

# Uses and Gratification with the Website Secret-Thai.Com

Siriporn Meenanan

**Abstract**— The objective of this study is to study about the uses and gratification of the sample who use the website that named secret-thai.com which provides moral contents, inspires, and builds up the spirit. The study found that the samples mainly use this website to follow up on the dharma activities. They also use the space as the web board to discuss about dharma issues. Moreover, the contents help readers to relax and also provides the guidelines to deal with stress and uncomfortable situations properly. The samples found to be most satisfied. In other words, the samples found the contents of the website are complete, and can cover their needs. Moreover, they found that contents useful in their ways of living. In addition, they are satisfied with the beautiful and interesting design of the website and well classification of the contents that readers can easily find the information that they want.

**Keywords**— uses and gratification, website, Secret-Thai.com, moral contents

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE society of challenges in economy, social and opposite opinions, has led to the higher condition of rush, distress and stresses. These circumstances are the causes of how human being needs security and sanctuary for their minds, and relaxation from everyday lives. Some of which seeks for entertainment activities such as watching movies or listening to music. Some people turns to the temple for the Buddha's teaching or sermons and meditation, which happens to become the Buddhist's choice increasingly every year.

In 2015, a study found that Thailand have approximately 1,510 meditation centers in every provinces across the country. It can be concluded that meditation has drawn Thai citizens to attend in the temples more than in the past. Praying over New Year's activity is also a terrific attraction, organized by several sectors and there are enlarging numbers of people joining this activity every year.

Apart from meditation in the temple or other Buddhist activities, 'encouragement' is also another important factor that people searching for while living in the society. Each individual would seek for encouragement from differences sources. Some might find them easily from family, friends or colleagues. While some people who does not live with their families might explore for encouragement from medium, such as books or inspiring quotes, Buddhist lessons or real life of

famous faces from social media. By such practices, has ignited the idea for one of the largest printing media in Thailand, Amarin Book Centers Co.,Ltd, to publish a Dhamma magazine into the market, which was a fresh idea since there were no other printing media has ever did before. It took one year for the editor's team to prepare for the launching of the 12<sup>th</sup> magazines for Amarin. Until July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008 was officially the birth of a bi-weekly Dhamma magazine named "Secret".

Secret is the magazine that promotes good deeds, positive thinking, creating inspiration and encouragement. It fully contains of food for thoughts in every pages, even the cover. If it is properly noticed, will be found that the faces of the famous person in every covers are in black and white shades. This is a total different from other magazines available that emphasize beauty and colorful.

Ms.Usawadee Sinthusen, the editor of Secret Magazine, gave an interview for a book stated that using black and white shades for the cover is a sign, "We are not focusing on the attractive outer shell, but the core of this magazine are what they contains inside. Searching for a person to be in our covers is another part that we need to choose. The person needs to be successful in terms of personal life, work and family, be a decent person that the society accepted and have a clear way of living that could be a role model for other people. Some people does not have to be a very religious, but they do need to have positive thinking in life. To put in easy words, he or she is a good person. If they are teenagers, they need to be a good one, to be a good example for others. However, there are no one who is 100% perfect, because no one is, but to have positive side heavier than negative side is our goal."

Target groups of this magazine are is working age to pre-retiring. Yet, the editor's team has deeply wishes that all letters for all issues of the "Secret" will be stories that are told to all people in all ages, Thais and foreigners, to create happiness and decrease sorrow for the world. In the future, the team is preparing to publish the "Secret" in English version too. In contrary, today's printing media is facing one huge threat that is going to change everything. This threat is called "new media" which is a main factor that will alternate the data presentation. A reader is now an information seeker, that has a power to choose the sources or channels of information from all over the globe since the internet became the major role of communication. Therefore, before the publishing of English version of the 'Secret', the so-called threat has made the launch of the 'Secret' website channel, [www.secret-thai.com](http://www.secret-thai.com), as another channel for all target groups to reach to the

Siriporn Meenanan is with the Faculty of Management Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, 103P00 Thailand (E-Mail: [Siriporn.me@ssru.ac.th](mailto:Siriporn.me@ssru.ac.th), [Altogirl\\_jc@hotmail.com](mailto:Altogirl_jc@hotmail.com), Phone: +66896699421).

magazine's data from anywhere and anytime they want. However, website may give convenience for the readers, but there is a limitation which is the contents might not be included in the magazine. The researchers then need to study the reader's behavior if they are more satisfied in the 'Secret' magazine through website channel, including the content utilization.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the study of viewing behavior of the website Secret-thai.com has theories, frameworks and concepts that related as follows. The researcher use them to establish research guideline, research tools and finding discussion.

