

# Uses and Gratification Theory – Why Adolescents Use Facebook?

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## SUMMARY

*Due to a dynamic development of the Web 2.0 and new trends in the social media field that change on a daily basis, contemporary media research is shifting its focus to a greater extent on media users, their motivation and behavior in using social network sites in order to explain the extreme popularity of Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and other similar SNSs and mobile chat applications among the young.*

*In this paper we wanted to explore the benefits of Facebook use among adolescents as well as which of their needs are gratified thereat. As the theoretical background we used the uses and gratification theory due to its user oriented approach. Furthermore, we wanted to test whether the uses and gratification concept is adequate for analyzing the motivation and behavior of SNSs users as suggested by some previous research.*

*The survey comprising 431 adolescent Facebook users was conducted from October to December 2013 in the City of Zagreb. The results have shown that most adolescents use Facebook for socializing and communicating with their friends, discussing school activities, setting up meetings and dates with friends as well as*

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*obtaining information about social events. The use of Facebook primarily gratifies adolescents' need for integration, social interaction, information and understanding of their social environment. The uses and gratification theory proved thereby to be an adequate background for the analysis of the results.*

Key words: uses and gratification theory, Facebook, adolescents, social network sites, social media

## **Introduction**

Due to a dynamic development of the Web 2.0 and new trends in the social media field that change on a daily basis, one part of contemporary media research is shifting its focus to a greater extent on the media users, who at the same time consume and create the Internet content (Gallion, 2010: 3). Apart from standard content analysis, research that focuses on social media users' motivation and behavior is interesting as well (Gallion, 2010; Bumgarner, 2007; Quan-Hasse, Young, 2010; Smock et al., 2011; Raacke, Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Joinson, 2008; Froget, Baghestan, Asfaranjan, 2013), for it can explain the extreme popularity of Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and other similar Internet applications among the young. This kind of research is also interesting in the context of media literacy – it explores why and in which manner users interact on social network sites as well as which of their features they use most frequently.

In this paper we wanted to explore the benefits of Facebook use among adolescents as well as which of their needs are gratified thereat. As a theoretical background we used the uses and gratification theory which took hold in recent years (as shown by research cited above) due to its user oriented approach, since in the history of mass communication has the user never been more active than nowadays.

## **Uses and gratification approach**

Unlike mass media concepts and theories that emphasize the media influence, uses and gratification approach explores how and based on which motives recipients use the media as well as which gratifications are obtained thereat. While some older theories suggested that the audience is passive and can be easily manipulated, e.g. magic-bullet and hypodermic needle theory, uses and gratification approach emphasizes positive motivation and active use of the media content that can gratify individual recipient's needs (Griffin, 2012: 368). In its early stage of development (around 1950s-1980s) the approach focused on traditional media – radio, news-

paper and television (some theorists studied film and book usage as well). In the Internet era the theory gained new momentum and significance (Raacke, Bonds-Raacke, 2008: 169), particularly in the last five to ten years, due to a social media development.

Distinguished uses and gratification approach theorists Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch pointed out five basic assumptions of the theory: “1. the audience is active and its media use is goal oriented; 2. the initiative in linking need gratification to a specific medium choice rests with the audience member; 3. the media compete with other resources for need satisfaction; 4. people have enough self-awareness of their media use, interests, and motives to be able to provide researchers with an accurate picture of that use; 5. value judgments of media content can only be assessed by the audience” (Kunczik, Zipfel, 2006: 190). When it comes to types of gratifications which recipient can obtain when consuming a media content, Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch conclude they are as numerous as a number of recipients themselves – the same content can gratify different needs of different individuals (Katz, Blumler, Gurevitch, 1974: 21).

But still, according to theorists, uses and gratifications can be classified into five categories related to five groups of human needs (Katz, Gurevitch, Haas, 1973, in: Tan, 1985: 235-236):

1. Cognitive needs – acquiring information, knowledge, understanding our social environment, curiosity, exploration;
2. Affective needs – aesthetic and emotional experiences, pleasure;
3. Personal identity – self-confidence, personal stability, integrity, social status, the need for self-respect;
4. Integration and social interaction – family relations and friendship, connection with the outside world, the need for affiliation;
5. Escapism – the need to escape, tension release, shifting attention from unpleasant to pleasant.

Another classification suggested by Rubin (1981: 147) discerns eight different motives for consuming television content, which, according to Rubin, include almost every possible motive for using any media:

1. To pass time (e.g. watching television in a waiting room);
2. Companionship (e.g. meeting with friends to watch football);
3. Escape (e.g. watching television to escape from the pressure created by a deadline for submitting an essay);

4. Enjoyment (some people feel pleasure merely by watching television);
5. Social interaction (creating a feeling that we are connected with others by watching television, for example we can discuss the television content);
6. Relaxation (e.g. after work or before going to bed);
7. Information (the need to be informed about social events);
8. Excitement (e.g. watching a crime movie in which the conflict and violence create a sense of excitement).

In the later stage of the theory development (around mid 1980s), a distinction between *gratification sought* and *gratification obtained* was introduced. If gratification sought is not achieved, the recipient may stop using a particular media or consuming a particular media content. On the other hand, the recipient may obtain a gratification he/she hasn't initially sought. In some later classifications a habit was introduced as another motive for consuming media content (Kunczik, Zipfel, 2006: 192).

### **Advantages and disadvantages of the theory**

The main advantage of the uses and gratification approach is that it gives an insight to motivation for consuming a particular media content, which complements the findings about the interaction between the media and its users. A simple fact that someone watches television four hours a day cannot give the full information about their motives or which of their needs are gratified thereat. For some recipients, a television is merely an acoustic background, escape from the feeling of being alone, for others it is a mean of relaxation or obtaining information, while some recipients seek excitement. The theory considers recipient's individual motives, thus discarding an obsolete premise about passive media recipients all influenced by the media in the same manner (Griffin, 2012: 358).

But at the same time, here lies the main disadvantage of the theory. Katz, Gurevitch and Blumler hypothesized that media recipients are aware of their needs, that they can express them and then link them to different media uses which gratify those needs. But it cannot be claimed with certainty that recipients are always aware of their needs and that they can articulate them. For instance, someone will consume a particular media content to gratify the need to escape, but will at the same time give a different response (consciously or otherwise) when being surveyed for research purposes. Instead of stating the actual reason, he/she might state that the motive for consuming the media content is the need to be informed, and not escapism. But this is a potential threat in almost every research on attitudes and behavior (Galić,

JerneiĆ, Belavić, 2009: 977). Research based on uses and gratification approach is no exception.

## Facebook

Social network sites (SNSs) can be defined as a „web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd, Ellison, 2008: 211).

In 2014, Facebook – one of the most popular SNSs according to the number of its users (URL: <http://newsroom.fb.com/Key-Facts>), celebrated its 10th anniversary since it was established in February 2004 by a Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg, current owner and CEO of the company. According to statistics for June 2014, Facebook has 829 million daily active users and 1.32 billion monthly active users as of June 30, 2014 (URL: <http://newsroom.fb.com/Key-Facts>). The data for January 2014 show there are 1.6 million active Facebook users in Croatia (URL: <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/croatia>). Facebook has thus become a new way of communicating and a new form of sociability, introducing new behavioral patterns (Kušić, 2010: 103).

Today, an average teenage user has around 200 Facebook friends (URL: <http://bit.ly/1nUoUgr>), which makes this SNS an integral part of everyday life of “digital natives”<sup>1</sup> and “iGeneration”<sup>2</sup>. By using online SNSs, children and young people “create an identity (hybrid identities) thereby participating in the process of socialization that includes reading other users’ profiles and communicating with them” (Kušić, 2010: 105). It is interesting that in the last couple of years there has been an increase in the number of older Facebook users, age 35 to 54, who in January 2014 comprised 31.1. % of all Facebook users (URL: <http://bit.ly/1aoUCN9>).

Facebook’s features offer numerous possibilities. Almost all of them are designed to increase interaction and online communication dynamics as well as to keep users interconnected at all times, which is the basic idea of SNSs. On their personal profile, which can include user’s photograph and personal information, users can post text, photographs, videos or links to other Facebook or Internet content (in the section of the profile called *the wall*). Users interconnect by sending each other a friend request, which can be accepted or dismissed by the receiver of the request. Once they are connected, users can search through their friends’ profiles as well as comment on or “like”<sup>3</sup> their posts.

Users' Facebook activities and their friends' activities are shown in the central section called *News Feed*. In this section users can see which content their friends like, what were their comments on a particular content (e.g. a photograph, a song or a joke), which social event they will attend, what is their present location and what they are doing at the moment, who is celebrating a birthday etc.

Users can also communicate by exchanging personal messages using Facebook Messenger, a mobile chat application for exchanging text, photographs and stickers<sup>4</sup>. Apart from these basic activities they can create public Facebook pages, play games, create events (an invitation for different social events), follow celebrities or create a group of users with similar interests (e.g. a group of classmates).

### **Uses and gratifications of SNSs – previous research**

Given the fact that uses and gratification theory has been elaborated and validated in the context of traditional media (Kunczik, Zipfel, 2006: 189), until recently it took into consideration only uses and gratifications sought and obtained while *consuming* a media content. Due to a two-way communication enabled by the Internet as well as the fact that recipients can now deliver and post their own media content, the theory today also focuses on uses and gratifications which the Internet or the SNSs user can obtain while *creating* a new content (Gallion, 2010; Bumgarner, 2007). Therefore the approach may help to explain the enormous popularity of particular SNSa and mobile chat applications.

Although Kazt, Gurevitch and Haas developed the theory in the context of traditional media, their classification, as shown by contemporary research, is applicable to the Internet and SNSs as well. Some recent research on SNSs use has shown their users gratify all five needs from the original classification – cognitive needs, affective needs, the need for personal identity, integration and social interaction and escapism (Katz, Gurevitch, Haas, 1973, in: Tan, 1985: 235-236).

The results of the research have shown that SNSs users gratify their need for social interaction, entertainment, self-presentation and information (Gallion, 2010), seeking a romantic relationship, gossip about their friends and acquaintances, voyeurism and expressing their identity (Bumgarner, 2007), obtaining information about social events, sharing problems with others and filling their free time (Quan-Hasse, Young, 2010), escapism, relaxation, habit, meeting new people, professional development and following new trends (Smock et al., 2011), academic activities (Raacke, Bonds-Raacke, 2008), peer pressure (others are using the SNS) (Froget, Baghestan, Asfaranjan, 2013) as well as identity sharing and exploring other people's profiles (Joinson, 2008). Apart from these numerous di-

fferent needs, all cited research confirmed that SNSs users primarily gratify their need for integration and social interaction. It is evident that uses and gratifications of SNSs include all five categories of human needs suggested by Katz, Gurevitch and Haas. Therefore, the theory has proven to be an adequate theoretical background for SNSs research.

### **Research aims, research questions and hypotheses**

The aim of the research was to explore the benefits of Facebook use among adolescents as well as to find out which of their needs are gratified thereat – cognitive, affective, the need for personal identity, integration and social interaction or escapism (Katz, Gurevitch, Haas, 1973). The secondary goal was to find out whether adolescents use all of the Facebook features or do they mainly communicate (chat) with their friends and acquaintances. Before the beginning of the research, five research questions and hypotheses were formulated based on the theoretical background and previous research.

Within the uses and gratification approach, one of the needs gratified by the media use is the need for integration and social interaction (Katz, Gurevitch, Haas, 1973; Rubin 1981), especially pronounced in adolescence (Gielen, Roopnarine, 2004: 262). Furthermore, previous research mentioned earlier in the paper (Gallion, 2010; Bumgarner, 2007; Quan-Hasse, Young, 2010; Smock et al., 2011; Raacke, Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Joinson, 2008) have shown that SNSs users primarily gratify their need for integration and social interaction. Based on that, the first research question and hypothesis were formulated:

Q1: Do adolescents use Facebook mainly for social interaction?

H1: Adolescents use Facebook mainly to socialize and communicate with their friends.

One of the elements within the need for personal identity, for which SNSs have proven to be useful, is sharing and seeking confirmation of personal attitudes (Bumgarner, 2007). The public character of SNSs gives the users an opportunity to simultaneously share their attitudes, thoughts and emotions among a larger group of people. Furthermore, some adolescents are more inclined to express their attitudes on SNSs than in person (Schouten, 2007: 107), which may be of help to marginalized groups of adolescents (Cline, 2012: 9). Therefore, the second research question and hypothesis were formulated:

Q2: Do adolescents use Facebook to publicly express their attitudes?

H2: Adolescents use Facebook to publicly express their attitudes.

SNSs give adolescents an opportunity for self-presentation, since they allow them much more freedom and control over how they will present themselves (Schouten, 2007: 107). Some of them will present themselves as older, more seductive, more beautiful or more outspoken, which is associated with their need for personal identity (Schouten, 2007: 108). Therefore it was interesting to formulate a research question and a hypothesis linked to this type of adolescents' behavior on SNSs:

Q3: Do adolescents use Facebook to present themselves the way they want to?

H3: Adolescents use Facebook to present themselves the way they want to.

Uses and gratification theory suggests that one of the motives for using the media is curiosity, the need to understand our environment and to be informed (Katz, Gurevitch, Haas, 1973). This was confirmed by the research on uses and gratifications of SNSs as well (Gallion 2010; Joinson, 2008). The fourth research question and hypothesis were formulated:

Q4: Do adolescents use Facebook to follow<sup>5</sup> their friends and acquaintances?

H4: Adolescents use Facebook to follow their friends and acquaintances.

As mentioned earlier in the paper, a sense of pleasure can also be one of the gratifications when consuming a media content, which is related to a general emotional state triggered by using a particular media (Katz, Gurevitch, Haas, 1973). Therefore another research question and hypothesis were formulated:

Q5: Do adolescents feel good when using Facebook?

H5: Adolescents feel mainly good when using Facebook.

## **Research method**

The survey comprising 431 adolescent Facebook users was conducted from October to December 2013 in the City of Zagreb. Participants were divided into three age groups – early (138 students in seventh and eighth grade of elementary school), middle (143 students in first and second grade of high school) and late adolescence (150 students in third and fourth grade of high school)<sup>6</sup>. Lower age limit was set to 13 years of age, given that children under 13 are not allowed to use Facebook, as stated in Facebook Statement of Rights and Responsibilities (URL: <https://www.facebook.com/legal/terms>). A paper-and-pencil survey was conducted in four elementary and three high schools. Since the questionnaires were filled in in the presence of a researcher, students were asked to participate in the survey only if they had a Facebook profile. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed out of which 431 were valid.



Before the final questionnaire was created, a paper-and-pencil survey was conducted on a smaller sample (30 students in all three age groups). Participants were asked to answer single open-ended question: “Why do you use Facebook?” They were encouraged to give as many answers as they could. Based on their responses, as well as the uses and gratifications of SNSs confirmed by previous research (Quan-Hasse, Young, 2010; Raacke, Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Bumgarner, 2007; Gallion, 2010; Smock et al., 2011; Joinson, 2008; Froget, Baghestan, Asfaranjan, 2013), a 5-point Likert scale was constructed comprising 25 possible uses and gratifications of Facebook. Apart from the Likert scale, the final questionnaire included the question about the initial motive to create a Facebook profile, autonomy of the decision to create it, a question about a type of participants’ Facebook activities, time spent on Facebook as well as how they feel when using Facebook.

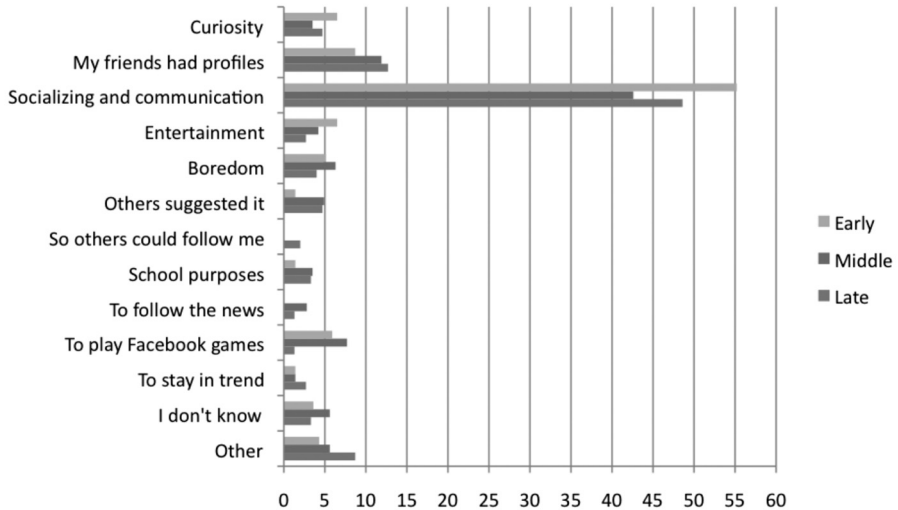
## Results

The participants’ responses to first, open-ended question about the motivation for creating a Facebook profile, in some categories show similar distribution of the motives in all three age groups. Most participants – 55.2 % in early adolescence, 42.6 % in middle and 48.6 % in late adolescence responded they created a profile for socializing and communication. The motivation for creating a profile also came from the fact their friends had profiles (E 8.7 %, M 11.9 %, L 12.7 %)<sup>7</sup>, as well as playing Facebook games (E 5.9 %, M 7.7 %, L 1.3 %), entertainment (E 6.5 %, M 4.2 %, L 2.7 %), curiosity (E 6.5 %, M 3.5 %, L 4.7 %), boredom (E 5.1 %, M 6.3 %, L 4 %) or because others suggested it (E 1.4 %, M 4.9 %, L 4.7 %).

The responses in some categories displayed a significant difference in motivation through the age groups (entertainment, others suggested it, playing Facebook games). The least number of participants responded that they created a profile to follow the news (E 0 %, M 2.8 %, L 1.3 %) and so that others can follow them (E 0 %, M 0 %, L 2 %).

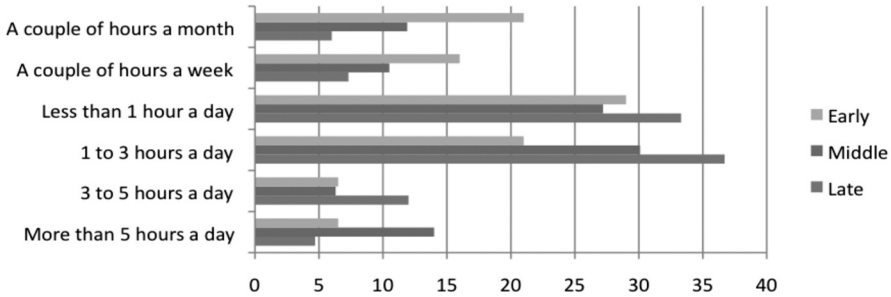
Graph 1 Motivation for creating a Facebook profile<sup>8</sup>

Grafikon 1. Motiv za otvaranje profila na Facebooku



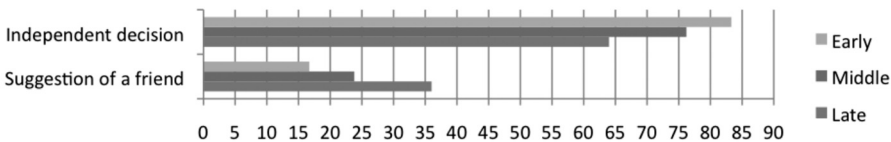
The time spent using Facebook varies through different age groups. Compared to younger age groups, participants in late adolescence spend most time using Facebook – 36.7 % of them spend 1 to 3 hours a day and 33.3 % spend less than 1 hour a day using it. Participants in middle adolescence also spend 1 to 3 hours a day (30.1 %) or less than 1 hour a day (27.2 %) using Facebook. The largest number of participants in early adolescence spend less than 1 hour a day using Facebook (29 %), while others use it a couple of hours a month (21 %) and 1 to 3 hours a day (21 %). A significant percentage of participants in late adolescence (12 %) spend 3 to 5 hours a day using Facebook and 14 % of participants in middle adolescence use it more than 5 hours a day.

Graph 2 Time spent using Facebook  
 Grafikon 2. Vrijeme provedeno na Facebooku



Most participants created a Facebook account based on an independent decision (E 83.3 %, M 76.2 %, L 64 %). The suggestion of a friend, if compared through the age groups, had most influence with participants in late adolescence (36 %), and least influence with participants in early adolescence (16.7 %).

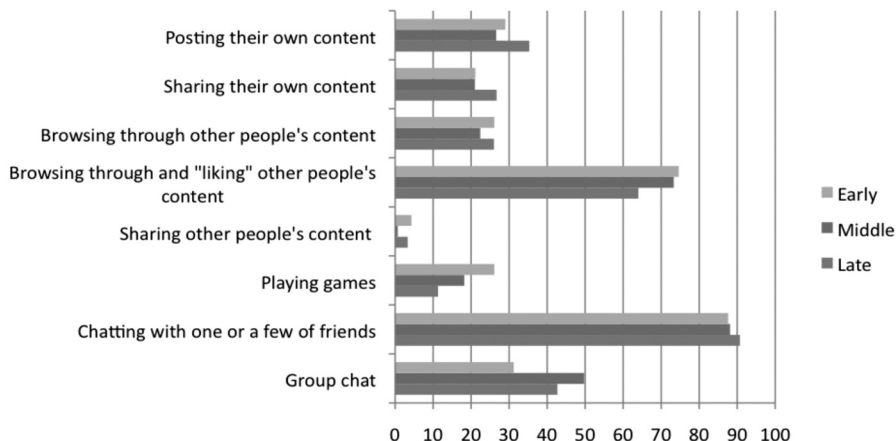
Graph 3 Autonomy of the decision to create a Facebook profile  
 Grafikon 3. Samostalnost odluke o otvaranju profila na Facebooku



In the question regarding activities on Facebook (which type of activity are they mostly engaged in), participants were asked to choose three responses. The largest number of participants in every age group chose the same three responses – chatting with one or a couple of friends (E 87.6 %, M 88.1 %, L 90.7 %), browsing through and “liking” other people’s content (E 74.6 %, M 73.3 %, L 64%) and group chatting (E 31.2 %, M 49.7 %, L 42.7 %). To a lesser extent they post their own content (posts and comments, photographs, videos, their own artworks, they create groups, events, Facebook pages etc.) – E 29 %, M 26.6 %, L 35.3 %, browse through other people’s content without “liking” or sharing that content (E 26.1 %, M 22.4 %, L 26 %) and share their own content (E 21.1 %, M 21 %, L 26.7 %). Participants in early adolescence, compared to other two age groups, play Facebook games to a greater extent (E 26.1 % compared to M 18.2 % and L 11.3 %), while all age groups least frequently share other people’s content.

Graph 4 Adolescents' activities on Facebook

Grafikon 4. Aktivnosti kojima se adolescenti bave na Facebooku



The penultimate question is formulated as a 5-point Likert scale with 25 possible uses and gratifications of using Facebook. Participants were asked to express to what extent is a certain statement correct in their case (*completely incorrect, incorrect, nor correct or incorrect, correct, completely correct*). The results indicate homogeneity among the age groups for some statements, while other statements vary regarding age. Table 1 displays (in color) only the valuations stated by more than 25 % of participants.

The results indicate that all three age groups use Facebook mostly for discussing school activities and setting up meetings and dates with friends (participants valued these statements as *completely correct*). Participants in both early and middle adolescence valued the statement that they use Facebook to hang out with friends as *completely correct*, while participants in early adolescence valued the statement that they use Facebook for entertainment as *completely correct* as well.

All participants agree to a lesser extent (statement valued as *correct*) that they use Facebook to find out what their friends are doing, to reduce boredom, to hang out with friends, for entertainment, to inform themselves about social events, to discuss school activities and to set up meetings as well as to share the content they like. Apart from that, participants in early adolescence use Facebook to fill their free time and those in middle and late adolescence use it out of habit.

The statements that they use Facebook so that friends can see how they look on photographs, so they wouldn't feel alone, to escape from reality, to insult or slander others, to draw attention, so others would confirm their attitudes and to express

their discontent are valued as *completely incorrect* by all participants. Apart from that, the results show that participants in middle and late adolescence do not use Facebook (statements valued as *completely incorrect*) because others are using it, to increase the number of friends, to publicly express their attitudes, to show others what they are doing, to present themselves the way they want to, to get noticed by a person they like or to follow celebrities.

A lesser degree of disagreement (*incorrect*) was expressed for different statements by different age groups – participants disagree that they use Facebook because others are using it (E and M), to increase the number of friends (L), to show friends how they look on photographs (E and K), to publicly express their attitudes (E and L), so they wouldn't feel alone (E), to escape from reality (E and L), to draw attention (E), to show others what they are doing (E and L), to present themselves the way they want to (L), to get noticed by a person they like (E and M), so others would confirm their attitudes (E and L) and to express their discontent (E and L).

The largest percentage of participants in all three age groups valued the statements that they use Facebook to fill their free time and for relaxation as *nor correct or incorrect*.

Table 1 Uses and gratification of Facebook among adolescents  
*Tablica 1. Koristi koje adolescenti ostvaruju korištenjem Facebooka*

Why do you use Facebook? (uses/gratifications)	Completely incorrect			Incorrect			Nor correct or incorrect			Correct			Completely correct		
	E %	M %	L %	E %	M %	L %	E %	M %	L %	E %	M %	L %	E %	M %	L %
To fill my free time	13.8	18.2	16	20.3	21	22.7	31.8	37.7	35.3	28.3	16.1	20.7	5.8	7	5.3
To find out what my friends are doing	5.1	9.9	7.3	13.1	11.9	14	26.8	27.9	30.7	40.5	41.9	36	14.5	8.4	12
To reduce boredom	16.7	7.6	6	13.8	11.2	13.3	26.1	27.3	36.7	27.5	29.4	26.7	15.9	24.5	17.3
To hang out with my friends	2.2	4.2	2.7	5.1	7	12	23.2	27.3	28.7	36.2	34.2	37.3	33.3	27.3	19.3
Entertainment	4.3	9.2	8.7	3.6	12.6	18.7	21.7	32.8	37.9	42	32.1	26.7	28.4	13.3	8
Others are using Facebook	24.7	26.5	32	27.6	25.9	20.7	28.9	22.4	22.7	13	15.4	17.9	5.8	9.8	6.7
To increase the number of friends	15.2	31.5	32.7	23.2	23.8	34	29.7	20.9	21.3	18.1	15.4	8.7	13.8	8.4	3.3

So friends can see how I look on photographs	44.2	58	58.1	29.7	14.7	25.3	13.8	11.9	10	9.4	8.4	3.3	2.9	7	3.3
To publicly express my attitudes	21.6	39.1	34	32.6	18.9	27.3	31.2	24.5	24.7	10.1	11.9	10	4.3	5.6	4
The feeling of not being alone	40.6	62.9	64	32.6	19.6	24.7	16.7	9.8	8	7.9	2.8	1.3	2.2	4.9	2
To escape from reality	47.1	65.7	64	28.9	13.3	25.3	16.7	11.9	6.7	5.1	5.6	2	2.2	3.5	2
To inform myself about social events	8.7	4.9	3.3	8.7	10.5	6	23.2	24.5	28.7	43.5	48.9	50	15.9	11.2	12
To insult or slander others	68.7	69.9	71.3	20.3	13.3	20	7.2	4.9	6	0.7	4.2	0.7	2.9	7.7	2
To relax	13	18.8	19.3	15.9	19.6	23.3	35.5	28.7	30.7	23.3	22.4	22	12.3	10.5	4.7
To draw attention	47.1	69.2	67.9	28.3	18.2	22.7	12.3	7.7	6	6.5	0	2.7	5.8	4.9	0.7
To discuss school activities	5.1	6.3	4.8	6.5	3.5	3.3	12.3	18.2	7.3	44.9	44.7	47.3	31.2	27.3	37.3
To set up meetings and dates with friends	3.6	4.3	2	4.3	3.5	4	18.1	14.7	10.7	35.6	33.5	44	38.4	44	39.3
To show others what I am doing	20.3	43.3	36.7	34.7	19.6	35.3	34.1	27.3	21.3	8	5.6	4	2.9	4.2	2.7
To present myself the way I want to	23.9	46.9	40	24.7	22.4	31.3	31.9	13.9	18	12.3	11.9	8	7.2	4.9	2.7
Out of habit	23.2	14.6	9.3	14.5	16.8	12	31.2	23.1	29.3	18.1	29.4	38	13	16.1	11.4
To share the content I like	7.2	20.3	10.7	9.4	15.4	17.3	31.2	21.7	30	34.1	30.7	28.7	18.1	11.9	13.3
To get noticed by a person I like	18.1	42.6	43.3	33.3	25.2	24	26.1	17.5	16.7	14.6	7	9.3	7.9	7.7	6.7
So others would confirm my attitudes	29.7	54.5	54	30.5	22.4	29.3	29.7	15.4	12.7	6.5	2.1	2.7	3.6	5.6	1.3
To express my discontent	38.4	48.3	47.3	38.4	19.6	28	15.2	20.9	17.3	2.9	6.3	3.3	5.1	4.9	4.1
To follow celebrities	21	35	34	18.1	13.9	17.3	25.4	23.1	20.7	23.2	18.9	23.3	12.3	9.1	4.7

All ten uses and gratification of Facebook confirmed by participants (statements valued as *correct* and *completely correct*) are shown in Graph 5. The largest number of participants in all three age groups confirmed that they use Facebook to set up meetings and dates with friends (E 74 %, M 77.5 %, L 83.3 %) and to discuss school activities (E 76.1 %, M 72 %, L 84.6 %). After that, the largest number of participants in early adolescence uses Facebook for entertainment (70.4 %), to inform themselves about social events (59.4 %), to find out what their friends are doing (55 %) and to share the content they like (52.2 %).

Apart from the top two uses and gratifications, participants in middle adolescence use Facebook to the greatest extent to hang out with friends (61.5 %), to inform themselves about social events (60.1 %) and to reduce boredom (53.9 %), while participants in late adolescence use it to inform themselves about social events (62 %), hang out with friends (56.6 %) and to find out what their friends are doing (48 %).

Table 2 displays five dominant uses and gratifications obtained of Facebook which were confirmed by participants in all age groups, starting with the one which was confirmed by the largest number of participants.

Graph 5 Uses and gratifications confirmed by participants on the 5-point scale  
 Grafikon 5. Koristi koje su ispitanici potvrdili na 5-stupanjskoj skali

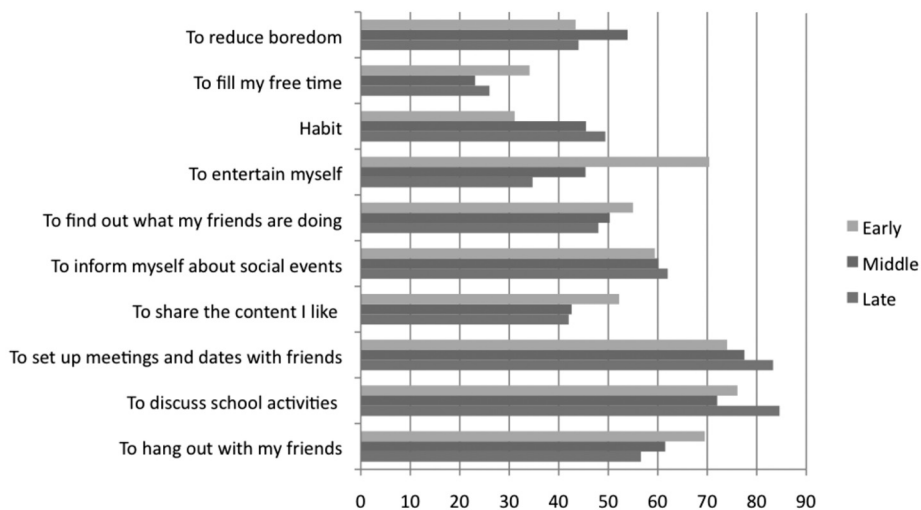
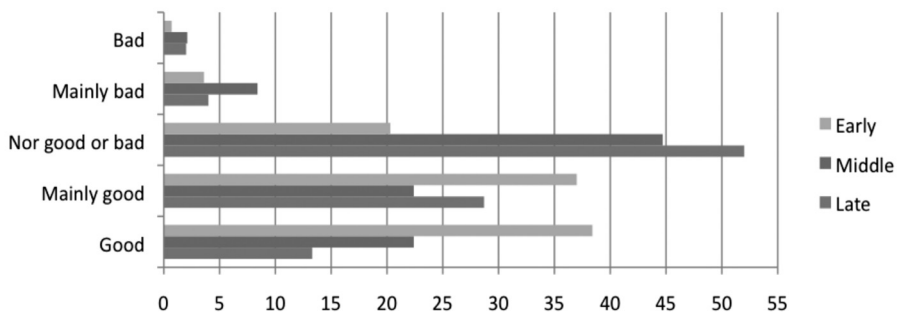


Table 2 Five dominant uses and gratifications of Facebook among adolescents  
 Tablica 2. Pet dominantnih koristi uporabe Facebooka kod adolescenata

	Early	%	Middle	%	Late	%
1.	To discuss school activities	76.1	To set up meetings and dates with friends	77.5	To discuss school activities	84.6
2.	To set up meetings and dates with friends	74	To discuss school activities	72	To set up meetings and dates with friends	83.3
3.	To entertain myself	70.4	To hang out with my friends	61.5	To inform myself about social events	62
4.	To hang out with my friends	69.5	To inform myself about social events	60.1	To hang out with my friends	56.6
5.	To inform myself about social events	59.4	To reduce boredom	53.9	Habit	49.4

In the last question the participants were asked to state how they feel when using Facebook. Most participants in middle and late adolescence responded that they feel nor good or bad (M 44.7 %, L 52 %). On the other hand, the largest number of participants in early adolescence stated that they feel good (38.4 %) and mainly good (37 %), which is a significantly larger percentage compared to participants in middle and late adolescence which chose the same answers (mainly good – M 22.4 %, L 28.7 % and good – M 22.4 %, L 13.3 %). A small number of participants feel bad (E 0.7 %, M 2.1 %, L 2 %) or mainly bad (E 3.6 %, M 8.4 %, L 4 %) when using Facebook.

Graph 6 How adolescents feel when using Facebook  
 Grafikon 6. Kako se adolescenti osjećaju zbog korištenja Facebookom





## Discussion

The results of the survey confirmed two out of five hypotheses. One hypothesis is partly confirmed, while two of them are refuted.

The analysis of the motivation for creating a Facebook profile indicates that gratifications sought by most participants were socializing and communication with friends (Graph 1). Another significant motive was the fact that their friends had profiles. In adolescence, the peer influence is growing stronger in a relation to the family influence. Thereby peers are becoming an important socialization factor in adolescents (Gielen, Roopnarine, 2004: 262). Therefore it was expected this particular motive would be one of the dominant motives for creating a Facebook profile. The decision for creating it (Graph 3) was independent for majority of participants across all three age groups, although in the smallest percentage for participants in late adolescence (64%), and highest in early adolescence (83.3%). The reason for a higher percentage in middle and late adolescence may be the greater peer influence, which linearly increases from age 14 to 18 (Steinberg, Monahan, 2007: 1,531), given that participants created their profiles at that age.

The analysis of the 5-point Likert scale, in which 25 possible uses and gratifications of Facebook were indicated (Table 1), shows that adolescents use Facebook to the greatest extent to socialize and communicate with friends. The largest number of participants confirmed they use Facebook to discuss school activities and socialize with friends (Graph 5). The results therefore confirm the first hypothesis: *Adolescents use Facebook mainly to socialize and communicate with their friends*, and are consistent with the findings of previous research. These gratifications are responsive to adolescents' need for integration and social interaction, the need related to contact with friends and outside world, which is associated with the need for affiliation (Katz, Gurevitch, Haas, 1973, in: Tan, 1985: 235-236).

As adolescents grow, their focus on their family (inherent for early adolescence) weakens, while relations with friends grow stronger, securing a strong foothold for the development of social skills, exploring identity and create a sense of belonging (Lerner, Steinberg, 2009: 335). Communicating via SNSs is one of the modern methods of maintaining a contact with friends at any time, regardless of the physical proximity, which can enhance the sense of belonging. Therefore, this form of communication responds to adolescents' needs mentioned above – when using Facebook, adolescents obtain the gratification which most of them stated as a dominant motivation for creating a profile (socializing and communicating with friends).

The results of the analysis of participants' Facebook activities also support the confirmation of the first hypothesis (Graph 4). Out of all Facebook's features, adolescents in all three age groups mainly use the chat features, whether to chat with one or a few friends. After that, most of them browse through and "like" other people's content as well as chat within a Facebook group. Again, communication with friends proves to be a dominant activity for most adolescents, which responds to their need for integration and social interaction.

On the other hand, browsing through and "liking" other people's content can be associated with another gratification of Facebook – obtaining information about social events. When browsing through their friends' content, adolescents can collect information about their social environment which can help them understand it and navigate within it – what their friends and acquaintances are doing, what are they thinking about, what they think is popular, what is important to them, with whom they identify themselves, what are their interests and hobbies. They can also obtain information about extracurricular activities, parties, concerts, celebrities, etc. Informing themselves about social events is one of the top five motives for Facebook use among adolescents, as confirmed by most participants (Table 2). Therefore it can be concluded that Facebook also responds to adolescents' cognitive needs – the need related to information, knowledge, understanding of social environment, curiosity and exploration (Katz, Gurevitch, Haas, 1973, in: Tan, 1985: 235-236). Another use of Facebook gratifies this type of need – following friends and acquaintances and their Facebook activities (E 55%, M 50.3%, L 48%). The results therefore confirm the fourth hypothesis: *Adolescents use Facebook to follow their friends and acquaintances.*

Regarding that, it is interesting that only a small percentage of participants (E 0 %, M 2.8 %, L 1.3 %) stated that *news following* was an initial motive for creating a Facebook profile, while a significant percentage in all three age groups recognized *following friends and acquaintances* as well as *obtaining information about social events* as gratifications of Facebook. Such results may indicate that adolescents obtained new gratifications which they didn't expect before creating a profile.

Apart from the possibility of obtaining a new, unexpected gratification, according to uses and gratification theory, the user will continue to use a media if expected gratification is obtained (Kunczik, Zipfel, 2006: 192). This assumption could explain why adolescents use Facebook for a significant amount of time. Results have shown (Graph 2) that most participants in middle and late adolescence use Facebook for 1-3 hours a day, while those in early adolescence use it less frequently – up to 1 hour a day. This could indicate that adolescents obtained the gratification they sought – most

of them stated that socializing and communication with friends were at the same time the motive for creating a profile as well as the benefit of Facebook.

Another explanation for a significant amount of time adolescents spend using Facebook, besides when gratification sought is achieved, is that they use it out of habit. Habit is one of the top five motives for using Facebook, confirmed by participants in early (31.1 %), middle (45.5 %) and late adolescence (49.4 %). Participants in early adolescence probably use Facebook for a shorter period of time compared to participants in middle and late adolescence. This could explain why this age group gives priority to other gratifications, such as entertainment, a gratification confirmed by 70.4 % of participants in early adolescence, which responds to their affective needs.

The second and third hypothesis – *Adolescents use Facebook to publicly express their attitudes* and *Adolescents use Facebook to present themselves the way they want to* were related to adolescents' need for personal identity – the need related to self-confidence, personal stability, integrity, social status, and the need for self-respect (Katz, Gurevitch, Haas, 1973, in: Tan, 1985: 235-236). Based on a theoretical background and some previous research regarding this particular gratification, it was assumed that Facebook can be used as a platform for public expression and confirmation of adolescents' attitudes as well as a tool for self-presentation (e.g. presenting a certain lifestyle, posting *selfies*<sup>9</sup>, communicating personal interests etc.). But, most participants in all three age groups denied they use Facebook to publicly express or get a confirmation of their attitudes or to express discontent (Table 1). When it comes to self-presentation, most participants in middle and late adolescence valued the statement they use Facebook to present themselves the way they want to as completely incorrect or incorrect, while participants in early adolescence valued the same statement as nor correct or incorrect. Furthermore, all three age groups denied they use Facebook to draw attention, to show others what they are doing at the moment, to show others how they look in photographs and to get noticed by a person they like. The results thus refute the second and third hypothesis.

But, since it is not very probable that not one motive for Facebook use is related to the need for personal identity, there is a possibility that participants were giving socially desirable responses regarding some statements in the Likert scale. The questionnaire included self-evaluation so there was a possibility of participants' self-deception while responding. According to socially desirable responding model suggested by Paulhus (1984), self-deception is "an unintentional socially desirable responding which reflects individuals' true beliefs about themselves" (Galić, Jerneić, Prevendar, 2008: 95). Thereby some evaluations may not reflect participants'

real behavior. It is interesting that most of them (E 89 %, M 83.2 %, L 91.3 %) denied they use Facebook to insult or slender others (Table 1), while other research indicates that 44.4 % of children of age 11 to 18 experienced violence on Facebook, 29.7 % act violently and 25.9 % of them both experienced violence and acted violently<sup>10</sup>. The same research shows that 1 in 5 children was frequently receiving offensive messages or comments on Facebook, while every second child experienced the same thing at least once (URL: <http://www.poliklinika-djeca.hr/aktualno/ri-jec-ravnateljice/nase-istrazivanje-koliko-vremena-i-uz-koje-rizike-djeca-provedena-internetu-i-facebooku/>). Based on the given data, it can be assumed that some participants in our research gave socially desirable responses.

The last hypothesis, *Adolescents feel mainly good when using Facebook*, was related to general emotional state the user can experience when using a particular media. Most participants in middle and late adolescence responded they feel nor good or bad when using Facebook (Graph 6). Most participants in early adolescence feel good, and nearly the same percentage of them mainly good when using Facebook. A small number of participants responded they feel bad or mainly bad. Thereby the fifth hypothesis is partly confirmed. Since the categories “good” and “bad” are not specifically defined in terms of psychology, deeper conclusions about participants’ responses to the last question cannot be derived. But still, the results are interesting given that most participants obtained the gratifications they sought before creating a profile, as well as the fact they use Facebook up to three hours a day.

The results have shown that all three age groups use Facebook to the greatest extent to socialize and communicate with friends, which includes discussing school activities and setting up dates and meetings with friends. Most adolescents chat with one or a few friends, or with a larger number of friends within Facebook groups. This indicates that they don’t use some other Facebook features, or at least not in a significant extent (e.g. creating public Facebook pages or playing Facebook games). In the context of those findings, it is not surprising that in 2011 Facebook launched its own mobile chat application, the Facebook Messenger App for mobile devices. Furthermore, in February 2014 Facebook purchased WhatsApp, a popular messaging application used by 450 million users (URL: <http://www.whatsapp.com/?l=hr>) for 19 billion dollars, as an attempt to win the market for messaging among younger users (URL: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/19/us-whatsapp-facebook-idUSBREA1I26B20140219>). When Facebook was purchasing WhatsApp, its CEO Mark Zuckerberg wrote on his Facebook profile that Facebook’s mission is to make the World more open and connected, and that they support this mission by giving people the tools for exchanging any type of content with any group of people. Thereby Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp complement one

another (URL: <https://www.facebook.com/zuck>). One of the reasons for purchasing WhatsApp could also be a decrease in the number of Facebook's teen users, who are starting to use some other, simpler SNSs and mobile chat applications with less features, such as Twitter or Snapchat (URL: <http://mashable.com/2013/10/30/facebook-teen-use-declining/>).

Furthermore, the research conducted by the European Union in 2013 called „Global Social Media Impact Study”, shows that young people are starting to use Twitter, Snapchat and WhatsApp to a greater extent, not only because these SNSs and mobile chat applications are simpler and have less features, but also because their parents and other family members use Facebook. Teenagers no longer perceive Facebook as “cool enough” or exclusively as their own social space (URL: <http://bit.ly/1hJjNf4>). In the last three years (January 2011 to January 2014) the number of users age 13-17 decreased by 25.3 % in United States alone. In the same period, the number of older users (55+) increased by 80.4 % (URL: <http://bit.ly/1aoUCN9>). Therefore it can be concluded that young people's need for integration and social interaction is gratified more completely by new and simpler SNSs and mobile chat applications.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of the research was to explore the benefits of Facebook use among adolescents as well as to find out which of their needs are gratified thereat. The uses and gratification approach proved thereby to be an adequate theoretical background for the research, both for constructing the questionnaire and interpreting the results. The survey comprising 431 adolescent Facebook users was conducted from October to December 2013 in the City of Zagreb. The survey results have shown that most adolescents use Facebook for socializing and communicating with their friends, for discussing school activities, setting up meetings and dates with friends as well as obtaining information about social events. The use of Facebook primarily gratifies adolescents' need for integration, social interaction, information and understanding of their social environment, which is consistent with the findings of previous research. Apart from that, adolescents use Facebook out of habit, for entertainment and to reduce boredom as well.

Some other research has shown adolescents are starting to use simpler SNSs and mobile chat applications for quick communication and exchanging messages, like Twitter, Snapchat and WhatsApp, simultaneously leaving Facebook. Out of its numerous features, adolescents' need for social interaction is to the greatest extent gratified by Facebook's chat feature, which is offered by other chat applications

with less features. Therefore it is not surprising that Facebook is purchasing other popular chat applications as an attempt to win the market for messaging among younger users. Furthermore, Facebook's popularity is decreasing among adolescents due to an increase in the number of older users. That could be the reason why younger users turn to other SNSs and mobile chat applications, which they perceive exclusively as their own social space.

Although the uses and gratification approach is relatively old, contemporary research has shown it is adequate for studying uses and gratifications of SNSs as well as explaining users' behavior. Since new types of SNSs and mobile chat applications emerge every day, continuous research should be conducted to give a deeper insight into complex relations between SNSs, mobile chat applications and their users.

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The term "digital natives" according to: Prensky, M. (2001): „Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants“, *On the Horizon*, 9 (5), 1-6.
- <sup>2</sup> The term "iGeneration" according to: Rosen, L. D. (2010) *Rewired: Understanding the iGeneration and the way they learn*. New York: St. Martin's.
- <sup>3</sup> The *Like button* is Facebook's feature for expressing which content users like or support (e.g. photographs, comments, status updates, places, pages etc.). When the user clicks the *Like button*, the "liked" content appears in user's *News Feed*.
- <sup>4</sup> Illustrations or animations of different characters (e.g. people, animals, cartoon characters) which complement the text part of the message and help users to vividly express their feelings, what they're doing at the moment etc.
- <sup>5</sup> In this particular context the verb *follow* is not used in the sense of stalking, but browsing through other users' Facebook activities (status updates, posted photographs etc.) in order to "keep in touch" with a particular person and to find out what is new in that person's life.
- <sup>6</sup> Age group classification (early adolescence 10/11-14 years of age, middle 15-17 and late 18-20 years of age) according to: Lacković-Grgin, K. (2006) *Psihologija adolescencije*. Jastrebarsko: Naklada Slap.
- <sup>7</sup> E, M, L – early, middle and late adolescence.
- <sup>8</sup> Responses are grouped based on similarity (e.g. responses *Communication with friends* and *Quick, easy and cheap communication with others* are in the same category – *Socializing and communication*).
- <sup>9</sup> The word *selfie* refers to self-portrait photography, usually made by holding the camera in one hand. Publishing selfies on the Internet is associated to SNSs. The idea of the *selfie* is to present oneself in spontaneous manner, although this type of self-portrait often includes staging the photograph so the person would look their best. The accent is not on what the person in the *selfie* is doing, but how he/she looks.
- <sup>10</sup> "How much time and with what risks children spend using the Internet and Facebook", a research conducted by Child Protection Center of Zagreb; the sample comprised of 1489 children in Croatia (URL = <http://bit.ly/1dgQexH>, accessed February 5, 2014).

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# Teorija koristi i zadovoljstva – Zašto se adolescenti koriste Facebookom?

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## SAŽETAK

Zbog dinamičnog razvoja Weba 2.0 i novih trendova u području društvenih medija koji se mijenjaju iz dana u dan, suvremena medijska istraživanja sve se više usmjeravaju na medijske korisnike, njihovu motivaciju i ponašanje na društvenim mrežama, nastojeći objasniti iznimnu popularnost Facebooka, Twittera, WhatsAppa i drugih sličnih društvenih mreža i mobilnih aplikacija među mladima.

Cilj ovoga rada bio je ispitati koje koristi adolescenti ostvaruju uporabom Facebooka te koje potrebe pritom zadovoljavaju. Kao teorijsko uporište odabran je koncept koristi i zadovoljstva, upravo zbog svoje usmjerenosti na korisnika medija. Također, željelo se ispitati je li koncept adekvatan za analizu motivacije i ponašanja korisnika društvenih mreža, kao što sugeriraju neka prethodna istraživanja.

U razdoblju od listopada do prosinca 2013. na području Grada Zagreba provedeno je anketno ispitivanje koje je obuhvatilo 431 korisnika Facebooka u adolescentskoj dobi. Rezultati su pokazali da se najveći broj adolescenata Facebookom koristi kako bi se družili i komunicirali s prijateljima, dogovarali oko školskih aktivnosti i izlazaka te kako bi se informirali o društvenim događanjima. Uporaba Facebooka primarno zadovoljava njihovu potrebu za integracijom, društvenom interakcijom, informiranošću te razumijevanjem vlastite okoline. Teorija koristi i zadovoljstva pritom se potvrdila kao adekvatna podloga za analizu rezultata.

Ključne riječi: teorija koristi i zadovoljstva, Facebook, adolescenti, internetske društvene mreže, društveni mediji