A Comparative Study of Uses and Gratifications Between Weibo and News Websites in China

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This thesis titled
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China

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ABSTRACT

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The thesis is based on uses and gratifications theory to compare users’ behavior and gratifications gained on Weibo and Chinese news websites. The researcher conducted an online survey with snowball sampling. The participants were recruited online.

The study finds more respondents use Weibo each day than use news websites each day. They spent significantly more time on Weibo than on news websites. Respondents considered Weibo to be significantly more helpful than news websites for obtaining news gratifications. The study also find there is no correlation between time spent on Weibo and personal gratifications gained on Weibo. The numbers of accounts followed on Weibo has no correlation with personal gratifications gained. The researcher found males considered Weibo less helpful than females for both news and personal gratifications. Respondents considered Weibo and news websites more helpful for news gratifications if they are required to follow news by their occupations.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Sina Weibo, China’s most popular microblogging company, is changing the landscape of the news industry in China. Before Weibo existed, the primary source of online news was from official websites of Chinese news organizations or from news portal websites. Audiences could share what they found on social media sites. Now, news organizations and journalists are turning to Weibo in search of an audience for online news. The service, which is similar to Twitter, claimed it had more than 500 million registered users (BBC, 2014). Weibo is planning to raise about $500 million this year when it issues stock for a second quarter IPO in the United States (Mozur & Ho, 2014).

There are many unanswered questions about the growing popularity of Weibo as a platform for news. Why do individual users turn to Weibo as a platform to get informed, to express themselves and communicate with others? The service limits messages to 140 characters, but this has not limited the range of users on the platform. In addition to individuals, governments, corporations and organizations are using Weibo to promote their products or services, to publish and broadcast information, and to manage relationships with customers. Weibo has also become a news outlet for everyone, professional journalists and ordinary users, who want to publish news. Weibo is not just a social network, but also an information network and a powerful news medium.

This thesis examines Weibo’s growing importance and popularity through the lens of uses and gratifications theory. The thesis uses an online study to ask users’ how they spend time on Weibo and compares that with how they spend time on Chinese news websites. The thesis uses these comparisons to examine the motivations for using Weibo and news websites, and the gratifications received from each. The researcher also
examined what patterns of use are correlated with gratifications sought and received on Weibo and news websites. Results from the survey showed that there is no correlation between time spent on Weibo and personal gratifications. There are positive but weak correlations between the number of accounts in a user’s network and personal gratifications. The researcher also found there is significant gender difference in terms of personal and news gratifications on Weibo. The researcher also found a significant but weak difference by occupation in terms of personal and news gratifications on Weibo: respondents who are required to follow news for their job reported more gratifications gained.
CHAPTER 2: USES AND GRATIFICATIONS ON WEIBO

Uses and gratifications is an approach that has been used since the early stages of mass communication research, where researchers attempted to explain why individuals choose to use certain communication tools to satisfy their needs or achieve their goals (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973). It is used to interpret the motives for content choice and the satisfactions looked for and derived from media use regarding everyday social circumstances and needs (McQuail, 2010).

The inside logic of uses and gratification approach is that

“(1) Personal social circumstances and psychological dispositions together influence both (2) general habits of media use and also (3) beliefs and expectations about the benefits offered by media, which shape (4) specific acts of media choice and consumption, followed by (5) assessment of the value of the experience and, possibly (6) applications of benefits acquired in other areas of experience and social activity.” (McQuail, 2010).

Katz et. al (1973) had five embedded assumptions when applying the uses and gratifications approach: (1) The audience is assumed to be active, in other words, the audience’s mass media use is goal directed; (2) audience makes the decision linking gratification and media choice so the audience has an active role in determining how media affects the audience; (3) media compete with other sources of gratifications; (4) the goals of media use can be derived from data reported by individual audience themselves; (5) the cultural significance of mass communication should be ignored while audience is explored in the term of individuals.
Uses and gratifications research usually employs two research methods. One is to conduct in-depth interviews within a small population asking why they use specific media and what kinds of gratifications they get from these media. The other research method is to conduct a survey and try to understand whether certain characteristics of a population can predict the patterns and extent of media use (Turow, 2011). The study is going to conduct a survey to examine the use patterns and gratifications gained from Weibo and news websites and compare them to find whether differences or correlation exist.

Researchers have proposed a variety of motives for and satisfactions from media use, which usually vary along with the medium and contents researched. Katz, Gurevitch and Hass (1973) classified 25 needs and gratifications derived from social and psychological functions of mass media, and grouped them into five categories: (1) to strengthen information, knowledge and understanding, which is thought to be cognitive needs; (2) to strengthen aesthetic, pleasurable and emotional experience, which is thought to be affective needs; (3) to strengthen credibility, confidence, stability and status, which is thought to be integrative needs, combining cognitive and affective elements; (4) to strengthen contact with family, friends, and the world, an integrative needs; (5) to escape or release tension as it weakens contact with the self or one’s social roles.

Stafford, Stafford & Schkade (2004) identified three general types of uses and gratifications on Internet: (1) content gratifications, concerning the message carried by the medium; (2) process gratifications, concerning the actual use of the medium itself; and (3) social gratifications, concerning the enjoyment of interpersonal communication
and social networking. They also developed a set of indicators as measurement model to measure the scales of process, content and social gratifications.

The gratification questions in this survey are primarily based on the studies by Dimmick et. al (2004) and Dimmick et. al (2000). There is other research that sheds lights on uses and gratifications of Internet and social media, which is relevant with the current study.

Entering the Information Age, more uses and gratifications research was conducted with Internet related products, and a new gratification framework was proposed. Sundar and Limeros (2013) argued there were four possible new gratification categories rooted in new technology and media: (1) modality, indicating different measures of presentation of media content, which appeal to different aspects of human perception; (2) agency-based gratifications, which are created by what media enable users to do, like community building on the internet; (3) interactivity, which is the capability to allow users to make real-time changes to content in media; (4) navigability, which is the ability to allow users to move through the medium, like browsing.

As more and more people use micro-blogs, one simple question is raised by researchers: why do people Tweet? Java, Song, Finin & Tseng (2007) tried to answer the question by examining four major user intentions: (1) daily chatter, they found the most common posts on Twitter talk about people’s daily routine or what they are currently doing; (2) conversations, people use Twitter as a tool to have informal conversations with each other; (3) sharing information and URLs, (4) and reporting news or commenting on news.
Liu, Cheung and Lee (2010) proposed four factors that influence users’ intention to continue using Twitter: (1) content gratification, which is derived from the perceived quality of information carried by Twitter; (2) social gratification, which resides in the interactivity with others on Twitter; (3) process gratification, which means getting gratifications from being involved in the process of a behavior, like searching for something or to pass the time, rather than from message content; (4) and technology gratification, which is determined by how convenient and easy to use Twitter is.

They found content gratification and technology gratification are positively correlated with users’ intention to keep using Twitter, while process gratification and social gratification do not exhibit any significant correlation with users continuing to tweet. (Liu, et al, 2010)

An early study in regard to the communication side of micro-blogging was conducted by Zhao & Rosson (2009). Regarding Twitter as a “people-based RSS feed”, their study suggests that micro-blogs enhance informal communication. By keeping a pulse on others’ personal lives, interests, and current moods, colleagues know each other better, which in turn gives them more opportunities for exchanging social support, generating new common ground, and creating and sustaining a feeling of connectedness.

Johnson and Yang (2009) examined the social motive and information motives of Twitter users by comparing gratifications sought and gratifications obtained on Twitter. They found the information motive is positively correlated with Twitter use, while social motives are not significantly correlated to Twitter use.
Although some studies show social gratifications are irrelevant to users’ engagement on micro-blogging, there are other studies concluding social gratification does matter.

Greer & Ferguson (2011) surveyed Twitter followers of local television news personalities, and found social motivation rather than information seeking is the best explanation for following TV news personalities. Followers perceive tweets from TV news personalities as more than a piece of news, but also as personal interaction.

Chen (2011) found that the months a person is active on Twitter and the hours per week the person spends on Twitter are positively correlated with the gratification of connecting with others. What’s more, compared to the variable “hours per day spent on Twitter,” spending a lot of time using Twitter over a series of months does more to gratify people’s need to connect with others on Twitter.

Whiting and Williams (2013) examined why people use social media by conducting in-depth interviews. They had 10 uses and gratifications items in their study: social interaction (mentioned by 88% of the respondents), information seeking (mentioned by 80% of the respondents), passing time (mentioned by 76% of the respondents), entertainment (mentioned by 64% of the respondents), relaxation (mentioned by 60% of the respondents), communicatory utility (mentioned by 56% of the respondents), expression of opinions (mentioned by 56% of the respondents), convenience utility (mentioned by 52% of the respondents), information sharing (mentioned by 40% of the respondents) and surveillance and watching of others (mentioned by 20% of the respondents).
Online news consumption is becoming a socially-engaging activity, especially with the addition of micro-blogs in the online news consumption market. Audiences have become a part of news process by tweeting or retweeting news.

But for news organizations, microblogs are a way to increase the audience for the news organization’s website. These news organizations are hoping to direct Twitter users to their web sites or convince them to consume newspapers or TV programs offline.

Bruns (2010) examined the Twitter activity on leading journalists’ personal accounts and the institutional accounts of news organizations during two major political events in Australia: the Rudd/Gillard leadership split on 23 June 2010, and the day of the subsequent federal election on 21 August 2010.

The study found that journalists and news organizations no longer operate solely on their own web sites, but try to gain and maintain prominent places on third-party networks like Twitter (Bruns, 2010).

