Selective Exposure to *Berita Harian Online* and *Utusan Malaysia Online*:
The Roles of Surveillance Motivation, Website Usability and Website Attractiveness

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ABSTRACT

News media allows audiences to be selective in determining both their news sources and type of news stories they read. This study examined factors influencing selective exposure to the online editions of two mainstream Malaysian newspapers, *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia*. Using selective exposure theory as the theoretical lens, this study compared both newspapers in terms of their audiences' level of surveillance motivation, and how audiences rate the newspapers' websites with respect to usability and attractiveness. This study used a within-subject experimental research design that exposed 51 subjects to both *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia* online newspapers. The results of the experiment indicate that *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia* online were significantly different in terms of website usability; however, no significant differences were found in terms of surveillance motivation or website attractiveness between the two newspapers. Further analysis indicate that the only significant predictor of selective exposure was website usability. This study highlights the importance of website usability for online newspapers wanting to harness audience selectivity.

Keywords: Selective exposure, online newspapers, surveillance motivation, website usability, website attractiveness

1. INTRODUCTION
News media began to have an online presence during the mid-1990s. Early online newspaper content was text-based and delivered through BBS or online services such as Prodigy or America Online (Li, 2006). It was only after the launch of Netscape

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Navigator in December 1994 that online newspapers were formally established (Li, 2006). At that time, there were less than 10 newspapers available on the Internet. Today, most printed newspapers have an online presence. The trend of distributing news content on mobile devices is now prevailing.

Earlier studies of online newspapers were mostly content-related. Some of the issues explored were information delivery and access (Greer and Mensing, 2006; Li, 2006), internet newspapers and the public (Lin, Salwen and Abdulla, 2005), credibility (Abdulla, 2005), and implications for business and legal issues (Gunter, 2003). Best, Chmielewski and Kruger (2005) explored selective exposure to online foreign news, such as Al-Jazeera, during the Iraq war and found that subjects strongly opposed to the U.S. Bush administration were more likely to supplement their online news consumption with foreign news. Researchers were also interested in studying selective exposure to mainstream media, which are commonly owned by governments or large corporations and catering to the whims of the widest demographic (Downing, Ford, Gil and Stein, 2001), and to non-mainstream media which reflects peripheral and often radical views (Downing, 2003). Tsfati (2010), for example, found that people with an inherent distrust of mainstream media were more likely to avoid mainstream news altogether and express a preference for non-mainstream news.

As online newspapers proliferated across the Internet, selective exposure theory became crucial in trying to predict online news selectivity. Online news research is also concerned with media audience. One important characteristic of the online news audience is that they are active selectors of news. Knobloch-Westerwick and Hastall (2006, 2009) found that selective exposure was increased through the use of popularity indicators such as "most read news" or "most emailed news". Lead framing of online news also proved to be a predictor of selective exposure (Zillmann, 1988, 2000, 2006; Zillmann, Chen, Knobloch and Callison, 2004). Zillmann *et al.* found that leads projecting aggravated conflict or agony over suffered misfortunes garnered more exposure time for participants.

We consider news website usability and attractiveness as factors that contribute to selective exposure to online newspapers. In particular, we examined two mainstream Malaysian newspapers, *Berita Harian Online* and *Utusan Malaysia Online,* and investigated both the news motivation of consumers, and their perceptions of the newspaper website's usability and attractiveness. Specifically, through this study we sought to examine:

- The relationship between surveillance motivation and selective exposure to *Berita Harian Online* and *Utusan Malaysia Online*.

- The relationship between website features (in terms of their usability and attractiveness) and selective exposure to *Berita Harian Online* and *Utusan Malaysia Online*.

- The differences in surveillance motivation, website usability and website attractiveness between *Berita Harian Online* and *Utusan Malaysia Online*.

By focusing on consumers' motivation for news (surveillance motivation) and website features (website usability and website attractiveness), this study attempts to bridge the gap between user-centric and medium-centric approaches in understanding audience selectivity.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Selective Exposure

The selective exposure theory is derived from the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) and is based on the same premise that people prefer attitude-consistent information and avoid contradicting opinions. Selective exposure, therefore, is a form of dissonance reduction in which people avoid messages that might result in dissonance, preferring media consistent with their predisposition that they might achieve consonance.