### A. Information seeking theory

In the communication process, receiver means to the social group that gathering for consume or use the information and the media on a daily basis. They are important for the media producers because they are causing the transmission of information as well as social values.

Ubonrat Siriyuwasak (1996) divided the media receiver as follows [1].

1. Receivers as viewers, readers and listeners. The original audience has served as viewer that recognize only what is shown in the media. So, the sender will continue to spread awareness of their possible. The receiver will be recognized and understood the contents of the media to penetrate into one way of thinking and feeling.

2. Receivers as a mass that is diverse so it has to be an one-way communication. But in the present, receivers participate in defining the content in the communication process.

3. Receivers as a social group that affect to the social change because the use of two-way communication to create a virtual community.

4. Receivers as a consumer by the media as a tool in bringing a product to meet consumer groups.

Samuel L. Backer gives definitions of media exposure by categorizing three behaviors of receivers which are as follows [2];

1. Information Seeking – receivers look for information when they need it to be similar to someone at some point or in general.

2. Information Exposure – receivers are open to media when they need further information on their interesting topics such as watching TV programs based on suggestion or their preference. When they find some relating or interesting information, they will be more concentrated on it.

3. Experience Receptivity – receivers are open to media when they demand to do something or to relax. Four separated purposes by Surapong Sothanastien (1990) are as follows;

- 3.1 Cognition purpose – receivers demand for information to respond to their need.

- 3.2 Diversion purpose – receivers are exposed to media for entertainment, excitement, and relaxation.

- 3.3 Social Utility purpose – receivers need to create a sense of belonging or blend in with the society such as using slang words used today.

- 3.4 Withdrawal – receivers are open to media to escape from work or surrounding people [3].

As mentioning, media consuming styles and behaviors nowadays mainly focus on social network. Receivers are not only receiving, but they can select and participate in content screening. Therefore, the three media consuming behaviors above are taken to study the uses and gratification about social network.

In conclusion, not only the objective of seeking information is to support the existing ideas, attitude, and understanding, seeking information can also be used to gather knowledge, and as guidelines to problem solving. Furthermore, it helps to satisfy the individual's interest and entertainment. Nevertheless, the decision of seeking or ignoring the information depends on the individual's evaluation of the Reward Value of the information that the audience is received.

### B. Uses and Gratification Theory

This method is classified as a theory that prioritizes on a media receiver and pays attention to media's duty in a field of service based on humans' satisfaction. The method believes that the receivers dictate what kind of messages and channels they want to consume in order to satisfy themselves. It underlines receivers as an important agent of communicator. Receivers are not only influenced by senders, but they also select which senders and messages under their preference. This communication method implies that receivers make decision matching with satisfaction which relies on these basic hypotheses. First, receivers will seek for desiring content from different senders. Second, receivers will select senders from all of the senders existing. Third, receivers will consider senders that can fulfill and relate sufficiently to what they need. And fourth, receivers will use any sender without considering their media consuming behaviors.

It shows that receivers will consume messages that follow their own preferences. Therefore, senders need to adjust themselves all the time in order to respond to receivers' needs. According to this method, senders are neither heroes nor bad guys because they (media) are not influential over receivers, but vice versa. For that reason, senders have the main role to respond to what the society needs [4].

Ubonrat Siriyuwasak presents the views explaining more about media consuming behavior based on Theory of Uses and Gratification. Advantages she states that receivers will gain are as follows;

1. Receivers use media as "diversion" which is an outcome of escaping from the real world and relaxing from work.

2. Receivers use media to create "personal relationship". Messages from senders are tools for them to start a conversation or to spend time with their family and friends.

