rafaeli & Ariel, 2008). Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H4.** Status seeking will be positively associated with users' intention to share news in social media.

### 2.3. Prior social media sharing experience

Despite its contribution to understanding media usage behaviors, scholars have argued that the U&G approach may not be able to explain social media usage adequately as it tends to ignore the social cognitive aspects of selecting media (LaRose & Eastin, 2004). Specifically, U&G theory by itself may not be enough to explain users' motivations because it assumes that users are constantly actively participating in media selection and use. This concept implies that the behavior of seeking media gratifications is regarded as goal-directed and utility-driven (Leung & Wei, 1998). Accordingly, users are involved in self-reflection and self-instruction processes when consuming media channels and content. In contrast to this U&G assumption, prior studies have argued that media consumption behavior can be conducted without users' full attention but be triggered automatically by environmental stimuli (Dunne et al., 2010; Hartmann, 2009; Ruggiero, 2000). With repeated usage, media usage behavior is less subject to active self-reflection in order to conserve mental resources (Diddi & LaRose, 2006).

This study thus responds to this criticism of U&G by integrating SCT. From the perspective of SCT, audiences may access media simply out of their prior experience in contrast to the self-reflection process assumed by the U&G approach (Hanson & Haridakis, 2008; LaRose, 2009). For example, SCT suggests that experience can enhance individuals' self-efficacy in knowledge sharing behaviors (Hsu et al., 2007; LaRose, 2009). Self-efficacy is the belief "in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997). Essentially, as familiarity with website increases, users are more confident of their capabilities in completing various actions (Chen, Lin, Yen, & Linn, 2011). Additionally, prior experience can help to establish trustworthy relationships between individuals and media use, and further encourage sharing behaviors (Hsu et al., 2007). Therefore, the amount of past experience explains individuals' tendency to adopt related innovations.

In our research, prior experience with similar applications, such as blogging, micro-blogging, may help potential users to adopt news sharing behavior. As users explore social media through interaction over time, they may experience benefits and in the process develop trust with other users as well as the social media platform. This, in turn, reinforces the relationships between users and social media. Stated differently, experience can reinforce the usage of a social media platform and make this usage regularized and ritualized, thereby serving as a behavioral template (O'Brien, 2010). Thus, prior sharing experience that users have attained in from past social media usage should be an important basis to predict future news sharing intention. We therefore put forward the following hypothesis:

**H5.** Prior social media sharing experience will be positively associated with users' intention to share news in social media.

Furthermore, previous studies have shown that gratifications can in turn encourage media usage and improve users' positive judgments of prior experience. For example, users with high information seeking motivations were found to be more likely to visit the Internet more frequently, which in turn enhanced their usage experience (Ko et al., 2005). Mondy, Woods, and Rafi (2008) concluded that students' motivations to acquire information positively influenced their perceived experience about e-learning. This indicates the influence of information seeking gratification on prior experience. Further, Park et al. (2009) revealed that people with status seeking motivations were more likely to utilize Facebook for civic and political participation. This means that social media platforms are regarded as useful outlets to express one's opinions and gain social status. These positive impressions increase the amount of usage and enhance social media experience. In addition, prior research has shown that users accumulate online experience through online exposure and systems proficiency (Chen, Chien, Wu, & Tsai, 2010). Taken together, we argue that people who are motivated to seek information or reputation in social media are likely to have social media exposure and be proficient in using the social media platforms. Consequently, this means that these people will be more likely to have accumulated prior social media sharing experience. Collectively, we hypothesize that:

**H6.** Information seeking will be positively associated with prior social media sharing experience.

**H7.** Status seeking will be positively associated with prior social media sharing experience.

Our conceptual model illustrating the hypothesized relationships is presented in Fig. 1.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Sample

A survey instrument was developed and administered to undergraduate and graduate students at a large local university. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. A total of 210 questionnaires were collected, of which seven respondents reported that they had no experience in using social media to access news. These were omitted from the sample, resulting in a final sample size of 203 respondents. This means that all the respondents had prior experience with using social media to access news stories. The respondents were also asked to indicate one social media platform in which they primarily used to access news stories, and they were required to answer the survey questions related to gratifications, social media experiences and usage intention based on this selected platform. Such an operationalization helped us to obtain a more accurate and realistic measure of social media usage intention and gratifications based on the respondents' actual experiences. The demographics of the sample are shown in Table 1.