Armstrong and Gao (2010) did a content analysis of tweets by nine news organizations during a 4-month period. The study examined links, news headlines and the subject areas covered on Twitter. The results showed 86.7% of tweets by news organizations were used to drive traffic to the organization’s web site, and only 4.7% of tweets were used to provide breaking news or other information (Armstrong & Gao, 2010).

Newspaper web sites and news portal sites may both have channels for consumers to comment or interact. However, Weibo is supposed to be a more interactive medium where information spreads at high speeds and social networking takes place. Time
limitation is a significant factor that influences media consumption. Consumers may be able to get more gratifications in an equivalent amount of time spent on Weibo when compared with new websites.

The author found a limited number of uses and gratification studies about news websites. Diddi and LaRose (2006) studied uses and gratifications and the news consumption patterns of college students. They found five major news consumption patterns of college students: hometown newspapers, comedy news, cable news, Internet news and broadcast news. When measuring Internet news consumption, they included e-mail alerts, Internet portal sites and Internet news sites run by major media organizations.

Diddi and LaRose (2006) also found surveillance and escapism gratifications were the most consistent predictors of news consumption patterns including Internet news consumption. They also found habit strength, a gratification item describing news consumption as a routine of life, was the most powerful predictor of news consumption overall.

Althaus and Tewksbury (2000) examined the patterns of Internet and traditional media use among undergraduate students of a networked community in a public university. They found members in that community consumed news online mostly for entertainment.

However, no studies were found of uses and gratifications on Chinese microblogging and news websites. This study will therefore examine Chinese websites by adapting measures used previous studies that were conducted in the United States. The
study will determine if these measures apply to Chinese users who have a different set of cultural values

This study adopts the view that consumers may believe that Chinese news websites and Weibo are substitute products. Two goods are substitutes if an increase in the consumption of one good results in a decrease in the consumption of the other good (Hoskins, McFadyen & Finn, 2004). Chinese news websites and Weibo are both part of the media consumption basket of consumers. Each of these sites has attributes that can potentially satisfy the same consumer needs for gratifications. However, consumers have limited time, so if consumers can get more marginal utility or gratification from one medium, they will increase their consumption of that medium and reduce consumption of other media according to standard models of utility maximization.

The current study will examine the relationship between news websites and Weibo using gratifications from news and social gratifications. The measures for news are adapted from a study that framed gratifications in terms of consumption and utility theory. Dimmick, Chen and Li (2004) used an 8-item gratification opportunity framework to measure the competition between the Internet and traditional news media. The study examined the helpfulness of traditional media for providing the eight gratifications. The study compared that with the helpfulness of the Internet for providing the same gratifications. The study found that traditional media provided fewer gratifications than the Internet. The researchers compared the overlap between traditional media and the Internet, and found the Internet provided a range of the gratifications that
could otherwise only be obtained by consuming multiple different traditional media, such as newspapers and television.

The current study adopted six of the items from the 8-item framework developed by Dimmick, Chen and Li (2004). These six items were used to measure news gratifications that respondents might gain from Weibo and news websites. Respondents were asked how helpful Weibo and news websites were for obtaining (1) for the latest updates on news stories (UPDATES); (2) for stories on a variety of topics (VARIETY); (3) for a variety of choices in news coverage (CHOICES); (4) for convenient access to news (CONVEN); (5) for information as quickly as possible (QUICK); (6) for getting news at the times I want it (TIME). Two items were not adopted because they were considered redundant.

The current study’s measures of social gratifications are adapted from a study by Dimmick, Kline and Stafford (2000). This study developed an 11-item gratifications framework to compare the gratification niche of personal e-mail and telephone. The researcher adopted six of the items to use as personal gratifications framework in the study: (1) to share ideas and opinions (SHARE); (2) to keep in touch with people (TOUCH); (3) To give or receive advice on personal matters or issues (ADVICE); (4) to receive messages that show people care about me (CARE); (5) to express that I care about others; (6) To enjoy companionship with people (COMP). Items that were redundant or did not fit into the researched media were not adopted for this study.
CHAPTER 3: WEIBO IN CHINA

Weibo is a micro-blogging and social network service launched in 2009, which enables users to read and send text-based content with a limitation of 140 Chinese characters. The service has expanded since its launch to include media firms, government organizations and commercial entities in its user base (Weibo, 2013). Weibo offers a posting and re-posting message function that is similar to Twitter. Weibo also provides threaded comments, a variety of applications, games and Weibo medals (a virtual rewards to users when they finish an online task as required), and allows video and audio uploaded into user feeds (Zhang & Pentina, 2012).

Not all of the company’s 500 million users visit the site every day. According to Sina Weibo the company had 46 million daily active users in 2012, an 82 percent increase from a year earlier (Merced, 2013). As an information and social network, Weibo conveys messages to mass audiences like traditional mass media do. But Weibo also has he property of interactivity attained from its nature as a social network.

Weibo users follow other users to get the messages that are posted. They can also search via key words to get messages from people who they don’t follow. Any user with an account can be followed by any other user. Every posting on micro-blog services is limited to 140 characters, which forces users to express themselves concisely. The ability to reply to posts empowers users to spread information of their choice beyond the reach of the original posts’ followers (Kwak, Lee, Park & Moon, 2010).

According to an official 2012 report published by Data Center of China Internet, 327 million people were using microblogs in China. There are several microblog service
providers in China. Among them, 87.67 percent of people used Sina Weibo; 84.69 percent of people use Tencent Weibo; 56.12% of people use 163 Weibo; 35.63% of people use Sohu Weibo; 13.61% of people use iFeng Weibo, while 18.37% of people use other microblog platforms (DCCI, 2012). Many users have accounts from more than one microblog service providers.

The reporter stated that nearly 70 percent of Weibo users have only one account. For all Weibo users there is an average of 1.45 Weibo accounts each (DCCI, 2012).

Zhang, Zhang, Zhao & Ma (2013) analyzed 17 million records from Weibo users, and found that more developed districts had more Weibo users. The study found the average user density across China was 10.8 Weibo users per 1,000 people. Beijing has the highest user density with 79 users per 1,000 people, while Gansu province had the lowest user density with 3.9 users per 1,000 people.

According to the report from DCCI, 57.40 percent of China’s microblog users are male, while 42.60 percent of users are female (DCCI, 2012).

Less than 3 percent of Weibo accounts are verified users, with a proportion of 1.17 % verified individuals, 0.13% verified media, 1.43% enterprises and 0.01% experts (Zhang et al., 2013). Verified users are required to submit their real name, profile and contact information to the service provider, and get a symbol showing next to their account name as long as the service provider verifies their identity.

According to the report from Zhang et. al (2013), 83.2% of Weibo users had a college degree or are attending college. And 75% of Weibo users are ages 21 to 40.
Weibo plans to monetize itself through e-commerce, instead of relying on advertising revenues. Weibo has partnered with Alibaba, once known as China’s answer to eBay, to launch a new payment platform called Weibo Payment. Weibo has also added some new features that help merchants to manage marketing campaigns and accept payments on its platform. (Shu, 2014) Alibaba bought an 18 percent stake in Weibo, with a right to raise its stake to 30 percent in the future (Merced, 2013). Weibo’s current market valuation is $5 billion (Campos, 2014).

Weibo’s biggest competitor in China is WeChat. According to a report from China’s Internet Network Information Center, Weibo’s user base fell 9% to 280.8 million in 2013 from 308.6 million the year before (CNNIC, 2014). Unlike Weibo, WeChat is designed to communicate with friends in a one-to-one way or update your posts within a circle of close friends, instead of broadcasting it to everyone on internet (Custer, 2014).

Censorship probably also plays a big role in Weibo’s decreasing user base. After several high-profile Weibo users were arrested in 2013, other users on Weibo stopped posting or re-posting political or social sensitive news (Moore, 2014). For ordinary users, content on Weibo might be less interesting if posts don’t include a sense of political or social engagement (Custer, 2014).
CHAPTER 4: WEIBO’S PERFORMANCES AND FUNCTIONS

Twitter and Weibo are both micro-blogs that function similarly, but the strong regulatory environment in China’s news and media industry has resulted in a different micro-blogging environment for Weibo.

By comparing existing messages on Weibo to messages on Twitter, researchers (Bamman, O’Connor & Smith, 2012) found a set of politically sensitive terms which might be used as references to identify terms that are deleted on Weibo. The deletion rates on Weibo are not uniform throughout the country. Messages from provinces related to sensitive issues, like Tibet or Qinghai, show a much higher deletion rates than messages from eastern provinces (Bamman, O’Connor & Smith, 2012).

The current study acknowledges there is censorship and a highly regulated media environment on Weibo. However, these issues are beyond the scope of the current study, which is focused on uses and gratifications obtained from using Weibo and Chinese news websites.

Censorship has not stopped Weibo from becoming a popular alternative to mainstream media in China. The distrust of mainstream media and the flourishing of public personalities on Weibo have helped it become a contested public opinion forum (Sullivan, 2012). Researchers analyzed Weibos which have been reposted over 1,000 times, and grouped these top Weibos into eight categories, including Entertainment & Fashion, Hot Social Events, Leisure & Mood, Life & Health, Seeking Help, Sales Promotion, Fengshui & Fortune and Deleted Weibos. Researchers found that Leisure & Mood, and Hot Social Events contributed nearly 65% of all top Weibos, representing the
two major parts of the marketplace of ideas on Weibo (Li, Gao, Yang, Guan, Ma, Qian, Cao & Yang, 2013).

Besides the basic micro-blogging functions of posting and/or reposting a message, Weibo adds other functions like multi-media uploads, games, threaded comments and Weibo medals (virtual rewards), which suggests a potentially different user motivation and usage patterns.

Fu and Chau (2013) described the landscape of Weibo based on data from the service provider. They found more self-reported male users, at 56.5%, than female users, at 43.5% (Fu & Chau, 2013). Male users wrote almost two thirds of the most reposted Weibos, while 51.1% of comments on Weibos are released by female users (Li et. al, 2013). Gender difference is also significant for online credibility. Posts from men are perceived as more credible than those from women on Weibo, especially political posts (Yang et. al, 2013)

Guan, Gao, Yang, Li, Ma, Qian, Cao & Yang (2013) studied user behaviors on Weibo in 2011 and found that male users were more likely to be involved in the discourse about popular news (Guan et. al, 2013).
CHAPTER 5: WEIBO BEHAVIOR

Researchers who compared Twitter with Weibo suggested that on average Chinese Weibo users got almost 50 percent of their daily information from Weibo, while U.S. respondents reported getting less than 25 percent of information from microblogs (Yang et. al, 2013). The high level of information consumption on Weibo suggests the possibility that Weibo is competing with news websites in terms of news consumption in China. No previous research was found that studied this question, so the research is going to look into this question.

Yang et. al (2013) found Chinese users on Weibo have relatively highly trust in and dependence on micro-blogs as information sources compared to US participants on Twitter. Chinese users also have greater acceptance of anonymously and pseudonymously authored content. Gao, Houben & Yu (2012), found users on Sina Weibo avoid talking about political organizations or institutions in contrast to Twitter. As we don’t know what characteristics users have when they use news websites, it should be interesting to compare the characteristics of users of news websites to the characteristics of Weibo users.

Large numbers of inactive accounts exist on Weibo. In a random survey, researchers found 57.4% accounts statuses are empty, indicating either they are inactive users or they merely read Weibo as a news catalogue without posting their own opinions (Fu & Chao, 2013). Another possible explanation is that these could be “zombie” accounts created to increase the number of followers of other accounts in social media marketing campaigns. Inactive accounts are beyond the scope of this paper.
Most original posts are created by a small group of micro-bloggers on Weibo. More than 80% of original posts on Chinese micro-blog websites are contributed by about 4.8% of micro-bloggers, while only 13% of the Chinese micro-bloggers make at least one original post in a seven-day period (Fu & Chau, 2013).

Among most reposted messages on Weibo, 46.5 percent are created by verified users. Only 0.1 percent of all Weibo users have verified identities, whose identities are verified by the company. 39.2% most reposted Weibo are created by marketing accounts which post content like wisdom quotes or jokes all the time. Only 14.4% of the most reposted Weibos are written by individual users who have neither verified nor marketing accounts (Li et. al, 2013).

According to Li et. al (2013), a small but active group of Weibo accounts dominate the marketplace of ideas on Weibo, and are capable of setting agendas and leading public opinions in the online discourse by consistently posting and re-posting original contents.

In the active group on Chinese micro-blogging websites, official accounts run by formal news organizations and online news websites could also be counted as significant players. Normally, these sites hire social media specialists to keep updating their micro-blogging, providing briefs of breaking news with a hyper-link to their websites.

These studies show there has been research that describes the specific characteristics and behavior of Weibo users. But the author did not find research looking into the gratifications from Weibo and news websites. The researcher is going to study this question in the current explorative research.
CHAPTER 6: NEWS ORGANIZATIONS AND MICROBLOGGING

News organizations in China, including news portal websites and news organization websites, are using Weibo to interact with audiences and publish content. This study compares gratifications from news websites with gratifications from Weibo, so it’s necessary to understand how news organizations use microblogs in general.

Some studies on how traditional news media adopt and use micro-blogs have examined Twitter. Messner, Linke and Eford (2011) found that U.S. traditional media had fully adopted Twitter. Ninety point five percent of traditional news organizations had a Twitter account in 2009, which increased to 99.5% in 2010.

Generally speaking, traditional news organizations in the U.S, use official Twitter channels as a tool to promote their websites’ traffic. Ninety six point five percent of posts by news organizations were news related in 2010, and 95.5% of the posts had hyperlinks. Most of the hyperlinks, 99.3%, led users to the news organizations website (Messner et al., 2011).

Ferguson and Greer (2011) examined how 111 local radio stations used Twitter in the U.S. by content analyzing tweets. They found stations that are intending to establish a news media image rather than entertainment presence appear to tweet more often. The stations build their follower numbers by updating news items. Many of those stations have lively “human” feel accounts, which are believed to be more attractive to micro-blog users, while minority tweets like an automated headline server.

Compared to music stations, the study found news stations have less interactivity with their audiences. They also carry fewer promotional tweets in contrast to their music
counterparts. Most news stations merely update news on Twitter without offering information to promote their programs or interactivity with their audiences (Furguson & Greer, 2011).

Hong (2012) examined the association between newspapers’ adoption of Twitter and their online traffic, and found newspapers’ adoption of social media is positively associated with an increase in online traffic. Furthermore, the association increases with the size of the newspapers’ social media networks.

A content analysis of tweets by major business news media in U.S. by Messner and Messner (2013) found that content posted on Twitter by news organizations was a brief version of news from the news organizations’ websites, which made Twitter a secondary platform in the news dissemination process. Twitter is effectively used for news promotion by these organizations. Increasing traffic remains an important goal of any social engagement. But direct communication with their audiences and using Twitter to publish breaking news are still underutilized.
CHAPTER 7: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

To explore the landscape of online news consumption and the relationship between Weibo and online news websites in China, the researcher proposes to use research questions. Research questions are appropriate because studies of uses and gratifications involving Chinese websites are limited. The first set of research questions asks about the patterns of use:

RQ1: What are the patterns of use when people use Weibo?

RQ2: What are the patterns of use when people use Chinese news websites?

The literature review suggests that researchers have identified specific gratifications users obtain from news websites and social media (see, e.g., Liu et. al, 2010; Java et. al, 2007). This thesis therefore asks if people are obtaining similar gratifications from using Chinese news websites and Weibo.

RQ3: What are the gratifications gained on Chinese news websites?

RQ4: What are the gratifications gained on Weibo?

RQ5: What is the relationship between use patterns and gratifications on Chinese news websites?

RQ6: What is the relationship between use patterns and gratification gained on Weibo?

The literature also suggests some specific relationships between time spent on media and gratifications gained (Chen, 2011). This suggests the following hypotheses:

H1: Time spent on news websites is positively correlated with personal gratifications.
H2: Time spent on news websites is positively correlated with news gratifications.

H3: Time spent on Weibo is positively correlated with personal gratifications.

H4: Time spent on Weibo is positively correlated with news gratifications.

A previous study suggests network size was significantly associated with gratifications (Dimmick, Ramirez & Wang, 2007). This thesis also makes predictions that there is positive relationship between the number of network connections on Weibo and personal gratifications.

H5: There is a positive correlation between the number of people someone follows on Weibo and personal gratifications.

H6: There is a positive correlation between the number of people who follow someone on Weibo and personal gratifications.

The literature review also shows gender differences in gratifications on websites (Li et. al, 2013; Yang et. al, 2013). This suggests two additional research questions:

RQ7: Is there any difference by gender in gratifications on Chinese news websites?

RQ8: Is there any difference by gender in gratifications on Weibo?

Workers in some occupations, for example public relation professionals, journalists and marketing professionals, may be required to follow news on the Internet. The thesis makes a prediction about that relationship:

H7: Users who follow news in their occupations have significantly more news gratifications than users who don’t follow news in their occupations.
CHAPTER 8: METHODOLOGY

The researcher conducted an online survey of users on Chinese social media sites. The survey asked respondents about Chinese websites that publish news and about Weibo. Questions covered patterns of use, gratifications received, and demographics of the respondents.

The researcher used a purposive sample for the survey. Results from a purposive sample cannot be generalized. However, purposive samples are considered useful for exploratory studies that can lay the groundwork for additional studies based on probability samples (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). This thesis is an exploratory study that attempts to answer basic research questions about social media users in China. The study also conducts preliminary tests of some theoretical relationships. However, the study is not intended to be generalized to the population of Chinese social media users.

There are also practical considerations at work. To create a probability sample of social media users would require access to a sampling frame that lists Weibo users and users of Chinese news websites. Such a sampling frame is not available to the researcher. In the U.S., probability samples of social media users are created using random-digit-dialing for telephone surveys (Mitchell, Kiley, Gottfried & Guskin, 2013). The initial telephone contact represents the first-stage of screening for a sample of respondents with Internet access at home or at work. However, the research is being conducted from the U.S., and a telephone survey would require resources and financing that is not available. Therefore, the survey was conducted with a purposive sample using a snowball technique (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).
To measure patterns of use the survey asked how often respondents use Chinese news websites and Weibo. The frequency of use was measured as an ordinal variable with six categories: (1) Several times a day; (2) Once a day; (3) 3-5 days a week; (4) 1-2 days a week; (5) Every few weeks; and (6) Less often. These categories have been used in U.S. surveys of Internet use by the Pew Research Center (Hampton, Goulet, Rainie & Purcell, 2011), and are therefore likely to be understandable and valid. Patterns of use were also measured by asking respondents to estimate how many minutes or hours they spend on Chinese news websites and on Weibo. This open-ended question allowed respondents to specify the length of time. The question asked “In a typical session, how many minutes or hours do you spend on Weibo” and “in a typical session, how many minutes or hours do you spend on online news outlets.”

To measure relationships between the size of a user’s Weibo network and other variables, the survey asked respondents how many other Weibo accounts are following them and how many Weibo accounts they are following. These were both open ended questions allowing respondents to specify a number.

To measure gratifications from news websites and from Weibo, the researcher used two sets of measures, with six items in each set questions. One set of measures focused on gratifications from news. The second set of measures focused on personal gratifications from sharing information with others.

The news gratification measures were adapted from Dimmick, Chen and Li (2004), which used a survey to compare gratifications from traditional media with gratifications from the Internet. This thesis replicates and extends that study by
comparing gratifications from news websites and from Weibo. The current survey asks respondents “How helpful is Weibo for accessing and finding news?” Answers are on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is not helpful, and 5 is very helpful. The six items in the measure are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>For the latest updates on news stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>For stories on a variety of topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>For a variety of choices in news coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>For convenient access to news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>For information as quickly as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>For getting news at the times I want it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey then asked respondents “How helpful are news websites for accessing and finding news?” Responses used the same scale and the six items in Table 1. This allows direct comparisons between Webio and Chinese news websites.

Personal gratifications were measured with 6 items adopted from a study from Dimmick et. al (2000), where they compared the social gratifications available from personal e-mail and telephones. Respondents were asked, “How helpful do you think Weibo is…?” for each of the 6 items in Table 2. Answers were on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is not helpful, and 5 is very helpful.
Table 2

*Personal Gratification Items*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>To share ideas and opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To keep in touch with people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To give or receive advice on personal matters or issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>To receive messages that show people care about me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>To express that I care about others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>To enjoy companionship with people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were then asked, “How helpful do you think news websites are for…” for each of the 6 items in Table 2. This allowed direct comparisons of answers about Weibo and news websites. The scaled items in Table 1 and Table 2 will be treated as interval level variables in the analysis.

The research questions and hypotheses ask if occupation influences gratifications from Weibo or news websites. Measures of occupation were based on the 32th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China (CNNIC, 2013). Respondents could select from eight categories: (1) Student; (2) private company employee; (3) state-owned enterprise employee; (4) public institution employee; (5) government employee; (6) self-employed entrepreneur; (7) unemployed; and (8) other. These are nominal variables.

Another question asked, “Does your job require you to follow news?” Respondents could select yes or no, a nominal variable. This measure was used to examine relationships between job duties and other variables in the study.
Other demographic measures included age, gender, educational level, occupation and income. Age was measured by a fill-in-blank question, “how old will you be by the end of 2013.” Education is measured by five categories: (1) Less than high school; (2) high school; (3) some college; (4) bachelor’s degree; (5) and graduate degree.

The measure for income was also based on the measurement from the 32th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China (CNNIC, 2013). The survey asked “In a typical month, my income is…RMB”, with the following items: (1) Less than 1,000; (2) 1,001-2,000; (3) 2,001-5,000; (4) 5,001-8,000; (5) 8,001-10,000; (6) 10,001-15,000; (7) 15,001-20,000; (8) more than 20,001.

The researcher first submitted a draft questionnaire and recruitment plan for approval from Ohio University’s Institutional Research Board. After receiving IRB approval, the researcher conducted a pilot study to test the understanding of the questionnaire. The researcher used the Personal Message function on Sina Weibo to invite 15 individuals to participate in the pilot study. The message function ensured that only individuals who got the invitation were able to get into the survey. All 15 individuals responded to the pilot study, which was administered using Qualtrics.

The pilot study resulted in one minor change to the questionnaire. The researcher added “state-owned enterprise employee” and “public institution employee” options to the Occupation question. This was because a number of respondents chose the “Other” option and filled in the blank with those two occupations.

The survey was administered via the Qualtrics Online Survey website from Dec 13th 2013 to Jan 13th 2014. The researcher posted survey invitations on her Sina Weibo
account. The invitation asked the researcher’s followers to re-post it to their own Weibo followers. A copy of the survey invitation and the survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

The researcher sent out two follow-up invitations. The first follow-up was sent about two weeks after the first time invitation, and the second follow-up sent about two weeks after the second time invitation.

As the original invitation post was accidentally deleted, the re-posted number is un-trackable. But the number of people who read the original post is still available. The invitation posts were read 13,000 times. The researcher will use this number and numbers from Qualtrics to calculate response rate.

According to Qualtrics, 971 participants entered the survey via the link on the invitation posts, and 655 respondents entered the survey and answered some questions, with 543 participants completing the entire survey. The initial response rate is 7.5% (971/13,000), the overall response rate is 5.0% (655/13,000), and the final response rate is 4% (543/13,000). Alternatively, the overall response rate based on 971 participants 71% (655/917) and the final response rate is 56% (543/971).
CHAPTER 9: RESULTS

Five hundred and fifty respondents answered the gender question. Among them, 251 respondents are male (45.6%), and 299 are female (54.4%). This means the females are slightly overrepresented in the sample. As mentioned in the literature review, data from Data Center of China Internet shows that 57.40 percent of Weibo users are male while 42.60 percent are female (DCCI, 2012).

As for the education level, 550 respondents answered the question. Among them, nearly 70 percent have a Bachelor’s degree or higher. Two hundred and thirty nine respondents reported having a Bachelor’s degree, which is 43.5% of total responses. One hundred and fifty five respondents have a Graduate Degree, which is 28.2% of total responses. One hundred and thirty two respondents reported some college (24.0%), 23 reported high school (4.2%), and only 1 respondent reported as less than high school (0.2%). As reported in the earlier study of Weibo (DCCI, 2012), 54 percent of users have a Bachelor’s Degree, 7.74 percent have a Graduate Degree, and 25.94 percent users have some college. Compared to the data from DCCI, users with higher education are overrepresented in the current sample.

For the Occupation question, 550 valid responses were collected. Nearly half of the respondents are full-time students (273 or 49.6%), followed by private enterprise employees (98 or 17.8%) and public institution employees (51 or 9.3%). Thirty seven are state-owned enterprise employees (6.7%), while another 6.7% of respondents chose the “Other” option.
Five hundred and fifty respondents answered the income question. Almost half of them reported a monthly income lower than 2,000 RMB. A majority of respondents reported their monthly income was less than 1,000 RMB (190 or 34.5%), while the second biggest group reported their monthly income as 2,001-5,000 RMB (135 or 24.5%). Another 13.1% (72) of responses are 1,001-2,000 monthly income, and 12.2% (67) are 5,001-8,000 monthly income (12.2). Data from DCCI shows that users’ monthly income between 3,001-4,000 RMB is the largest group (18.03%). Compared to that data, the current sample is skewed to the lower income user group.

The first research question asked about the patterns of use on Weibo. The second research question asked about patterns of use on news websites. Results in Table 1 are from all respondents who answered the questions, so the totals are higher than the number who answered demographic questions.
Table 3

*Frequency of Using Weibo and News Websites*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Weibo</th>
<th></th>
<th>News Websites</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times a day</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a day</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 days a week</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 days a week</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every few weeks</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less often</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>655</td>
<td></td>
<td>655</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 3, the majority of respondents, 86.7 percent, use Weibo several times a day. However, less than two thirds of respondents, 59.4 percent, use news websites several times or once a day. The answer to the first two research questions is that more respondents use Weibo each day than use news websites each day.

As presented in Table 4 respondents spend an average of 59.4 minutes on Weibo compared with 33.6 minutes on news websites. However, the Table also shows there is more variance in time spent on Weibo. The answer to the first two research questions is also that respondents’ average a bit more than half as much time on news websites compared with time spent on Weibo.
A paired-samples t-test was used to determine whether the difference in times was statistically significant. A paired-samples test was used because the test can be used to examine differences between two scores for the same variable (Salkind, 2010).

Table 4

Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Time Spent on Weibo and News Websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Weibo</th>
<th>News Websites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean of time</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
<td>(1.447)</td>
<td>(.69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>653</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* difference between Weibo and News Websites significant, p<.05 (t=7.73, df=652)

Results in Table 4 show the mean number of minutes on Weibo is significantly higher than mean number of minutes on News Websites (t(652)= 7.73, p=.00). On average, users spend 25.8 more minutes on Weibo.

The third research question asks about gratifications on news websites. The fourth question asks about gratifications on Weibo. (Table 5) The Cronbach’s Alpha of six news gratifications items on Weibo is .842, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. The Cronbach’s Alpha of six news gratifications items on News Websites is .873, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency.

Weibo had the highest helpfulness rankings for getting the latest updates (M=4.10) and getting information as quickly as possible (M=4.18). The lowest helpfulness ranking, (M=3.36) was for getting news when the respondent wants it. News websites
also ranked highest on helpfulness for the latest updates (M=3.63) and getting information quickly (M=3.56) but the news rankings were lower.

Table 5

\textit{t-test Results for News Gratifications (N = 555)}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UPDATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>VARIETY</th>
<th>CONVEN</th>
<th>QUICK</th>
<th>GET IT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weibo</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. dev.</td>
<td>(1.01)</td>
<td>(.98)</td>
<td>(1.02)</td>
<td>(1.11)</td>
<td>(1.02)</td>
<td>(1.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. dev.</td>
<td>(1.12)</td>
<td>(1.14)</td>
<td>(1.14)</td>
<td>(1.13)</td>
<td>(1.16)</td>
<td>(1.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>7.97*</td>
<td>8.43*</td>
<td>7.20*</td>
<td>5.38*</td>
<td>14.43*</td>
<td>-2.82*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* difference between Weibo and News Websites, p<.05(df=554)

Weibo had higher helpfulness rankings on all 6 items compared with news websites. A paired-samples t-test was used to determine if the differences between the helpfulness rankings were significant.

As presented in Table 5, all of the differences are statistically significant. Respondents to the survey considered Weibo to be significantly more helpful than news websites for obtaining news gratifications except for the Get It item. Respondents considered news websites more helpful than Weibo in terms of getting news at the time they want it.

In general, it appears that Weibo has an advantage because it is considered to be faster and covers more topics. Weibo was also ranked as more convenient than news
websites, but that was not the area considered most helpful. News websites ranked lowest for getting news quickly on a variety of topics. Perhaps Webo includes news from sources other than the websites.

The third and fourth research questions were also answered by examining personal gratifications from Weibo and News websites. Results in Table 6 show that Weibo has the highest rankings for sharing ideas and opinions, followed by keeping in touch, and expressing how I care about others. However, the mean rankings for the other three items are below 3, indicating Weibo is not helpful for these gratifications. All of the averages for news websites are below 3, indicating these are not helpful for personal gratifications.

The Cronbach’s Alpha of six personal gratifications on Weibo is .843, suggesting that items have relatively high internal consistency. The Cronbach’s Alpha of six personal gratifications on News Websites is .922, suggesting that items have high internal consistency.

Weibo’s helpfulness rankings were also higher for all 6 items compared with news websites as seen in Table 6. A paired-samples t-test was used to determine if the differences between the helpfulness rankings were statistically significant.

Table 6 shows the t-test shows for the difference between Weibo and News Websites is significant for all of the comparisons. This shows that Weibo is helpful for sharing ideas, keeping in touch and expressing care for others. News websites are not considered helpful for any of these items. Both websites are not considered helpful for the remaining three items.
Table 6

$t$-test Results for Personal Gratifications ($N = 555$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHARE</th>
<th>TOUCH</th>
<th>ADVICE</th>
<th>CARE1</th>
<th>CARE2</th>
<th>COMPANY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weibo</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. dev.</td>
<td>(1.01)</td>
<td>(1.13)</td>
<td>(1.11)</td>
<td>(1.18)</td>
<td>(1.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. dev.</td>
<td>(1.20)</td>
<td>(1.03)</td>
<td>(1.06)</td>
<td>(.96)</td>
<td>(0.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$t$</td>
<td>25.54*</td>
<td>23.56*</td>
<td>15.45*</td>
<td>20.44*</td>
<td>25.25*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* difference between Weibo and News websites, $p<.05$ (df=554)
(Care 1= receive care, Care 2= express care)

The answer to the third research question asking what gratifications are helpful on Weibo is sharing ideas, keeping in touch, and expressing care for others. The answer to the fourth research question asking what gratifications are helpful on News Websites is that there are no personal gratifications considered helpful from these websites.

The fifth research question asks what relationships exist between use patterns and gratifications gained on News Websites. The sixth research question asks what relationships exist between use patterns and gratifications on Weibo.

To examine these relationships the researcher used correlations between gratification items and time spent on News Websites or Weibo.

Results in Table 7 show that Time and five news gratification items have a statistically significant positive correlation. As time spent on news websites increases, the helpfulness ranking for five of the 6 items also increases. However, the largest correlation is 0.163 for getting news quickly. The other significant correlations are smaller. These relationships are weak.
### Table 7

*Pearson’s Correlation between Time and News Gratification for News Websites*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>UPDATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>VARIETY</th>
<th>CONVEN</th>
<th>QUICK</th>
<th>GET IT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPDATE</td>
<td>.128**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOPIC</td>
<td>.103*</td>
<td>.569**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VARIETY</td>
<td>.120**</td>
<td>.485**</td>
<td>.787**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONVEN</td>
<td>.117**</td>
<td>.579**</td>
<td>.519**</td>
<td>.489**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUICK</td>
<td>.163**</td>
<td>.603**</td>
<td>.538**</td>
<td>.493**</td>
<td>.715**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET IT</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.428**</td>
<td>.400**</td>
<td>.365**</td>
<td>.553**</td>
<td>.534**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### Table 8

*Pearson’s Correlation between Time and Personal Gratification for News Websites*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>SHARE</th>
<th>TOUCH</th>
<th>ADVICE</th>
<th>CARE1</th>
<th>CARE2</th>
<th>COMPANY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHARE</td>
<td>.112*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOUCH</td>
<td>.090*</td>
<td>.669*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADVICE</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.512**</td>
<td>.747**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARE1</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.531**</td>
<td>.780**</td>
<td>.709**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARE2</td>
<td>.099*</td>
<td>.551**</td>
<td>.766**</td>
<td>.676**</td>
<td>.851**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPANY</td>
<td>.113*</td>
<td>.474**</td>
<td>.677*</td>
<td>.627**</td>
<td>.787**</td>
<td>.830**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

(Care 1 = receive care Care 2 = express care)
Results in Table 8 show the correlations between Time spent on News Websites and helpfulness for personal gratifications. There are positive and statistically significant correlations for three items, sharing ideas, keep in touch, express care and company. However, the largest correlation is again just 0.113, so these correlations are weak.

Results in Table 9 show the correlations between Time spent on Weibo and its helpfulness for news gratifications. There are positive and statistically significant correlations for three items, getting updates, topics, and convenience. However, the largest correlation is again just 0.109, so these correlations are weak.

Table 9

*Pearson’s Correlation between Time and News Gratification for Weibo*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>UPDATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>VARIETY</th>
<th>CONVEN</th>
<th>QUICK</th>
<th>GET IT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPDATE</td>
<td>.091*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOPIC</td>
<td>.109*</td>
<td>.489**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VARIETY</td>
<td>.084</td>
<td>.421**</td>
<td>.705**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONVEN</td>
<td>.089*</td>
<td>.539**</td>
<td>.389**</td>
<td>.377**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUICK</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>.609**</td>
<td>.365**</td>
<td>.381**</td>
<td>.576**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET IT</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.461**</td>
<td>.419**</td>
<td>.371**</td>
<td>.541**</td>
<td>.450**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Table 10

*Pearson’s Correlation between Time and Personal Gratification for Weibo*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>SHARE</th>
<th>TOUCH</th>
<th>ADVICE</th>
<th>CARE1</th>
<th>CARE2</th>
<th>COMPANY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHARE</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOUCH</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>.364**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADVICE</td>
<td>-.011</td>
<td>.304**</td>
<td>.468**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARE1</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.236**</td>
<td>.519**</td>
<td>.530**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARE2</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.251**</td>
<td>.552**</td>
<td>.490**</td>
<td>.741**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPANY</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.244**</td>
<td>.526**</td>
<td>.499**</td>
<td>.638**</td>
<td>.610**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
(Care 1 = receive care, Care 2 = express care)

Results in Table 10 show the correlations between Time spent on Weibo and its helpfulness for personal gratifications. None of the correlations are statistically significant, so there is no relationship that can be identified using correlations.

Answer to the fifth research question asking about relationships between use patterns and gratifications on News Websites is that there are positive correlations between time spent on these websites and news and personal gratification items, but the correlations are weak. The answer to the sixth research question asking about relationships between use patterns and gratifications on Weibo is that there are significant positive correlations between time spent and news gratification items, but there is no correlation found between time spent and personal gratifications for Weibo.

To examine additional relationships between patterns of use and gratifications, the researcher also examined Spearman Correlations between gratifications and the number
of network connections the respondents had on Weibo. These tests were only for gratifications on Weibo.

The researcher ran a histogram on SPSS and deleted the outliers until the shape of the histogram looks similar to normal distribution. Before deleting outliers, the skewness of following was 3.058 and kurtosis was 13.173; the skewness of followers was 11.601 and kurtosis was 169.998. After deleting outliers, the skewness of following is 1.157 and kurtosis is 1.471; the skewness of followers is 1.263 and kurtosis is .942. To keep as much data as possible after deleting outliers, the distribution is near symmetrical but with a tail to the right. Outliers with large number of followers are mostly verified accounts.

The researcher deleted 68 outliers before conducting statistical tests. After deleting outliers, the mean number of followers was only 23 more than the median. The mean number of people being followed was 72 more than the median.

Table 11

*Descriptive Statistics for Following and Follower*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before Delete Outliers</th>
<th>After Delete Outliers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. following</td>
<td>No. followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>263.44</td>
<td>503.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. dev.</td>
<td>(272.89)</td>
<td>(1784.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>654</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As demonstrated in Table 11 the sample was skewed in terms of the number of people following respondents on Weibo. The average number of followers was about 63
more than the median (M= 263.44, Med = 200). The number of people followed by respondents was also skewed (M= 503.46, Med = 197.50).

Table 12

Pearson’s Correlation between Use Pattern and News Gratification for Weibo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Following</th>
<th>Follower</th>
<th>UPDATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>VARIETY</th>
<th>CONVEN</th>
<th>QUICK</th>
<th>GET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Following</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follower</td>
<td>.395**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPDATE</td>
<td>.162**</td>
<td>.137**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOPIC</td>
<td>.152**</td>
<td>.121**</td>
<td>.489**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VARIETY</td>
<td>.123**</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.421**</td>
<td>.705**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONVEN</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.130**</td>
<td>.539**</td>
<td>.389**</td>
<td>.377**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUICK</td>
<td>.183**</td>
<td>.156**</td>
<td>.609**</td>
<td>.365**</td>
<td>.381**</td>
<td>.576**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET IT</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>.090*</td>
<td>.461**</td>
<td>.419**</td>
<td>.371**</td>
<td>.541**</td>
<td>.450**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Results in Table 12 show a significant positive correlation between the number of accounts respondents follow and four gratifications. The largest correlation is between accounts followed and getting news quickly, at 0.183, with an R2 of 0.03. There are also positive and significant correlations between the number of followers and five of the six gratifications. The largest correlation is also with getting news quickly, at 0.162 which is an R2 of 0.03. Again, the positive correlations are weak.
Table 13

*Pearson’s Correlation between Use Pattern and Personal Gratification for Weibo*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Following</th>
<th>Follower</th>
<th>SHARE</th>
<th>TOUCH</th>
<th>ADVICE</th>
<th>CARE1</th>
<th>CARE2</th>
<th>COMPANY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Following</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follower</td>
<td>.395**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHARE</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOUCH</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.158**</td>
<td>.364**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADVICE</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.304**</td>
<td>.468**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARE1</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.165**</td>
<td>.236**</td>
<td>.519**</td>
<td>.530**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARE2</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.110*</td>
<td>.251**</td>
<td>.552**</td>
<td>.490**</td>
<td>.741**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPANY</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>.107*</td>
<td>.244**</td>
<td>.526**</td>
<td>.499**</td>
<td>.638**</td>
<td>.610**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
*Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).  
(Care 1 = receive care, Care 2 = express care)

Results in Table 13 presents no relationship between the number of accounts respondents follow and personal gratifications on Weibo. However, there are positive and significant correlations between the number of followers and four gratifications. The largest correlation is between helpfulness for receiving care and followers, at 0.165, with an R2 of 0.03. Again, these positive correlations are weak.

This adds to the answer for the sixth research question about patterns of use and gratifications on Weibo. These two tables show that following and follower numbers have correlation with personal gratifications, but the correlations are weak.
Finally, the correlations between time spent on Weibo and the number in a user’s networks were examined. Results in Table 14 show these relationships are not significant.

The first hypothesis predicts there is a positive correlation between time spent on news websites and the helpfulness of personal gratifications. Results in Table 8 show a positive and significant correlation between time and four of the six gratifications. These results offer partial support for the first hypothesis.

The second hypothesis predicts there is a positive correlation between time spent on news websites and the helpfulness of news gratifications. Results in Table 7 show a positive and significant correlation between time and five of the six gratifications. These results offer partial support for the second hypothesis.

The third hypothesis predicts there is a positive correlation between time spent on Weibo and the helpfulness of personal gratifications. Results in Table 10 show a positive and significant correlation between time and zero of the six gratifications. These results offer no support for the third hypothesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Following</th>
<th>Follower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follower</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>.395**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
The fourth hypothesis predicts there is a positive correlation between time spent on Weibo and the helpfulness of news gratifications. Results in Table 9 show a positive and significant correlation between time and three of the six gratifications. These results offer partial support for the fourth hypothesis.

The fifth hypothesis predicts there is a positive correlation between the number of accounts followed on Weibo and the helpfulness of personal gratifications. Results in Table 13 show that the number of accounts followed on Weibo has no significant correlation with personal gratifications. These results offer no support for the fifth hypothesis.

The sixth hypothesis predicts there is a positive correlation between the number of accounts respondents follow on Weibo and the helpfulness of personal gratifications. Results in Table 12 show follower numbers have significant but weak correlations with four out of six personal gratifications. These results offer what, partial support for the sixth hypothesis.

The seventh research question asked if there is any difference by gender in the helpfulness of gratifications gained on news websites.
Table 15

**Cross Tabulation of Gender by News Website News Gratification Scale (n=489)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Above Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>(40.9)</td>
<td>(59.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>(46.0)</td>
<td>(54.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>(43.8)</td>
<td>(56.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi Square .168

As presented in Table 15, there are results from a test of gender differences. To examine whether a gender difference exists the researcher created a new variable, the News Gratification Scale. This was created by summing each respondent’s score on all six news gratification items. As reported earlier, these items have high internal consistency. The researcher then divided respondents into two groups based on the average scores for the News Gratification Scale – above average and below average. Crosstabs by gender were used to compare the number of respondents with below average scores and above average scores.

Eighty-eight male respondents have news gratification scale score that is below average and 127 male respondents have news gratification scale score above average. One hundred and twenty-six female respondents have news gratification scale below average and 148 female respondents have news gratification scale above average. A Chi-
square test was not significant. The answer to the seventh research question is that there is no significant difference in terms of gender on news gratification of news websites.

Table 16

*Cross Tabulation of Gender by News Website Personal Gratification Scale (n=489)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Above Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>(62.3)</td>
<td>(37.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>(53.6)</td>
<td>(46.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>(57.5)</td>
<td>(42.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi Square</td>
<td>3.710</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

df=1, Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)=.054.

Table 16 shows results from a test of gender differences for helpfulness of personal gratifications on news websites. This test used a personal gratification scale created by summing scores on all the items. As reported earlier, these items have high internal consistency. There are 134 males with personal gratification scores below average and 81 male with personal gratification scores above average. There are 147 female with personal gratification scores below average and 127 females with personal gratification scores above average. The p value is .054 ≤ .10. There is a difference regarding personal gratification scale on news websites because a higher percentage of
males are below average compared with females. Males appear to regard news websites as less helpful for personal gratifications.

The eighth research question asked if there is any difference by gender in gratifications gained on Weibo. Table 17 shows results of a cross-tab examining gender differences for the helpfulness of news gratifications on Weibo. This uses a Weibo news gratification scale, as reported earlier these items have high internal consistency. The p value is .017<.05. There is a significant gender difference in terms of the news gratification scale on Weibo.

In this case, there is again a higher percentage of men who are above average. Men appear to regard Weibo as less helpful for news gratifications.

Table 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Above Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>(55.3)</td>
<td>(44.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>(44.5)</td>
<td>(55.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>(49.3)</td>
<td>(50.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi Square</td>
<td>5.65*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*df=1, Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)=.017.
Table 18 shows results of a cross-tab examining gender differences for the helpfulness of personal gratifications on Weibo. The p value is .004<.05. There is significant gender difference in terms of personal gratification scale on Weibo. This scale was created by summing personal gratification items. As reported earlier, these items have high internal consistency. There is again a higher percentage of males than females who are below average. Men consider Weibo less helpful for personal gratifications.

Table 18

Cross Tabulation of Gender by Weibo Personal Gratification Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Above Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>(58.1)</td>
<td>(41.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>(44.9)</td>
<td>(55.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>(50.7)</td>
<td>(49.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi Square 8.461**

** df=1, Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)=.004.

The ninth research question asked if there are differences by occupation in the helpfulness of gratifications gained from news websites.
Table 19

*Descriptive Statistics and t-test for Gratification Scales by Job (n= 550)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Weibo</th>
<th>News websites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News grat</td>
<td>Personal grat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Job</td>
<td>23.84</td>
<td>18.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. dev.</td>
<td>(4.25)</td>
<td>(4.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-news Job</td>
<td>23.05</td>
<td>18.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. dev.</td>
<td>(5.00)</td>
<td>(5.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>1.98*</td>
<td>2.02*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**differs between news job and non-news job significant, p<.01**
*differs between news job and non-news job significant, p<.05*

The sixth hypothesis predicts that users who follow news in their occupations will have significantly more news gratifications than those don’t follow news in their occupations. Table 19 shows results of a paired-samples t-test.

Results show a statistically significant difference on Weibo for respondents who follow news. Their mean score for helpfulness of news gratifications was about 0.79 (p<.05) higher, so this difference is not very large. These results also show a statistically significant difference on Weibo for respondents who must follow news on personal gratifications. Again, the difference is not large, just 0.92 (p<.05).

There is also a significant difference for respondents on News Websites for respondents who must follow news. This difference is just 1.77 (p<.01), which also is not large. All of the significance differences are less than one standard deviation.

So the results in Table 19 offer only weak support for the sixth hypothesis.
CHAPTER 10: DISCUSSION

This thesis examines Weibo’s growing importance and popularity through the lens of uses and gratifications theory. The thesis uses an online study to ask users’ how they spend time on Weibo and compares that with how they spend time on Chinese news websites. The thesis uses these comparisons to examine the motivations for using Weibo and news websites, and the gratifications received from each. The researcher also examined what patterns of use are correlated with gratifications sought and received on Weibo and news websites. Results from the survey showed that there is no correlation between time spent on Weibo and personal gratifications. There is positively but weak correlation between the number of accounts following and personal gratifications. The researcher found there is significant gender difference in terms of personal and news gratifications on Weibo. The researcher also found significant but weak occupation difference in terms of personal and news gratifications on Weibo: respondents who are required to follow new by their job reported more gratification gained.

The research is the first comparative study of uses and gratifications between Weibo and news websites in the context of China. Previous studies are mostly about U.S. users on Twitter. The study suggests Chinese users on Weibo and news websites are seeking and gaining similar news and personal gratifications.

The study suggests news consumers are spending more time and gaining more gratifications on Weibo than on news websites. This finding makes an alert to managers of traditional news media who are trying to promote the work of their organizations on Weibo. Users spend more time on Weibo and use it more frequently. The promotion
news organizations on Weibo may make the condition severe. To public relation and marketing practitioners, they should pay more attention to Weibo, as audiences are spending more time on it.

To be more specific, the first and second research question asked the use pattern of Weibo and New Websites. The researcher found users spent significant more time on Weibo than on News Websites. The results suggest that Weibo occupies a big part of online news consumption portfolio for Chinese netizens.

The third and fourth research questions asked what gratifications gained on Weibo and News Websites. The researcher found Weibo got highest scores on Update News and Share Ideas. All of the averages of personal gratifications on news websites are below 3, indicating these are not helpful for personal gratifications.

Only on gratification item “to get news when I want to”, news websites get higher score than Weibo. One possible explanation is that news on Weibo is mixed with other information such as product promotion information and updates from friends, within user’s news feeds. The boundary of news and other information on Weibo is blurred. Sometimes users try to read news from the accounts they follow but they can’t find them because the news is buried in other information. But for news websites, the display of news is much clearer. One can easily find where the news and where the advertisement are. As for discussion among readers, it is usually shown at the end of the article as billboard contents. News and other information on new websites are displayed in a clear separated way, making it easy for users to get news when they want it.
The fifth and sixth research questions asked the relationship between use patterns and gratifications gained on Weibo and on New Websites. The researcher found more time spent on news websites, more news gratifications were gained. But the same thing is not true with Weibo. There is no significant correlation between time spent and personal gratification on Weibo and news websites. Even the longer a user stayed on Weibo, the users still cannot feel more gratification gained from interpersonal communication.

The fifth hypothesis is that there is a positive correlation between the number of people someone follows on Weibo and personal gratification gained. The sixth hypothesis is that there is a positive correlation between the number of people who follow someone on Weibo and personal gratification gained. The researcher found positive but weak correlations to support the fifth and sixth hypothesis. People with more followers probably tend to more actively communication with others on Weibo than those who has few followers and only negatively receive and read news feeds on Weibo, and hence people with more followers get more personal gratification.

The seventh and eighth research questions asked if there is any difference by gender in the helpfulness of gratifications gained on news websites. The researcher found there is no significant gender difference on gratifications gained from news websites. But there is significant gender difference on gratification gained from Weibo. More women had news and personal gratification Scales above average. One possible explanation is that women spent more time on Weibo or use Weibo in a more active way.

The sixth hypothesis predicted that users who follow news in their occupations have significantly more news gratifications than users who don’t follow news in their occupations.
The researcher found that those who had a job requiring them to follow news had a higher score on both news and personal gratification on Weibo. People who need to follow news during work possibly stayed longer on Weibo, and in order to get news for their work, they could use Weibo in a more actively way, which leads to a higher score on gratification. Respondents who need to follow news also have a significant higher score of news gratification on news websites.
CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSION

The research applied uses and gratifications approach to compare two major forms of online news consumption, micro-blogs and news websites. The researcher tried to answer how users distribute their time on the two major forms of online news outlet, what motivate them to consume those media and whether group differences exist when consuming news. The data is collected by an online survey distributed on Weibo by snowball sampling. The survey lasted for 30 days and gathered 543 completed answers in all.

The research found online news consumers in China spent more time on Weibo than on news websites, and they use Weibo more often than news websites. Weibo got more scores on 5 news gratification scores out of the total six, and higher scores on each 6 personal gratification items. The differences are statistically significant. The researcher also examined the correlation between use patterns and gratification gained, and found that more followers a person has, more personal gratifications he/she gets. Women are reported to have more gratifications on both news and personal sides than men when using Weibo. Those who are required to follow news by their job reported more news and personal gratifications gained on Weibo than those who do not need to follow news for their work.

The research is conducted within the context of Chinese news industry, where online, print and broadcasting media are all highly regulated. Although micro-blog is also regulated by the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SARFT), it is treated as a new form of news media and the regulatory administrations
and institutions for each level from local to central are still under establishment. The
certain context gave Weibo a gratification picture different from other less or un-
regulated news markets. The researcher found Weibo got significantly higher scores on
Quickly, Update, Topic and Variety than news websites.

The exploratory research discovered a special landscape of online news
consuming in China, where people turn to micro-blog to find news, while news
organization and online news portals are publishing news on micro-blogs and the
accessing time and frequency to their home websites is already less than Weibo. To
suggest later researchers who want to know more about Weibo and Chinese news
websites in an approach of uses and gratifications, more news and personal gratifications
items can be added into measurement. And there can be more measurement of use
patterns, for example time of using hashtags, number of applications used on Weibo, can
be added in future studies.

The study has a few limitations need to be noticed. First, the findings cannot be
generalized because the sample is not randomly collected. Participants of the study were
recruited on Weibo, who mostly are heavily microblog users and cannot represent
average Weibo and news websites users. Secondly, there is a limitation of the measures I
used. The items of gratifications are selected from previous studies and in limited number.
Future studies can add more gratifications items. Thirdly, the study used correlation and
t-test in data analysis. Future studies can use ANOVA and regression to get a deeper
analysis.
REFERENCES


Li, Y., Gao, H., Yang, M., Guan, W., Ma, H., Qian, W., Cao, Z., Yang, X. (2013). What are Chinese talking about in hot Weibos? Retrieved Feb 9, 2014 from


http://www.journalism.org/2013/10/24/methodology-54/


APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT POST, CONSENT FORM & SURVEY

Research Invitation Post

Hello, I’m Si Xiong, a master student in Ohio University, who major in journalism. I’m conducting a survey for my thesis now. The survey will ask you if you get news from different sources, and how you use different kinds of news in your daily life. The answers will be used to determine if there are similarities or differences in the way that people use different news sources on the internet.

If you agree to participate and are at least 18 years old, you will be asked to answer the online survey questionnaire. Your participation in the study will last about 10-15 minutes, which is the time it takes to finish the questionnaire. You should not participate in this study if you are under 18 year old or if you never used Weibo. If you are interested in the research, more than 18 years old and would like to help me with my thesis, please click the link below to the survey page. Thank you very much!
Ohio University Consent Form

Title of Research: Comparing gratifications available from Weibo and other news websites in China and displacement effect.
Researchers: Si Xiong

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done because there is a potential that Weibo is displacing other news websites regarding to news consumption in China. Weibo can be seen as a catalog of news, as long as users follow enough official accounts of news organizations, journalists. People get news from their Weibo friends as well. In the meantime, people could get news from news websites run by traditional news organizations and online portal news websites. However, users’ time spent on news is limited, which has to been divided among all types of media, including Weibo and news website (official websites run by traditional media, and news portals).

If gratifications got from Weibo and news websites are overlapped, there could be a possible displacement effect, where people spend more time on Weibo and less time on news websites, according to the niche theory. The research is trying to find whether this effect exists in China now.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer three categories of questions, including Weibo and other news websites usage, gratifications, and demographic information.

You should not participate in this study if you are under 18 year old or if you never used Weibo.
Your participation in the study will last 20 minutes.

Risks and Discomforts

No risks or discomforts are anticipated.
Benefits

This study is important to science/society because it will create new knowledge that (1) whether Weibo, as a new form of media in China, has the displacement effect on elder but not traditional media—news websites; (2) a better understanding on why people use Weibo (3) a potential trend on the news industry and a prediction of landscape changing of the industry in China after the join of new player.

Individually, you may benefit by getting a copy of research result.

Confidentiality and Records

Your study information will be kept confidential by not connecting your identification information with your survey answers. In this study, all data will be collected anonymously. The only way that is possible to identify an individual is when a person requires a copy of the study report and provides his/her email address and other personal information. In this situation, I will create a new email account and restore their contact information in it. After sending copies to them, I will close the email account permanently. In addition, there is no way to link a person’s contact information to his/her questionnaire answers.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU.
Survey

First we want to ask about how you use Weibo and other websites that publish news.
1. How often do you use Weibo?
   1) Several times a day
   2) once a day
   3) 3-5 days a week
   4) 1-2 days a week
   5) Every few weeks
   6) Less often

2. In a typical session, how many minutes or hours do you spend on Weibo?
   _____hours _____minutes

3. How many accounts do you follow on Weibo? _____

4. How many people follow your account on Weibo? _____

5. How often do you use online news websites other than Weibo?
   1) Several times a day
   2) once a day
   3) 3-5 days a week
   4) 1-2 days a week
   5) Every few weeks
   6) Less often

6. In a typical session, how many minutes or hours do you spend on online news outlets?
   _____hours _____minutes

This next group of questions asks about ways you use Weibo to find information about the news and to keep in touch with other people.
7. How helpful is Weibo for accessing and finding news? Please answer questions on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 stands for not at all, 5 stands for very helpful.
   Not helpful at all
   Very helpful

   1) For the latest updates on news stories. 
      1 2 3
      4 5 
   2) For stories on a variety of topics
      1 2 3
      4 5 
   3) For a variety of choices in news coverage
      1 2 3
      4 5 
   4) For convenient access to news
      1 2 3
      4 5 
   5) For information as quickly as possible
      1 2 3
      6 7
6) For getting news at the times I want it 1 2 3 4

8. How helpful do you think Weibo is...?
   1) To share ideas and opinions 1 2 3
   4 5
   2) To keep in touch with people 1 2 3
   4 5
   3) To give or receive advice on personal matters or issues 1 2 3 4
   5
   4) To receive messages that show people care about me 1 2 3 4
   5
   5) To express that I care about others 1 2 3
   4 5
   6) To enjoy companionship with people 1 2 3
   4 5

9. How helpful do you think online news outlets are for accessing and finding new?
   Very helpful
   1) For the latest updates on news stories. 1 2 3
   4 5
   2) For stories on a variety of topics 1 2 3
   4 5
   3) For a variety of choices in news coverage 1 2 3
   4 5
   4) For convenient access to news 1 2 3
   4 5
   5) For information as quickly as possible 1 2 3
   4 5
   6) For getting news at the times I want it 1 2 3 4
   5

10. How helpful do you think online news outlets are ...?
    1) To share ideas and opinions 1 2 3
    4 5
    2) To keep in touch with people 1 2 3
    4 5
    3) To give or receive advice on personal matters or issues
Now we would like to ask for some information about you. Your responses will remain confidential. We will not report any individual responses; only aggregate responses will be used in our report.

11. How old will you be by the end of 2013?

12. What is your gender? 1) Male 2) Female

13. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
1) Less than high school
2) High school degree
3) Some college
4) Bachelor’s degree
5) Graduate degree

14. What is your occupation?
1) Student
2) Private enterprise employee
3) State-owned enterprise employee
4) Public institutions employee
5) Government employee
6) Self-employed entrepreneur
7) Unemployed
8) Other, please specify

15. Does your job require you to follow news? 1) Yes 2) No

16. In a typical month, my income is ... RMB.
Less than 1000 1001-2000 2001-5000 5001-8000 8001-10000 10001-15000 15001-20000 More than 20001

Asking for a Copy of This Study Report
If you want to request a copy of the research report, please enter your e-mail address where you can receive the report. The email address will only be used for sending you the report and can’t be connected to your survey response. If you would not like to have a
copy of the report, please submit the survey directly. You are not required to give your email address.
Email address ______________________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please click “Submit” now to send your responses to us!
APPENDIX B: CHINESE VERSION OF RECRUITMENT POST, CONSENT FORM & SURVEY

问卷邀请函
我是俄亥俄大学新闻系研究生熊思。您被邀请参加我的硕士论文问卷调查。本问卷关于您的微博使用习惯。如果您年满十八岁并且是微博用户，请您点击一下链接参与调查。调查将持续大概 10 到 15 分钟。如果您未满十八岁，您无需参与本调查。
知情同意书
您被邀请参加本研究。为了决定是否参加这个研究项目，您首先应该了解这个项目是关于什么的，以及参与本项目会产生的潜在风险和好处，这个过程被称为知情同意。请阅读下面的段落，文章最后您将被问及是否确认自愿参与本次调查，并且年满 18 周岁。如果您点击 “>>”键则表示确认，并将开始回答问题。

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本研究是为了找出你是如何使用微博和其他网站获得新闻的。微博可以被看做一个新闻机构和记者的聚合目录，人们可以从这些新闻机构或记者的账号中获得新闻，也可以从其他微博好友中获得新闻。本次调查会询问你是否从这些不同渠道获得新闻，你在日常生活中如何使用这些新闻。
你的回答将有助于发现人们在网络上使用新闻源时，存在怎样行为上的相似或者不同。
如果你同意参加并且年满 18 周岁，你将会回答一个在线问卷调查。在线问卷大概需要 10-15 分钟的时间完成。
如果你未满 18 周岁或者你从未使用微博，你不应该参与本次调查。

风险与不适
本项研究没有可预期的风险和不适。所有数据都将以匿名的方式收集，因此你的答案无法以个人身份识别。研究将会整合所有数据用于分析，因此个人答案不会出现在报告中。

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本次研究不会对参与者产生直接的好处或收益，但是参与者有权索要本次研究的简单报告副本。本次研究对于科学和社会至关重要，因为它产生了关于人们如何从微博和新闻网站获得新闻的新知识。
如果你索要本次研究的研究报告，你需要提供一个电子邮箱地址。你的联系方式会从数据集中移除，并保存在一个单独的电子邮箱账户中。这个电子邮箱账户将仅用于发送研究报告，全部通讯信息都会在研究结束后删除。邮箱账户将被关闭。

保密性和记录
本次调查将不会问及或者收集你的可识别的个人信息，因此本项研究是匿名性的。我们会尽一切努力维护问卷答案的保密性。然而，在特殊情况下信息将可能与以下机构分享：
- 美国联邦机构，例如人类研究保护办公室，其职责是保护科学研究中的人类参与者；
- 俄亥俄大学的代表，包括机构审核委员会，其职责是监督俄亥俄大学中发生的研究。

联系信息
如果您对于本研究有任何疑问，请联系研究者熊思，sx864412@ohio.edu, 740-331-0859, 或者其导师 Hugh J. Martin 博士，martin1@ohio.edu, 740-597-2199.
如果您对您作为研究参与者的权利有任何疑问，请联系 Jo Ellen Sherow, 研究合规部，俄亥俄大学，740-593-0664。

如果您点击下面的前进按钮，则表明您同意以下内容：
- 您已经阅读了知情同意书（或者有人把它读给你听）并且被给予了提问的机会，并且问题已经被回答
- 您已经知道研究潜在的风险，并且研究人员已经为你做出你满意的解释
- 您明白俄亥俄大学对您参与本研究产生的任何伤害未安排相关基金
- 您已经年满 18 周岁
- 您参与本次研究是完全出于自愿的
- 您可以在任何时候离开本次研究，如果您决定停止参与本次研究，不会有任何罚款产生。
调查问卷

首先，我们想知道你如何使用微博和其他新闻网站。
1. 你多久使用一次微博？
   1）一天几次
   2）一天一次
   3）一周 3-5 天
   4）一周 1-2 天
   5）每几周使用一次
   6）更少的情况

2. 通常使用一次微博，你会花几分钟或几小时在微博上？
   ______分钟 ______小时

3. 你在微博上关注了多少帐户？ ______个

4. 有多少个帐户在微博上关注你？ ______个

5. 你多久使用一次除微博外的其他在线新闻网站？
   1）一天几次
   2）一天一次
   3）一周 3-5 天
   4）一周 1-2 天
   5）每几周使用一次
   6）更少的情况

6. 通常使用一次在线新闻网站，你会花几分钟或几小时在网站上？
   ______分钟 ______小时

接下来的一组问题将询问您在微博上阅读新闻和与人接触的方式。
7. 微博对于您接触和寻找新闻有多大帮助？请从 1 到 5 号码中选择回答问题。
   1 代表一点也不帮助，5 代表非常有帮助。

   一点没有帮助       非常有帮助
   1) 为了看到新闻报道的最新更新   1   2   3   4   5
   2) 为了看到不同话题的新闻       1   2   3   4   5
   3) 为了看到多样性的新闻报道     1   2   3   4   5
4) 为了更便捷地看到新闻                          1  2  3  4  5
5) 为了最快速地获得消息                          1  2  3  4  5
6) 为了在我想看到新闻时看到                      1  2  3  4  5

8. 微博对于……有多大帮助?
1) 分享观点和想法                                  1  2  3  4  5
2) 与人保持接触                                    1  2  3  4  5
3) 在个人事务上接受或者给予建议                  1  2  3  4  5
4) 接受别人关心我的信息                           1  2  3  4  5
5) 表示我对别人的关心                             1  2  3  4  5
6) 享受他人的陪伴                                  1  2  3  4  5

9. 在线新闻网站对于您接触和寻找新闻有多大帮助?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>一点没有帮助</th>
<th>非常有</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2) 为了看到不同话题的新闻                       1  2  3  4  5</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) 为了看到多样性的新闻报导                     1  2  3  4  5</td>
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<td>4) 为了更便捷地看到新闻                         1  2  3  4  5</td>
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<tr>
<td>5) 为了最快速地获得消息                         1  2  3  4  5</td>
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<tr>
<td>6) 为了在我想看到新闻时看到                     1  2  3  4  5</td>
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10. 在线新闻网站对于……有多大帮助?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>一点没有帮助</th>
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<td>2) 与人保持接触                                    1  2  3  4  5</td>
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<tr>
<td>4) 接受别人关心我的信息                           1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) 表示我对别人的关心                             1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) 享受他人的陪伴                                  1  2  3  4  5</td>
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我们现在想要询问一些关于你个人的信息。你的回答将会是匿名并且保密的。我们不会在研究中使用任何个人单独的数据，只会使用整合后的数据。

11. _______岁
12. 你的性别？ 1）男性  2）女性
13. 你完成的最高等级的学历？
    1）高中以下
2）高中
3）大学未毕业
4）大学本科
5）研究生
14. 你的职业是……？
   1）学生
   2）企事业员工
   3）政府雇员
   4）自由职业
   5）未就业
   6）其他，请注明
15. 你的工作需要你跟踪新闻吗？  1）需要   2）不需要
16. 通常情况下，我的月收入是……人民币。
   少于 1000  1001-2000  2001-5000  5001-8000  8001-10000  10001-15000
   15001-20000  多于 20001

你需要一份这次研究的报告吗？
如果你想收到这份研究的报告，请输入你的电子邮箱地址。您输入的电子邮箱只用于发送研究报告，不会和您的问卷回答产生任何关联。如果您不需要报告，请直接提交您的问卷。
A determination has been made that the following research study is exempt from IRB review because it involves:

Category 2: research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior.

Project Title: Comparing Gratifications Available from Weibo and Other News Websites in China and Displacement Effect.

Primary Investigator: Si Xiong

Co-Investigator(s):

Advisor: Hugh J. Martin

Department: Journalism

Jo Ellen Sherow, MPA
Office of Research Compliance

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved (as an amendment) prior to implementation.
CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Human Research Curriculum Completion Report
Printed on 6/18/2013

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Group 2. Social and Behavioral Investigators and Key Personnel:

Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 06/18/13 (Ref # 10351009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Modules</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
<th>Quiz Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>06/11/13</td>
<td>no quiz</td>
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<tr>
<td>History and Ethical Principles - SBR</td>
<td>06/18/13</td>
<td>4/5 (80%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR</td>
<td>06/18/13</td>
<td>4/5 (80%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Regulations and The Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR</td>
<td>06/18/13</td>
<td>5/5 (100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR</td>
<td>06/18/13</td>
<td>5/5 (100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informed Consent - SBR</td>
<td>06/18/13</td>
<td>5/5 (100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ohio University</td>
<td>06/18/13</td>
<td>no quiz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Course Coordinator

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