Although the selective exposure theory has previously been related to Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory, the concept of selective exposure was earlier used by researchers in political studies. Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaud (1948) used selective exposure to explain why political campaigns invariably strengthen the existing voting tendencies of audiences instead of changing their minds. Selective exposure was also used by Hyman and Sheatsley (1947) to explain the failure of informational and mass media campaigns to have any significant persuasive impact.

Later research in the field of selective exposure theory found evidence that audiences expose themselves to opposing information. Zillmann (2006) observed that while earlier studies of selective exposure indicated that audiences tend to avoid dissonant-arousing messages, preferring agreeing messages, later studies tended to reject this idea. Wicklund and Brehm (1976) were of the opinion that a variety of factors, not just cognitive dissonance, affect selective exposure. Rather than avoiding messages solely for the purpose of avoiding dissonance, media users demonstrated preference and avoidance patterns as a consequence of situational and personality factors (Zillmann, 2000).

Other studies examined the perception of credibility and its relationship with media exposure. Studies demonstrated that individuals tend to select news from sources considered reliable (Rimmer and Weaver, 1987; Westley and Severin, 1964). However, Rimmer and Weaver (1987) found that the frequency of media exposure is not related to the perception of media credibility. Tsfati and Capella (2003) found that distrust towards mainstream media has a negative correlation with mainstream media exposure. Tsfati's (2010) study drew similar conclusions, that trust in the mainstream media is positively correlated with mainstream media exposure, and distrust towards mainstream media is positively related with exposure to online news. In conclusion, individuals with a positive perception of the credibility of mainstream media will choose mainstream media as a source of information whereas individuals who perceive the mainstream media more negatively tend to seek information on the Internet.

Visual elements in mass media are another important determinant of selective

exposure. Earlier studies of these visual elements sought to identify reading behaviour, and the results of these studies ultimately contributed significantly to the development of the selective exposure theory. Garcia, Stark and Miller's (1991) study on "entry points" and reading passages is, perhaps, one of the most influential studies examining the effects of visual elements on audience selectivity. The study sought to identify the elements on a sheet of printed newspaper that would "catch the eye" of readers. While it was observed that having a picture on the page tended to attract the attention of the reader, image size and picture content (especially facial expressions) significantly impacted the overall level of attention (Garcia, Stark and Miller, 1991). Recent studies by Holmqvist and Wartenberg (2005) and Holsanova (2005) corroborated the findings of Garcia *et al*. (1991).

The Internet also allows for varying degrees of interaction with online news and other sites. Consequently, communication researchers have begun to explore interactive features that attract readers and how to exploit them more effectively. Li (2006), for example, explored the connection between a news site's web design and news retrieval efficiency. The study concluded that web designers should consider as critical factors immediate access to news and smooth news flow to increase news retrieval efficiency. As consumer demand for online news sources increases, it is imperative that we understand the selective behaviour of the online audience. Thus, it is appropriate that we study the online newspaper from the perspective of the selective exposure theory.

2.2 Surveillance Motivation

According to Zillmann *et al.* (2004), the surveillance function of the media, which is to disseminate news and information, is explained by way of protective vigilance. Protective vigilance is the evolutionary impulse to continually scan the environment looking for signs of potential danger. Organisms with such an impulse toward protective vigilance are highly aroused by non-symbolic iconic representations indicative of potential threats or harm.

Surveillance motivation suggests that people use the Internet for self-education and information needs (Chung and Chan, 2008). Payne, Severn and Dozier noted that the need to obtain information also refers to the process of confirming information (as cited in Beaudoin and Thorson, 2004). This includes how consumers search for information about events transpiring around them. Information seeking can be motivated by a desire to reduce uncertainty during troubled times or for emotional self-management (Zillmann, 1988).

In an era where the Internet is ubiquitous in everyday life, it has become increasingly difficult to selectively expose oneself to a singular point of view (Neuman, 1991). One reason for this is the immediacy of online news. Stovall (2004) contrasted the immediacy of online news to broadcast media and noted four major differences−variety, expansion, depth and context. The functionality of the Internet makes passive exposure more difficult and selective information seeking easier (Valentino, Banks, Hutchings and Davis, 2009). However, in an environment such as that created by online newspapers, news is abundant and consumers are inevitably exposed to

opposing viewpoints. The extent of that exposure is determined by the audience's level of surveillance. Consequently, we sought to identify the relationship between surveillance motivation and selective exposure to online newspapers. The following hypotheses were tested:

H1a: There is a significant relationship between surveillance motivation and selective exposure to *Berita Harian*.