### 3.2. Measures

All constructs were measured using multiple items, each measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale. The measurements assessing gratifications of information seeking, socializing, entertainment and status seeking for news sharing in social media were adapted from prior U&G research (Lee et al., 2010; Park et al., 2009). Prior social media sharing experience was adapted from LaRose and Eastin (2004) while intention to share news was adapted from Lee et al. (2010) and Hagger et al. (2007). Table 2 lists the items used to measure each construct.



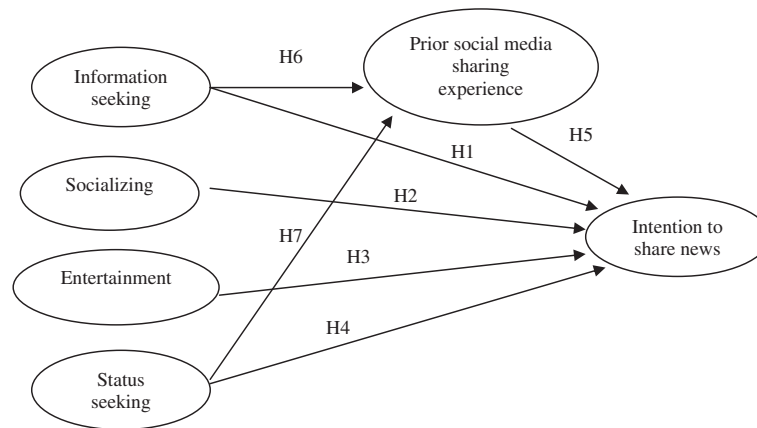


Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

**Table 1**  
Demographics of respondents ( $N = 203$ ).

	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	95	46.8
Female	108	53.2
<i>Level of study</i>		
Undergraduate	141	69.5
Graduate	62	30.5
<i>Selected social media platform</i>		
Facebook	117	57.6
Twitter	21	10.3
Renren	12	5.9
YouTube	4	2.0
Others	49	24.2
Age	Median = 26	Mean = 27

### 3.3. Data analyses

We adapted the two-step approach to structural equation modeling recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). First, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis to verify our measurement model. Then, we conducted structural equation model (SEM) to examine the relationships among the constructs. Finally, following Bollen's (1989) recommendation to examine multiple indices of model fit, for the confirmatory analysis and structural equation models, we ascertain the goodness of fit of each model using several statistics including chi-square, goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA). All analyses were conducted using AMOS software.

## 4. Results

Prior to CFA, the measurement model was assessed for construct reliability and validity. To test measurement reliability, Cronbach's alpha was employed and this yielded acceptable values for all constructs for the given sample size (see Table 2). Additionally, before testing the hypothesized model, we conducted a principal component analysis with Varimax rotation on all 18 the perceived gratification items. Four factors emerged with eigenvalues greater than 1.00 explaining a total of 81.8% of the variance and all items loaded above 0.6 on the appropriate factor. Separate principal component analyses with Varimax rotation were also conducted on the experiential and intention to share items (refer

to Table 2). The factor loading for all items exceeded the recommended level of 0.6. Hence, the measurement model demonstrated adequate reliability and convergent validity.

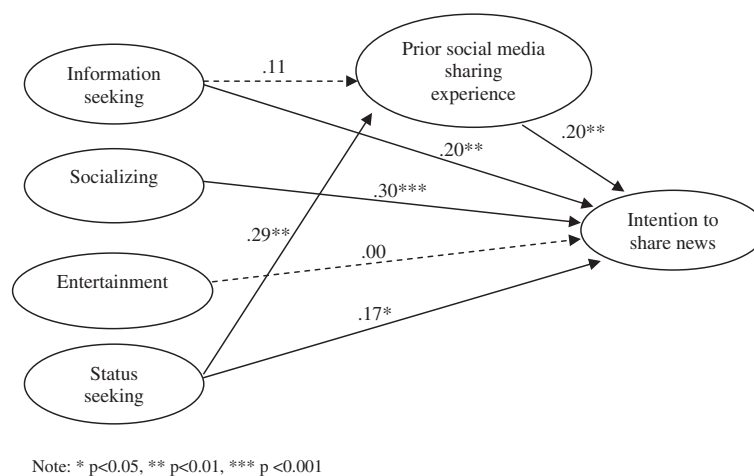
Finally our CFA analysis showed that the measurement model indicated good fit with the data since the  $\chi^2/df$  value of 2.23 was below the suggested 3.0 value (Kline, 2010) and the GFI of 0.92, NFI of 0.94 and CFI of 0.96 exceeded the critical value of 0.9 (Kline, 2010). The CFA results indicated that the overall fit of the measurement model was good as the fit indices for the model exceeded the critical level of 0.80 (Kline, 2010). We also found that each item loaded significantly on its respective construct suggesting that the measurement scales for each construct demonstrated high convergent validity. In sum, our test results indicated the appropriateness of the measurement model and we proceed to conduct the SEM analysis to examine the relationships among the constructs.

By employing SEM in this study, we were able to test the significance of the entire model as well as the significance of the relationships and variances among the multiple variables in the research model. Our overall model had a high significance level ( $\chi^2 = 196.97$ ; degree of freedom = 122; probability level = 0.000). Furthermore, the  $\chi^2/df$  value of 1.62 met the criteria of less than 3 as suggested by Kline (2010). Further, the statistical analysis showed a good model fit according to the fit standards; all the values except adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) were within reasonable ranges. Specifically, the goodness of fit index (GFI) of 0.91 and the normed fit index (NFI) of 0.92 were above the acceptable value of 0.9 while the comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.97 was above the criteria of 0.95. Even though the AGFI was below acceptable level (0.87), it was close to the threshold (0.9) and this has been shown to be acceptable in past research (Chen et al., 2010). In addition, the root mean residual (RMR) was 0.08 and root-mean-squared error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.05. These values meet the guidelines of less than 0.10 for RMR (Steiger, 1990) and 0.05 or below for RMSEA (McDonald & Ho, 2002) further providing support that the model was a good fit with the data.

Fig. 2 presents the results of our hypothesized model's path analysis. The standardized path coefficients between intention to share and information seeking ( $\beta = 0.20$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), socializing ( $\beta = 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), status seeking ( $\beta = 0.17$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and prior social media experience ( $\beta = 0.20$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) were significant, indicating support for hypotheses H1, H2, H4 and H5. The standardized path coefficients between prior social media sharing experience and status seeking ( $\beta = 0.29$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) was also significant, indicating support for hypothesis H7. We did not find support for hypotheses H3 and H6. These results are shown in Table 3. In total, five of the seven hypotheses were supported.

**Table 2**  
Measurement constructs.

Variable	Description	Item	Factor loading	Mean	Std. deviation	$\alpha$
Information seeking	Measures the extent to which news shared in social media can provide users with relevant and timely information	It helps me to store useful information	.89	3.01	1.09	.86
		It is easy to retrieve information when I need	.91	3.09	1.15	
		To keep up to date on the latest news and events	.69	3.37	1.04	
Socializing	Measures the extent to which news sharing helps to develop and maintain relationships with acquaintances in social media	I can interact with people when sharing news	.85	3.45	1.06	.87
		To keep in touch with people	.86	3.53	1.08	
		It is effective to exchange ideas with other people	.79	3.56	1.03	
Entertainment	Measures the extent to which sharing news in social media serves as a means for entertainment and leisure purposes	It helps me pass time	.88	3.29	1.12	.88
		To combat boredom	.90	3.20	1.13	
		It helps me to relax	.78	3.21	1.12	
Status-seeking	Measures the extent to which sharing news in social media helps one to attain status among peers	It helps me feel important when sharing news	.82	2.94	1.06	.91
		It helps me to gain status when sharing news stories	.88	2.82	1.05	
		It helps to look good when sharing news stories	.91	2.79	1.08	
Prior social media sharing experience	Measures the extent to which users shared content in any social media platform	How often do you use social media to write blogs?	.84	1.76	1.11	.63
		How often do you use social media for micro-blogging?	.82	1.95	1.25	
		How often do you use social media to share pictures and videos?	.61	2.71	1.28	
Intention to share news	Measures how likely respondents intended to share news in a social media platform in the future	I intend to share news stories in social media in the future	.93	3.17	1.01	.92
		I expect to share news stories contributed by other users	.93	3.17	1.04	
		I plan to share news stories in social media regularly	.93	2.99	1.04	

**Fig. 2.** Structural model.

## 5. Discussion

Drawing from both the U&G theory and SCT, this study investigated the influences of information seeking, socializing, entertainment, status seeking and prior social media sharing experience on news sharing intention in social media. As discussed, the U&G theory by itself may not be sufficient to explain news sharing intention in social media as the theory does not take into consideration prior media experience and assumes that users are always

actively evaluating their gratifications from media usage (LaRose, 2009). By incorporating the user experience perspective, we are able to extend beyond the explanations provided by the U&G framework, which ultimately improves the explanatory power of our research model.