3. Receivers use media to shape "personal identity" such as personal reference, and reality exploration for further information to support their beliefs.

McQuail summarizes that Theory of Uses and Gratification has limitation because the previous studies have not identified clearly that a person deciding to receive a certain media is an absolute result from expectation for gratification influenced by

the society. However, there are many other studies supporting an idea of seeking gratification from media in different ways such as digesting information from news, using media to avoid problems, loneliness, and stressfulness in daily life, or to create self-confidence in the society [5].

In addition, the research of Lawrence A 'Wenner (1985) [6], on the news gratifications, has divided the consumer satisfactions into four following groups: First, Orientation Gratifications is the use of information to be used as references, to support the relationship between individual and social, and the type of needs that will follow such as the Information Surveillance, or receiving information to be used as Decisional Utility. Second, Social Gratifications is to use the information as the linkage between the information relating to social's perception and the individual's network such as to use the information in the conversations or to persuade others. Third, Para-Social Gratifications refers to the process to use the information to establish the individual's identity or to reference a person that involves or appears in the media. Fourth, Para-Orientation Gratifications refers to the process to reduce and ease the stress or to protect individual self, such as to use the media as entertainment to get away from other dissatisfaction.

### *C.A Concept of Social Network*

The varieties of social network has created huge impact of benefits to all users, especially in marketing aspects, for example, increasing sales volume, product acknowledgement expansion, public relations, client's responses and website visitors expansion [7]. Moreover, there are numerous users that are using social network individually such as presenting their opinions via social media to create public following. Social network becomes an inevitable and important role in people's lives. According to Pisek Chainirundra (2011), he stated "Social media is not a choice, but the path that you have to walk on" [8].

In today's social media platforms, they can be divided as follows [9].

1. Mobile Social Network is to use social network via cell phones and mobile tools, which has led to reduction of social network usage through computer or laptop. It shows the changing trend of Thai internet users as adults (over 45 years old) are using social network on tablet due to the bigger screen size and easier to access compared to computers. Accessing internet by using 3G network is getting more popular across the country that make cell phones and mobile tools as the main channel to social network.

2. Social Network Competition is the service competition through channels of social network, for example, online meeting services and online event planning services.

3. Social Media Integration is available when Thai users starting to access many services of social network. Social media integration makes the communication working more efficiently, for example, users using Facebook and Instagram or Foursquare at the same time. It portrays that only one channel of social media is not enough and continuity of communication is another factor to be aware of. Using cell phone apart from the computers can be a good example.

4. Social TV that connects with television or internet set top box is getting more popularity, especially Android, which plays a big role in the market. Smart TV creation is also a way to integrate television and internet together.

5. Social Search by using social media is becoming a popular method of searching for information in today's lives. The results could be different from Google because of the specialties, faster (Real Time) and more reliable.

6. Social Media Advertising as more people are using social network, this channel is getting more successful and becoming 'smarter' as the advertisers could target the specific group of audiences such as pin-pointing the audiences' location or customizing spaces and types of advertisement from Facebook Ads via cell phones are developed and has been very popular channel.

7. Advance Social Media Tactic are strategies and techniques of social media using to create more volume for branding and business.

8. Social Commerce by using social media is becoming more complex than before. In the past, posting commercial on the timeline or pages' walls are ways to create commerce. Later, there will be more platforms to assist social commerce to be more earnest.

9. Social CRM is client's assistance service through social media. Many companies starting to shift their ways of communication from old channels (telephones or letters) to social media. When clients face any problems, they tend to ask and communicate more in social media such as Q&A or sharing experiences via Facebook or Twitter.

10. Social Media Monitoring to listen and follow what the clients say about the business. Social media plays a huge part for businesses to communicate and getting to know the clients. Using listening & monitoring tools that are available in the social networks allow the companies' admin team to know what the clients are saying or sharing about them, including the campaigns that are created in social media to measure the specific information and more complex goals and KPIs from the available tools.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is on the study of viewing behavior of the website Secret-thai.com by using the quantitative research methodology. The questionnaire is used as a tool to collect the data from the sample. The sample are 400 teenagers in Bangkok who have visited the website Secret-thai.com.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics which will be divided into the following parts:

Part 1 and Part 2 are the general analysis and viewing habits of the website Secret-thai.com that were analyzed by frequency and percentage.