H1b: There is a significant relationship between surveillance motivation and selective exposure to *Utusan Malaysia*.

H2:   There is a significant difference between *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia* in motivation.

2.3 Website Usability

Various definitions of website usability have been discussed throughout the literature. Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) defined website usability as the utility and operational use of the website. Dix (1993) explained usability in terms of the ease of use of a given system in an efficient, effective and satisfactory way; while Karat (1997) and Nielson (2000) focused on the perceived ease with which users can access desired information from a website.

These differences in how usability is defined have led to disagreement in the way usability should be evaluated. Nielsen (1993) identified five predictors of website usability, namely efficiency, memo ability, user errors, learning ability and satisfaction. Other metrics of evaluation have been proposed including ease of use, aesthetic appearance, navigation and terminology (Tsakonas and Papatheodorou, 2007). Despite these differences, there seems to be some general agreement that ease of website use and navigation might be the most salient aspects of determining usability.

The literature suggests that for a website to achieve its organisational objectives, it must be easy to use. Both the academic and corporate sectors, employing websites as marketing tools, have realised the importance of the consumer's experience of their websites (Agarwal and Karahanna, 2000). A study by Tarafdar and Zhang (2007) revealed that link appearance, navigation, and the inclusion of positive features on a corporate website can significantly improve usability and, by extension, website reach.

Another important consequence of website usability is its capacity to create good or bad impressions of the organisation. Hill (2001) found that the design of a website was an important determinant of online purchases and return visits to online stores. While most usability studies focused on organisational websites, few studies have attempted to explore usability in relation to newspaper websites. Oostendorp and Nimwegen (1998) conducted a study on the usability of online newspapers in terms of information locating and found that usability affected the use of hyperlinks and page scrolling. Abdullah and Wei (2008) studied the usability of four online newspapers in Malaysia. Usability was conceptualised across four dimensions: content, organisation and readability; navigation and links; user interface design; performance and effectiveness.

Their study indicated that newspaper website usability is positively related to reader satisfaction. Similarly, in this study, we investigated the relationship between website usability and selective exposure to online newspapers. The following hypotheses were tested:

H3a: There is a significant relationship between website usability and selective exposure to *Berita Harian*.

H3b: There is a significant relationship between website usability and selective exposure to *Utusan Malaysia*.

H4:   There is a significant difference between *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia* in website usability.

2.4 Website Attractiveness

Maintaining an attractive website is vital for organisations, especially given the link between website appeal and people's overall impression of a website (Chen and Wells, 1999; Schenkman and Jönsson, 2000). Website attractiveness also influences ratings of organisational attractiveness, which in turn motivates people to want to work for those companies which maintain attractive websites (Schenkman and Jönsson, 2000). In a nutshell, the more attractive your website, the more people will want to work with you.

First impressions of a website may prove to be vital. Studies suggest that initial impressions, based on a website's aesthetic appearance, form so quickly as to precede cognitive processing and that these impressions impact the website's usage (Fernandes, Lindgaard, Dillon and Wood, 2003; Pham, Cohen, Pracejus and Hughes, 2001). Similarly, a study by Tractinsky (2004) found that extreme evaluations of attractiveness, both positive and negative, develop faster than moderate evaluations, alluding to the immediacy of impression. Tractinsky's (2004) results also indicate that visual aesthetics play an important role in a user's overall evaluation of a website.

A number of studies have investigated the attractiveness of a job recruitment website and the effect it has on applicants' evaluations of the company. Researchers have also examined several dimensions of attractiveness, such as colours, fonts, layouts, pictures and the type of text (Braddy, Meade and Kroustalis, 2008; Zusman and Landis, 2002). Zusman and Landis (2002) exposed subjects to three websites with different levels of appeal and found that the subjects expressed a greater desire to work for whichever company that had the website with the most appealing colours, fonts and pictures. Moreover, Cober, Brown, Levy, Cober and Keeping (2003) found that job seekers' intentions to look for work and their willingness to recommend a prospective employer to a friend were positively related to their evaluation of the aesthetic features of an organisational website. Website appeal was also found to have a positive relationship with people's overall impressions of websites (Schenkman and Jönsson, 2000).

One study of website attractiveness also considered the relationship between attractiveness and consumerism. Lee and Yurchisin (2011) studied consumer perception of a website and how these perceptions were related to purchase intentions. The study demonstrated that how consumers' perceive the attractiveness of a retail

apparel website directly and positively influences the degree to which they identified with the website (Lee and Yurchisin, 2011). Consequently, this then directly and positively influenced consumers' perception of the trustworthiness of the website, which subsequently leads to purchase intentions from that website.

According to Weick and Sutcliffe (2001), attractiveness is governed by design effects that direct the attention of users to a medium and its contents. For example, because attention is diverted by change, dynamic media such as film, animation and sound grasp attention more than static media such as pictures and text. Online newspapers, with their interactive features, constitute a dynamic media. Consequently, in the present study, we sought to investigate the relationship between website attractiveness and selective exposure to online newspapers. The following hypotheses were tested:

H5a: There is a significant relationship between website attractiveness and selective exposure to *Berita Harian*.

H5b: There is a significant relationship between website attractiveness and selective exposure to *Utusan Malaysia*.

H6:   There is a significant difference between *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia* in website attractiveness.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We used an experimental design method for this study in order to determine the effects of surveillance motivation, website usability and website attractiveness on selective exposure to online newspapers. According to Keyton (2006), an experiment is the recording of measurements and observations using defined procedures, and under defined conditions. This method is well-suited to research involving relatively limited and well-defined concepts and propositions. Furthermore, the purpose of experimental research is to identify the cause and effect relationship between variables. To this end, an experiment manipulates one variable while simultaneously measuring its effects on a second variable; all other variables being controlled for (Keyton, 2006). The manipulated variable in this study was selective exposure. The variables measured were surveillance motivation, website usability, website attractiveness and selective exposure. The controlled variables were the experimental conditions such as locations, computer configurations and Internet access.

Using a within-subject design approach, we investigated the causal relationships between surveillance motivation, website usability and website attractiveness as independent variables with the dependent variable − selective exposure to online newspapers. A within-subject design is an experiment in which the same group of subjects serve in more than one treatment. Several steps have been taken to address the issue of procedural bias. Firstly, a detailed guideline of the experimental procedure was prepared for the research assistants in order to minimise the potential for expectancy bias by controlling the interactions between subjects and investigators. The research assistants were also blinded to both the research objectives and hypotheses to avoid experimenter bias.

3.1 Sample

The subjects selected for this study were undergraduate students, aged 19 to 25 years, from the School of Communication, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Malaysia. Student samples are often used in studies employing experimental methods (e.g. Eveland and Dunwoody, 2001; Tewksbury and Althaus, 2000), and are a mainstay of research involving new media usage (e.g. Joorabchi, Hassan and Osman, 2013; Omar and Subramanian, 2013; Hashim, Hassan and Meloche, 2011). Given the objectives of this study, to identify the effects of surveillance motivation, website usability and website attractiveness on selective exposure to online newspapers, selecting subjects familiar with the Internet was essential. A total of 51 students were chosen at random to participate in this study. According to Smith, Fabrigar, Powell and Estrada (2007), a sample of 51 subjects is acceptable for the purpose of determining a reliable prediction equation. The experiments were conducted with the help of three research assistants. Firstly, each subject was assigned an identification number ranging from ID001 to ID051 and a computer. Secondly, subjects were briefed about the experimental procedure by the researcher and research assistants. The study used an online self-report questionnaire as the main research instrument. The self-report questionnaire method is often used for data collection in experiments and evaluation research (Baxter and Babbie, 2004).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A total of 51 students participated in this study. Table 1 indicates that female subjects (76.5%) outnumbered male subjects (23.5%). The majority (88.2%) of the subjects were in the 19–23 age group, while the remainder belonged to the 24–28 age group (11.8%). The average subject age was 22 years. In terms of race, over half (62.7%) of the subjects were Malay (see Table 1). This was followed by Chinese (27.5%), Indian (7.8%) and other races (2%). The distribution of subjects according to their year of study indicates that over half of the subjects (60.8%) were in their first year of study, while more than a quarter (27.5%) were in their third year, and the remainder (11.8%) were second year students.

Table 1. Demographic distribution of subjects

Factors	Frequency [%]
Gender	
Male	12 [23.5]
Female	39 [76.5]
Age	
> 19-23 years old	45 [88.2]
< 24-28 years old	6 [11.8]

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Table 1. (con't)

Factors	Frequency [%]
Mean (M): 21.78	
Standard Deviation (SD): 1.54	
Year of study	
Year 1	31 [60.8]
Year 2	6 [11.8]
Year 3	14 [27.5]
Ethnicity	
Malay	32 [62.7]
Chinese	14 [27.5]
Indian	4 [7.8]
Others	1 [2.0]

The next analysis describes the subjects' preferred access sites whence they access the Internet (see Table 2). Most subjects (82.4%) preferred to access the Internet from their hostel rooms. Given that most of the student subjects lived on campus at one of the many university hostels, this figure was not surprising at all. Family homes (7.8%) and computer labs (7.8%) were less preferred. Cybercafes of which there were many in the vicinity of the campus, was the least preferred Internet access site, with only one subject preferring to access the Internet at cybercafe.

Table 2 indicates that over half of the subjects (56.9%) used the Wi-fi facilities provided by the university to connect to the Internet. Wireless broadband was the second most popular Internet connection method as preferred by a quarter of the subjects (25.5%). Other subjects (13.7%) used a Local Area Network (LAN), and one subject (2%) preferred to use a 3G mobile phone for Internet access. These results indicate that, despite having free Wi-fi service provided by the university, some subjects were willing to pay for better Internet access.

Table 2. Place of access and Internet connection among subjects

Factors	Frequency [%]
Place of access	
Home	4 [7.8]
Hostel	42 [82.4]
Computer lab	4 [7.8]
Cyber cafe	1 [2.0]
Internet connection	
Wi-fi	29 [56.9]
Local area network (LAN)	7 [13.7]
Broadband	13 [25.5]

Table 2. (con't)

Factors	Frequency [%]
3G Mobile phone	1[2.0]
Others	1[2.0]

Table 3 describes the frequency of the subjects' media usage (i.e. television, radio, printed newspaper and the Internet). Almost two-thirds of the subjects (74.5%) were heavy users of the Internet. The mean rate of Internet usage was very high (M = 4.69) and with very little standard deviation (SD = 0.62) between subjects. In short, there was little difference in the average amount of time spent using the Internet between subjects. Newspaper usage (M = 3.63, SD = 1.10) was higher than television (M = 3.14, SD = 1.25) and radio (M = 2.57, SD = 1.17). These results indicate that Internet usage among the subjects was greater than any other media, especially television and radio. These results also support the stereotyped claim of proximity between youth and the Internet. They also suggest that the availability of free Internet access on campus might be a contributing factor to the high Internet usage among the subjects.

Table 3. Frequency of media use among subjects [%]

Media	Rarely	Sometimes	Neutral	Often	Very Often	M (SD)
Television	6 [11.80]	11[21.60]	11[21.60]	16 [31.40]	7 [13.70]	3.14 (1.25)
Radio	9 [17.60]	19 [37.30]	12[23.50]	7 [13.70]	4 [7.80]	2.57 (1.17)
Newspaper	2 [3.90]	6 [11.80]	13[25.50]	18 [35.30]	12 [23.50]	3.63 (1.10)
Internet	0 [0.00]	1 [2.00]	1 [2.00]	11 [21.60]	38 [74.50]	4.69 (0.62)

Note: N = 51

In order to get a clearer picture of Internet usage among subjects, Internet applications were classified as television portals, blogs, social networks, online newspapers and YouTube. Table 4 describes the frequency of Internet application usage among subjects. The results indicate that social networking sites, such as Facebook (FB) and Twitter, were among the most popular Internet applications. Over half of the subjects (64.7%) indicated that they used social networking sites "very often". The mean rate of social network usage was relatively high (M = 4.45) and with a relatively small standard deviation (SD = 1.11). Online newspapers (M = 3.75, SD = 1.11) was the second most used set of Internet applications. A considerable number of subjects indicated reading or accessing online newspapers often (39.2%) or very often (27.5%). Only a small number of subjects indicated reading or accessing online newspapers rarely (3.9%) or sometimes (11.8%). These results indicate that online newspapers were one of the most preferred Internet applications by subjects in comparison to other applications, such as television portals, YouTube or blogs.

Table 4. Frequency of Internet application use among subjects [%]

Internet Application	Rarely	Sometimes	Neutral	Often	Very Often	M (SD)
Online newspaper	2 [3.9]	6 [11.8]	9[17.6]	20[39.2]	14[27.5]	3.75(1.11)
TV/Radio portal	13 [25.5]	9[17.6]	13[25.5]	11[21.6]	5[9.8]	2.73(1.33)
Social network	2 [3.9]	0[0.0]	4[7.8]	12[23.5]	33[64.7]	4.45(1.11)
Blog	12 [23.5]	6 [11.8]	11[21.6]	11[21.6]	11[21.6]	3.06(1.48)
YouTube	9 [17.6]	8[15.7]	12[23.5]	15[29.4]	7[13.7]	3.06(1.32)

Note: N = 51

Table 5 describes the average number of hours spent using the Internet, print newspapers and online newspapers per day by the subjects. Table 5 indicates that subjects spent an average of six hours per day on the Internet. Their time spent using the Internet ranged from one hour to 24 hours in a day; hence the wide standard deviation (SD = 4.73) indicating significant variation in the amount of time spent using the Internet. There was little difference in the mean number of hours spent reading print versus online newspapers. However, the overall use of online newspapers was slightly higher (M = 1.28) compared to print newspapers (M = 1.21). The standard deviations for both online newspapers (SD = 0.67) and print newspapers (SD = 0.80) also varied only slightly. These results indicate that in the new media era, online newspapers pose a very real threat to traditional printed newspapers as more time is spent reading news online.

Table 5. Mean hours of using the Internet, newspaper and online newspaper per day

Medium	Min (Max)	Mean (SD)
Print newspapers	0 (5)	1.21 (0.80)
Internet	1 (24)	6.39 (4.73)
Online newspapers	0 (3)	1.28 (0.67)

Note: N = 51

We also examined subjects' preferences with regard to mainstream daily newspapers. As illustrated in Table 6, over half of the subjects (60.78%) preferred *Berita Harian*, followed by *Utusan Malaysia* (54.9%), *Kosmo!* (54.9%) and *Harian Metro* (52.94%) among the Malay-language newspapers. Among the non-Malay language newspapers, *The Star* was the most read (50.98%). These results indicate that the subjects preferred more serious newspaper journalism over more sensationalist tabloid journalism, although the differences between them varied only slightly.

Table 6. Preferred daily newspaper among subjects

Newspaper	Frequency [%]
Berita Harian	31 [60.78]
Utusan Malaysia	28 [54.90]
Harian Metro	27 [52.94]
Kosmo!	28 [54.90]
Sinar Harian	9 [17.65]
The Star	26 [50.98]
The New Straits Times	10 [19.60]
The Sun	6 [11.76]
The Malay Mail	1 [1.96]
Sin Chew Daily	8 [15.69]
Oriental Daily	1 [1.96]
China Press	4 [7.84]
Kwong Wah Yit Poh	3 [5.88]
Nan Yang Siang Pao	2 [3.92]
Malaysia Nanban	1 [1.96]
Others	1 [1.96]

Note: N = 51

Table 7 illustrates the distribution of subjects according to their news section preferences. The majority of subjects (86.27%) preferred the entertainment section. Other sections rated highly by subjects were local news (78.43%) and world news (70.59%). The economy/business section was read by 17.65% subjects, while the subjects' least favourite newspaper section was the literature section (13.73%).

Table 7. Favourite newspaper sections among subjects

Section	Frequency [%]
Local news	40 [78.43]
World news	36 [70.59]
Economy business	9 [17.65]
Entertainment	44 [86.27]
Lifestyle	34 [66.67]
Recipe	14 [27.45]
Travel	24 [47.06]
Fashion	35 [68.63]

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Table 7. (con't)

Section	Frequency [%]
Sports	13 [25.49]
Literature	7 [13.73]

Note: N = 51

In summary, the portrait painted of subjects and their media use thus far suggests that young people are indeed a generation that have grown up with the Internet. With a mean Internet usage of six hours per day, the results indicate a transition from reading traditional printed newspapers to reading news online. These results indicate a strong link between Internet use, the use of online newspapers and youth. Additionally, *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia* were highly rated by subjects in this study. Subjects were not only selective in choosing what newspapers to read, but also in selecting what to read from a spectrum of news. This is consistent with previous studies of motivation which cite entertainment and surveillance as key reasons why people use media (Blumler, 1979; Blumler and Katz, 1974).

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

Table 8 describes the overall mean and standard deviation of the independent variables − surveillance motivation, website usability and website attractiveness. Surveillance motivation had the highest mean value among all the variables ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.58$), followed by website usability ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.48$) and website attractiveness ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.53$). A comparison between the two newspapers indicated that the mean scores for *Berita Harian* were consistently higher compared to *Utusan Malaysia*.

Table 8. Overall mean and standard deviation of variables

Variable	M (SD)		
	Berita Harian (n = 51)	*Utusan Malaysia (n=51)*	*Total*
Surveillance motivation	4.07 (0.58)	4.01 (0.52)	4.07 (0.58)
Website usability	3.81 (0.48)	3.64 (0.46)	3.72 (0.48)
Website attractiveness	3.66 (0.55)	3.62 (0.52)	3.64 (0.53)

Before testing for the hypothesized relationships, we explored the relationships among the independent variables (see Table 9). A significant positive correlation was identified between surveillance motivation, website usability and website attractiveness. Website usability was positively correlated with website attractiveness ($r = 0.58$, p = 0.00), the strength of the relationship being moderate. Similarly, website attractiveness was moderately correlated with surveillance motivation ($r = 0.53$, p = 0.00). The

relationship between surveillance motivation and website usability was also significant ($r = 0.41$, p = 0.00), though the relationship was only weak.

Table 9. Pearson correlations among surveillance motivation, website usability and website attractiveness

Indicators	Surveillance	Motivation	Website	Usability	Website	Attractiveness
	r	p	r	p	r	p
Surveillance motivation	-	-	.41	.000	.53	.000
Website usability	.41	.000	-	-	.58	.000
Website attractiveness	.53	.000	.58	.000	-	-

Note: N = 51

Hypothesis testing was performed via a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Table 10 illustrates that the overall r value is indicative of a significant but weak relationship between surveillance motivation and selective exposure ($r = 0.23$, p = 0.21) and between website attractiveness and selective exposure ($r = 0.23$, p = 0.19). The relationship between website usability and selective exposure *($r = 0.48$, p = 0.00)* was also low, but more moderately correlated. These relationships were further examined after making a comparison between Berita Harian and Utusan Malaysia in order to test H1a to H3b, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Correlations of surveillance motivation, website usability and website attractiveness with selective exposure

Variable	Selective Exposure					
	Berita Harian *(n = 51)*		*Utusan Malaysia* *(n = 51)*		Overall *(N = 51)*	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
Surveillance motivation	.36	.010	.15	.312	.23	.021
Website usability	.54	.000	.52	.000	.48	.000
Website attractiveness	.47	.001	.06	.674	.23	.019

*Correlation is significant at * p < 0.05 (2-tailed), ** p < 0.01*

A t-test facilitated the testing of the four hypotheses in order to explore the differences between *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia* in surveillance motivation,

website usability, website attractiveness and selective exposure. The results in Table 11 indicate that the two newspapers were significantly different in terms of website usability only, whereas the analysis of the other variables proved insignificant.

Table 11. Surveillance motivation, website usability and website attractiveness differences between *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia*

Variable	M (SD)		t	p
	Berita Harian	Utusan Malaysia		
Surveillance motivation	4.07 (0.58)	4.01 (0.52)	0.704	.485
Website usability	3.81 (0.48)	3.64 (0.46)	2.805	.007
Website attractiveness	3.66 (0.55)	3.62 (0.52)	0.498	.621
Selective exposure	434.12 (202.44)	508.24 (264.10)	-1.890	.065

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

Multiple regression analysis was subsequently conducted in order to determine which of the three independent variables might be considered the best predictor of selective exposure. As indicated in Table 12, the adjusted R^2 value for surveillance motivation, website usability and website attractiveness was 0.214. Therefore, in describing the role of surveillance motivation, website usability and website attractiveness, the variables contributed 21.4% of the variance to selective exposure. The highest *ß*-value out of all three variables was for website usability (*ß* = 0.512, p = .000), indicating that this variable made the greatest overall contribution to selective exposure. The value of the semi-partial or part correlation coefficient (r^2) indicates that website usability contributed 16.9% to selective exposure. The contributions of surveillance motivation (*ß* = 0.076, p = .472) and website attractiveness (*ß* = −0.108, p = .361) to selective exposure were negligible.

Table 12. Regression of surveillance motivation, website usability and website attractiveness to selective exposure

Variable	ß	sr²	p
Surveillance motivation	0.076	0.004	.472
Website usability	0.512	0.169	.000
Website attractiveness	-0.108	0.007	.361

Adjusted R² = 0.214, F (p-value) = 10.192

Finally, the regression models of *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia* were compared to expound upon the contribution of each variable to selective exposure for the respective newspapers. Table 13 reveals that, for *Berita Harian*, the adjusted R^2 value for surveillance motivation, website usability and website attractiveness was 0.286. For *Utusan Malaysia*, the adjusted R^2 value for the three variables was 0.291. These R^2 values are a result of the variables contributing 28.6% of the variance in selective exposure to *Berita Harian* and 29.1% of the variance to *Utusan Malaysia*. The highest *ß*-value was for website usability, for both *Berita Harian* (*ß* = 0.396, p = .014) and *Utusan Malaysia* (*ß* = 0.676, p = .000). Therefore, website usability made the most unique contribution to selective exposure to both newspapers, indicating that website usability has the most predictive value.

Table 13. Comparing regression models between *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia*

Variable	*Berita Harian* *ß (p)*	*Utusan Malaysia* *ß (p)*
Surveillance motivation	0.129 (.366)	0.016 (.911)
Website usability	0.396 (.014)	0.676 (.000)
Website attractiveness	0.147 (.366)	-0.311 (.049)
R²	0.329	0.333
Adjusted R²	0.286	0.291
F	7.683	7.826
Sig.	.000	.000

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

In summary, through this study, we have shown that there is a significant difference in website usability between *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia*. Although *Berita Harian* was rated higher in surveillance motivation and website attractiveness compared to *Utusan Malaysia*, the statistical difference was negligible. There was also no significant difference in selective exposure between the two newspaper websites. Finally, the multiple regression analysis revealed that website usability made the greatest unique contribution in explaining selective exposure in this study, whereas the contributions of surveillance motivation and website attractiveness were not significant.

5. CONCLUSION

We sought to examine factors contributing to selective exposure to online newspapers. It was argued that surveillance motivation, denoting the need to be regularly informed of current affairs, plays an important role in news readers' exposure to online newspapers. Motivation alone, however, is insufficient. We argue that website usability

and attractiveness play an important role in determining selective exposure to online newspapers. Understanding consumers' surveillance motivations, their perception of the newspaper's website usability and attractiveness, and the relationships between these factors and selective exposure to online newspapers, is therefore central to the present study. Subjects spent more time using the Internet than they did traditional mass media. Online newspaper usage per day surpassed that of print newspapers, indicating that young people are more inclined toward online media for their news. We also found that *Berita Harian* was the daily newspaper most preferred by subjects, followed by *Utusan Malaysia*, *Kosmo*! and *Harian Metro*. Subjects' favourite news sections were entertainment, followed by local news and world news.

Overall, we found that website usability was the most significant predictor of selective exposure to online newspapers. *Berita Harian's* website scored significantly higher than *Utusan Malaysia's* in terms of usability. The results also revealed a significant relationship between surveillance motivation and selective exposure to *Berita Harian*; however, no such relationship was found to exist for *Utusan Malaysia*. Furthermore, the relationship between website attractiveness and selective exposure to both online newspapers could not be established. The differences between the two newspapers in terms of surveillance motivation, website attractiveness and selective exposure were also negligible. Subsequently, out of the initial ten hypotheses, only four were accepted.

Additional correlation analysis between the independent variables indicated that they are significantly correlated between one another. While motivation and website usability proved to be only moderately correlated, website usability and website attractiveness were highly correlated. This suggests that although website attractiveness has no effect on selective exposure, it does make a significant contribution to website usability.

In future studies, a comparison might be made between newspapers of different genres, such as between a sensational (e.g. tabloid) newspaper and a more serious newspaper. Another area of potential inquiry might be to interview the web designers and producers of online newspapers to study their strategy for attracting audiences and beating their competitors. Alternatively, a content analysis of newspaper websites might elucidate the patterns of design and other factors deemed attractive to online news readers or consumers.

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