Not surprisingly, our results show that prior social media sharing experience and socializing were the two most salient factors influencing intention to share news in social media. It is possible that prior experience with a particular media can boost one's

**Table 3**

Structural model results and parameter estimates for the hypothesized model.

Structural model results								
Model fit indices	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	NFI	CFI	AGFI	RMSEA	RMR
Values	196.97	1.62	0.91	0.92	0.97	0.87	0.05	0.08
Standardized path estimates								
Paths	Standardized $\beta$			Standard error			$P$	
$N = 203$								
IS $\rightarrow$ INTENT	0.20			0.07			0.00**	
SOCIAL $\rightarrow$ INTENT	0.30			0.08			0.00***	
ENT $\rightarrow$ INTENT	0.00			0.07			0.99	
SS $\rightarrow$ INTENT	0.17			0.08			0.02*	
EXP $\rightarrow$ INTENT	0.20			0.07			0.00**	
SS $\rightarrow$ EXP	0.29			0.10			0.00**	
IS $\rightarrow$ EXP	0.11			0.09			0.31	

GFI – goodness of fit index; AGFI – adjusted goodness of fit index; RMSEA – root-mean-squared error of approximation; NFI – normed fit index; CFI – comparative fit index; RMR – root mean residual; SRMR – standardized root mean of the residual.

ENT – entertainment, EXP – prior social media sharing experience, IS – information seeking, INTENT – intention to share news, SOCIAL – socializing, SS – status seeking.

\*  $p < 0.05$ .

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

confidence in his or her ability to conduct various actions in that media. As predicted, prior social media experience emerged as powerful predictor for intention to share news. This means that people who are used to writing to blogs or micro-blogs may develop habitual use of social media to contribute and share content since they already have acquired the capability or have the confidence to execute such actions. Thus, for such users, they are more inclined to share news in social media. Further, prior experience can reinforce the familiarity of online service and make such usage habitual and ritualized (Lee, Goh, Razikin, & Chua, 2009; O'Brien, 2010). This means that while newer users make active media selections based on gratifications, more experienced social media users may rely on habitual and ritualized modes of content sharing behavior.

The socializing gratification was the other salient factor motivating users to share news. This indicates that users may feel that they are connected to the virtual community through sharing news stories, and is consistent with the notion of “anticipatory socialization” where people derive social gratifications from sharing views and news with others (Krishnatray, Singh, Raghavan, & Varma, 2009; Taylor & Kent, 2010). Specifically, news shared among users may provide the information source that lays the foundation to create potential social relationships. Hence, our study extends past work by suggesting that anticipatory socialization may be a major motivating force behind news sharing in social media. This is plausible since sharing news may be less time-consuming and thus required less effort compared to other forms of online socializing activities (e.g. writing blogs, playing games).

We found that status seeking was a strong motivating factor influencing intention to share news in social media. The need for status seeking is derived from one's desire to establish or improve one's credibility, self-confidence, and self-esteem (Rubin, 1986). Our finding indicates that sharing news in social media can enhance one's status within the virtual community and is consistent with recent work. Indeed, Dunne et al. (2010) reported that users try to establish status through interacting with each other in the form of comments and discussions via a social media platform. Additionally, studies on social networking sites have also shown that users contribute content to a community so as to obtain reputation or “to keep up with the Joneses” (Burke, Marlow, & Lento, 2009). In the context of news sharing in social media, individuals tend to do so for others to access relevant content. If the content they share turns out to be credible, they in turn will appear to be credible and be seen as an opinion leader within the community (Rogers, 2003), which will then allow them to attain the desired

status within that social network. Hence, the connections one establishes within a social network can impact his or her desire for status attainment (Lin, 1999). Furthermore, we also establish that status seeking was positively associated with prior social media sharing experience. Here, our research suggests that the need for status attainment not only compels users to adopt news sharing behavior in social media to establish reputation among peers but also drives them to accumulate relevant social media experience.

Somewhat surprisingly, our study found that entertainment was not a significant predictor for news sharing in social media in contrast to the information seeking gratification. Our findings suggest that news sharing is not perceived as a source to satisfy entertainment needs. This is not consistent with earlier studies on the gratifications attained from Internet usage (Diddi & LaRose, 2006; LaRose & Eastin, 2004). However, recent research has indicated that the entertainment need is not a significant factor to explain the extent of political participation in social networking sites (Park et al., 2009). Furthermore, we reason that most social media platforms afford users with many fun and entertaining features (e.g. videos, games, chat). This means that users may turn to such features to meet their entertainment gratification rather than from sharing news.

As for the significant influence of information seeking, we argue that news stories shared in social media can also be used for potential retrieval by these users when future information seeking needs arise since the shared news stories will typically be archived in the online profile as a private collection. Indeed, past research (Ames & Naaman, 2007; Chua et al., 2012; Low et al., 2010) has shown that people share content on mobile platforms to facilitate information retrieval to meet future information needs of oneself as well as others who are in the same social network. Therefore, our research suggests that sharing news in social media may not only satisfy the current informational needs of oneself and others, but may also facilitate the fulfillment of future information seeking needs. However, the insignificant of information seeking on prior social media sharing experience suggests that the need to seek information is not sufficient to drive users to accumulate relevant social media experience.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study contributes to research in several ways. First, to our knowledge, this is one of the first studies that draw from

diverse literature (e.g. communication, information science) to investigate antecedents of news sharing intention in the social media context. Specifically, this study shows that the U&G framework and the SCT are theoretically complementary in explaining users' intention for news sharing. Hence, our conceptualization and research model provides a theoretical foundation from which to explore further the influence of different types of gratification and experiential factors on news sharing intention in social media. Second, we also establish that status seeking has a significant influence on prior content sharing experience indicating that the experiential factor may be a possible mediator between gratifications and news sharing intention. This suggests that gratifications may be triggered by different types of prior social media sharing experiences (e.g. sharing of comments, sharing of tags). Future research could thus conduct a more nuanced analysis of different types of experience and their mediating effects.

For practitioners, understanding the gratification and experiential factors underlying news sharing has important implications. Designers of social media platforms can incorporate features to facilitate status seeking. This could include highlighting users who actively share news, or award them with virtual badges or titles based on the amount and/or ratings of news stories shared. To build experience, news sharing platforms should provide tutorials or other help facilities for novices. To cater to experienced users, social media platforms may also consider providing a unified sharing mechanism to allow news to be disseminated across multiple social media platforms with ease.

There are some limitations in the present study that warrants caution in interpreting our results. First, we did not consider the attributes of different types of social media platforms on users' sharing behaviors. Some platforms are characterized by the presence of users' real identities (e.g., Facebook) while others are mostly anonymous (e.g., YouTube). The perceived affiliation of different social media platforms may influence users' social activities such as news sharing behavior. Second, the nature of this study may reduce the generalizability of its findings. Specifically, respondents were primarily undergraduate and graduate students with prior social media exposure. Replication of this study in other contexts (e.g. more diverse age groups, different educational backgrounds) would be useful to uncover and understand the factors influencing people's intention to share news in social media. Nonetheless, we believe that our data sample consisting of mainly technologically savvy college and graduate students will be a good representative of the overall online community who will access or share news online (LaRose & Eastin, 2004; Pornsakulvanich, Haridakis, & Rubin, 2008). In addition, we acknowledge that the operationalization of the entertainment gratification may affect the findings. In the present study, we operationalized entertainment based on past studies (i.e., combating boredom, passing the time, and relaxing) which focused on social media's capability of helping users escape from daily routine. In retrospect, a broader conceptualization of entertainment, including escapism, mood management, achievement, and competition (Vorderer, Klimmt, & Ritterfeld, 2004), perhaps may be more appropriate in the context of news sharing in social media and may yield different results. Finally, we did not differentiate the impact of different types of news in our study such as politics, science, entertainment and sports. Individuals have different preferences for news types and this could influence their sharing behavior (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2010). Future work can therefore consider the characteristics of news as well as different types of social media platforms. Different resources afforded by the technologies may influence perceptions and ultimately the usage intention (Lee, 2010). Integrating these factors may contribute to a better understanding of the motivations underlying users' news sharing behavior in social media.

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