Part 3 analyzes the data about the attitudes of audience of the website Secret-thai.com based on the Likert Scale which divided into 5 levels (1-5) which are Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Uncertain, Agree, and Strongly Agree respectively.

The scores obtained are weighted to determine the audience's level of feedback. The weighted scores are divided into 5 levels which are Most Strongly Agree (scoring 4.50-5.00), Strongly Agree (scoring 3.50-4.49), Moderately Agree

(scoring 2.50-3.49), Less Agree (scoring 1.50-2.49), and Least Agree (scoring 1.00-1.49).

#### IV. FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey of sample consisted of 400 respondents found that most of the respondents are female. The respondents are in the age range of 26-30 and graduated the bachelor degree.

The study of viewing behavior of the website Secret-thai.com found that 60 per cent visit the website 1-2 day per week, 30 per cent visit the website 3-4 days per week, and only 10 per cent visit the website more than 6 days per week.

In addition, the study found that each time the sample visit the website, 56 per cent pay attention to contents in the website for 31-60 minutes, 20 per cent pay attention for 61-90 minutes, 14 per cent pay attention for 91-120 minutes, and only 10 per cent pay attention for more than 120 minutes.

On the use of the website, the study found that most of the sample use the website to updating new information and be up-to-date, utilized the content to be a conversation topic with others, utilized the content and lead to deeper study of Dhamma, as an open space for Dhamma discussion, as an open space to share and space for exchange opinions with people who shared same interests, join activity in the website for prizes, follow and attend Dhamma activities regularly, develop oneself to be a life coach for others, help for relaxation once read the contents from the website and the contents from the website turns to guide lines in problem solving when in distress.

The sample satisfied stylish designs of the website, they strongly agree that the content were well-organized and easy for searching, well-rounded, regularly updated and useful for ways of living. Most of sample has the satisfaction in Dhamma's Q&A and studies, satisfaction in the content as a source of Dhamma's discussion and satisfaction in the website's activities for both games & prizes and meditation.

For the suggestion, the next research should use the focus group or in depth interview to gather the in depth information on the perspective of sample on the appropriateness of the content.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to thank Assoc. Prof. Dr. Luedech Girdwichai, The President of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand for financial support. The author would like to thank Asst. Prof. Dr. Prateep Wajeetongratana, the Dean of Faculty of Management Science for the full support in this research.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Ubonrat Siriyuvasak. "Television and the Emergence of 'Civil Society' in Thailand." In *Contemporary Television: Eastern Perspectives*, ed. by David French and Michael Richards, pp. 181-199. New Delhi : Sage, 1996.
- [2] Krikelas, James, *Information-Seeking Behavior: Patterns and Concepts*. Linear Networks and Systems. Drexel Library Quarterly, (Foundations of Library Practice) v19 n2 p5-20 Spr 1983.
- [3] Surapong Sothanasatien, "Social Communication." Chulalongkorn University, 1990.

- [4] Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. *Utilization of mass communication by the individual*. Beverly Hills: Sage. 1974.
- [5] Susan Kippax and John P. Murray, "Using the mass media need gratification and perceived," *Communication Research* July 1980 vol. 7 no. 3 335-359.
- [6] Lawrence A. Wenner. "The nature of news gratification," Beverly, Calif.: Sage. 1985.
- [7] Karnchana KaewDevi. *Mass Communication: Communication theory and study skills*. Bangkok : Love and Live
- [8] Pisek Chainirundra. *Marketing Click*. SE-Education, Bangkok: 2011.
- [9] Write, C.R. *Mass Communication: A Sociological Perspective*. New York: Random House.

**Siriporn Meenan** was born in 13th February 1981 in Bangkok, Thailand. She accomplished a bachelor of Arts (Journalism) from Thammasat University, Thailand in 2004. Then in 2011, she completed her master of Arts (Communication Arts) from Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. Currently, Siriporn is working as a full-time lecturer in Journalism, Communication Arts for the Faculty of Management Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand