

Using social media for news

The motivations of Dutch college students to consume and share news on
Facebook and Twitter

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ABSTRACT

Students are said to be less likely to consume news, especially via traditional media. In a time where news organizations are facing difficulties reaching younger audiences, it is thus important to realize college students' motivations for consuming and sharing news on online platforms they enjoy using. This study might provide Dutch news organizations valuable information on college students and their news consumption and sharing practices on social media. The research question that is posed is: What are Dutch college students' motivations for consuming and sharing news on social media? To investigate this, a qualitative research approach is taken on. Specifically, in-depth interviews are conducted to achieve this goal. The sampling method used to recruit participants is purposive sampling; with help of NU.nl, the largest news web site and mobile application in the Netherlands, the students were recruited. After the transcription of the interviews, thematic analysis was used as a toolbox for the data analysis process. The three main themes, or selective codes, found in the interviews are 'accessibility', 'societal needs' and 'low control'. The motivations for the consumption of news on social media are: the speed of news delivery, staying updated, the ease of news consumption, consume news with similar perspectives as they personally have and consume news that is relevant to their lives. The motivations for sharing news on social media are: give their opinion, want to know others' opinions, start a discussion, keep their friends or followers updated on current events and news and enhance their status.

KEYWORDS: *News consumption, news sharing, social media, uses and gratifications, motivations*

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1 Introduction

The dissemination and consumption of news has changed. The way we consume news is different from a few years ago, and is likely to change relatively quickly over the coming years (Hermida, Fletcher, Korell, & Logan, 2012). Social media is altering the way we consume news and how it is distributed and communicated; we are able to talk about current events with people all over the world within minutes from them happening. Users are able to share the news directly and keep others up-to-date instantly (Lee & Ma, 2012). Lee and Ma (2012) argue that social media thus is very important in producing and sharing news. News organizations are consequently increasingly investing in reaching audiences through these social media platforms (Chan-Olmsted, Rim, & Zerba, 2013). Social media users can simply select the news they are interested in, evaluate it and respond to it on social media (Lee & Ma, 2012).

This study aims to identify how students use social media to consume and share news, and more importantly pinpoint the motivations students have to consume and share news on social media by using the uses and gratifications approach. These motivations will create clarity on the reasons why students consume and share news on social media, which will expand on existing literature about both the uses and gratifications approach as well as research done on news on social media in general. Furthermore, it will have implications on stakeholders in society; specifically news organizations will benefit from this research, as it includes suggestions and implications for them.

This dissertation is structured as follows. First, basic but key concepts will be introduced in this first chapter, as well as the research problem, research question and sub questions and the relevance of this research. Next, a theoretical framework will be created to serve as a backbone for this research, including the introduction of the uses and gratifications approach. Furthermore, the methodology used for this current study will be discussed, explaining the use of in-depth interviews, the sampling technique and the data collection and analysis. In the fourth section of this thesis, the results of this current study will be included. Lastly, a conclusion is drawn.

1.1 Social media

Social media are, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61), “a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content”. This definition includes the term Web 2.0, which means that the content on the internet is not solely produced and distributed by individuals, but this content can rather be modified and created by everyone who uses the internet, by collaborating with each other and participating in this process (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The user-

generated content described by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) includes the entirety of content created on social media, and all the different ways of how people use social media. This user-generated content is usually produced out of creative endeavors and is created independently from professional practices. It is also accessible for the public through the internet (OECD, 2007, as cited by Balasubramaniam, 2009). The following section will discuss how news consumption has changed and is changing, as well as discussing the technology with which people access news and social media.

1.2 News consumption is changing

News consumption via traditional media has decreased, especially among younger audiences (Meijer, 2007). According to Mindich (2005), particularly news consumption through newspapers by younger audiences has decreased through a gradual process, beginning in the sixties of the last century, when television started becoming a widely available medium to consumers. Today's ratings clarify that young audience members, specifically between the ages of 15 and 25, barely get news from reading newspapers and watching the news on television. Meijer (2007) attributes this change to the increase in the channels on Dutch television, while also taking into account the increased use of the internet over the years. Despite this decrease in news consumption via traditional channels, Meijer (2007) does argue that young audiences (she focused on youth in the Netherlands) do in fact find the news to be important. However, her study shows that these audiences generally perceive conventional news to be boring, and argue that the news messages on television and in the newspapers are not often relevant to their lives.

According to Meijer (2007), young audiences have a need for news to which they can relate. They want to see the news from the perspective of someone who was there at the time. Furthermore, these young people are interested in "snack news" whereby the audiences tune into news that is happening at the moment and often is reported from an inside perspective. Meijer (2007) argues that young audiences use the internet for (snack) news, because it is accessible anytime, and is up-to-date. With "snack news" it is important to keep in mind that quality is not the first priority; the images and videos are often shot from non-professional devices such as phones. This reduces the quality, but adds to the perceived authenticity of the footage. Snack news is then defined as a fast way of checking the news in a manner that does not require in-depth reading. (Meijer, 2007). Meijer (2007) highlights the importance of the internet as a whole with regards to news consumption. Westlund (2013) however, argues that people have access to the online world at any time, as they own devices such as smartphones, to help them connect to the internet which might influence their news

consumption even more.

A growing number of people have access to mobile devices (Chan-Olmsted, Rim, & Zerba, 2013). The notion of a mobile device has changed over the years. Since the growth in popularity of mobile phones in the nineties of the previous century, mobile phones have changed in look and function over the decades. Whereas a mobile phone previously served as a communication tool for personal use, it has now become much more than that (Westlund, 2008).

According to Wei (2008) the technology for mobile phones is developing, and with the integration of internet connections to mobile phones, more people are using their phone for a multitude of reasons, such as communicating and finding sources of entertainment through their phones. A recent report from 2015 states that 98 percent of young adults in the US own a cell phone, and 86 percent own a smartphone (Anderson, 2015). Moreover, half of young adult Americans own a tablet. However, the numbers of the ownership of mobile devices is not only increasing in the US. The UK has also seen an increase over the years in ownership of smartphones and tablets. According to a research performed by Ofcom (2015), 66% of the adult population owns a smartphone, and one third of people who connect to the internet find their smartphone to be the most important device to do so. The report also states that especially younger people in the UK are likely to state that their phone is the device they would miss most when taken away from them. With regards to tablets, more than 50% of UK households own a tablet (Ofcom, 2015). The adoption of smartphones and the increased use of mobile devices has, according to Anderson (2015), changed the way we communicate with friends and has affected the way we consume media and other information.

In the Netherlands, these numbers are high as well. Firstly, in 2013, 95 percent of Dutch households had access to the internet. Furthermore, 95 percent of Dutch households had access to a personal computer in the same year, whether that be a laptop or desktop computer (CBS, 2014). However, the number of tablet owners in the same age group is far lower; just above 20 percent of people between the age of 18 and 25 own a tablet. When it comes to people between the ages of 18 and 25, a large majority (over 90 percent) have own a smartphone and use this device to connect to the internet outside of their home. CBS (2014) states that this demographic uses their smartphones for a multiplicity of purposes. The main reason this demographic uses their smartphones is to use social media (just under 90 percent). This shows that people from this age group are generally active on social media

1.3 Research problem

This introduction has shown that an increasing amount of people use the internet as well as their mobile devices to consume news, and share it with others (Koster, 2014). Oftentimes this is combined with social media, where a large number of people find articles or news items, Twitter updates and videos on a wide variety of news, including local, national and international news as well as entertainment news and sports. Although some research has been done on the consumption and the sharing of news on social media (Hermida et al., 2012; Lee & Ma, 2012), not much research has been done on that focuses on how college students consume and share news via social media and what their motivations are to do so. Furthermore, examining motivations for news consumption on social media and news sharing on social media in the same research offers a way to see possible similarities and differences between motivations. Finding out the reasons for the consumption of news on social media, and the reasons for news sharing practices on social media of college students, and being able to compare them in one study, offers value for research on news consumption via social media in general, as well as for organizations.

The research problem, then, is that organizations are finding it difficult to understand how and why students consume news on social media. In a time where news organizations are facing difficulties reaching younger audiences (Meijer, 2006), it is thus important to realize what motivates college students to consume and share news on social media platforms of their choice. By recognizing these motivations, news organizations might be able to use social media more efficiently to reach younger audiences, which include college students.

1.4 Research question

In order to investigate what motivates college students to use social media to consume and share news, and find out what college students' needs are with regards to these practice, the following research question is posed:

What are Dutch college students' motivations for consuming and sharing news on social media?

To be able to answer the research question, several sub questions are needed. These sub questions will pertain to different aspects of this research, and are there to create a better understanding of students and their news consumption and sharing practices. In order to get insights on how college students consume and share news in general and on social media, the following sub questions are posed:

How do college students consume and share news overall?

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How do college students consume and share news on social media?

These sub questions feature a variety of topics such as which devices students use for their general news consumption, which media outlets they enjoy using to consume and share news and when they do so, including frequency and their routine. They are posed to provide context in how college students consume and share news.

Furthermore, what is important to study and gain knowledge on, is their news consumption and news sharing practices on social media in particular; the frequency of consumption, the social media channels and other factors playing a role in in consuming and sharing news on social media. The following sub questions are related to these important factors.

What are Dutch college students' motivations to consume news on social media?

What are Dutch college students' motivations to share news on social media?

These sub questions are specifically related to college students' motivations to consume and share news, and will together be able to generate an answer to the research question. All of the abovementioned sub questions serve as a guide for this research and are there to help extract insights, views and opinions from participants and give us an understanding of how Dutch college students consume and share news and, more importantly, what their motivations are to do so.

1.5 Relevance

The importance of this study lies in both practical and academic relevance. News organizations are losing (news) consumers via traditional media, and especially younger audiences seem to have lost interest in conventional news media (Meijer, 2006; Huang, 2009). Notably, with the emergence of a variety of social media channels and their increased popularity, this has affected news consumption. It is thus important to gain an understanding of how these younger audiences consume and share news on social media and what their motivations are to do so. This study might provide Dutch news organizations valuable information on college students, who are the focus of this study, and their news consumption and sharing practices on social media, in that they will gain insights in this demographic, making it possible for them to incorporate this information in their strategy to reach younger audiences online.

From an academic point of view, this study finds it relevance in that the ever-changing media landscape affects organizations, as well as consumers' behavior and motivations. By implementing the uses and gratifications approach, this study aims to identify college students' needs when it

comes to their news consumption and how they share news, and how these needs can be met on social media. The aim of this research is to identify motivations students have to consume and share news on social media. Motivations are related to the needs one might have; motivations consist of needs, interests and external restraints (Windhal, 1981, as cited in Ruggiero, 2000). Rubin (1983) states that “motivations are not isolated, static traits, but rather, comprise a set of interactive needs and expectations” (p.39).

This study will thus expand on the existing literature on the uses and gratification approach in relation to news and social media. Furthermore, by asking questions about students’ motivations to consume and share news on social media, it will reveal how college students consume and share the news online and specifically how they do so on social media, and what their motives are; this study will aim to build on the idea that audiences are active in their (news) media behavior (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974).

1.5.1 College students

This study focuses on college students. This is an interesting demographic, firstly because – as the aforementioned states – especially their news consumption has decreased over the decades (Meijer, 2006). Secondly, according to Henke (1985), college students are in a phase of life wherein the socialization in their news consumption tendencies and routines is very important. Since college students are focusing on graduating from college and are preparing for this event from the moment they start college, this important event in one’s life is not a surprising event; due to the fact that graduation is foreseeable, it is natural to presume that college students are preparing for life after graduation, where they are likely to be entering the labor market. Henke (1985) argues that, because of these changes in the lives college students, we are able to anticipate a change in news consumption accordingly.

1.6 What is next?

As the youth is losing interest in the news, and as they are decreasingly consuming and sharing news, news organizations need to find a way of reaching students. Since social media are becoming an integral part of our lives, and people are using it more and more to consume and share the news, this might be the way to reach audiences such as college students.

In the next chapter, the uses and gratifications approach will be introduced as well as previous research done in relation to the uses and gratifications theory, news and social media. This is done in order to create a theoretical framework to serve as a backbone for this research, which will help

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answer the aforementioned research question. Furthermore, the third chapter will discuss the research methods employed in this study, as well as how the sampling technique, how data was collected and how it was analyzed. The choices for particular methods or approaches will be accounted for in the methodology chapter. Finally, the results of this study will be stated, which includes the answers to the sub questions and eventually the research question. Hereafter, these results will be discussed in relation to previous research, and the author will give implications for theory, implications for society as well as directions and recommendations for future research.

2 Theoretical framework

By exploring previous literature and discovering past research on uses and gratifications studies, this chapter aims to provide a framework for this research. A number of topics will be discussed in this chapter in order to be able to understand the context of this research, as well as create an overview of what has been said so far when it comes to news consumption and sharing practices on social media. Firstly, a short impression will be given on the target group of this research. As this study focuses on college students, information and past research will be given on their life phase, as well as how this might relate to news consumption and sharing practices. This part of the chapter will provide context in relation to college students' lives, featuring existing literature introducing the topic of news consumption amongst college students.

Furthermore, the uses and gratifications approach will be examined in this chapter. In order to gain a general understanding of the uses and gratifications approach, its context and how it has been used in the past, an overall examination and description of the approach will be given at the beginning of this chapter. Secondly, the uses and gratifications approach is more specifically mentioned in the light of the application of uses and gratifications in a new age, and specifically when it comes to social media. Moreover, this chapter then discusses news consumption and sharing practices specifically. This gives insights into various related fields in which the uses and gratifications approach is applied. It provides background knowledge on what this approach means and how it has been used in previous works.

The chapter thus moves from a general description of the uses and gratifications approach, including some critiques towards the approach, to a more specific use of uses and gratifications in social media and news consumption and sharing practices; it can be seen as a buildup of more general concepts to a more specific outlook on the uses and gratifications approach. By introducing these topics and providing insights into existing studies, this chapter serves as a backbone for the current research, as it helps identify possible motivations, and thus will aid in answering the aforementioned research question.

2.1 College students

Although touched upon in the introduction, it is necessary to create a larger comprehension and awareness of college students and this phase of their lives, as well as how college students have consumed news in the past and how they do so now. College students are transitioning from their adolescent stage in their lives to being adults (Greene, Wheatley, & Aldava, 1992). As Arnett (1994) states, college students see themselves as adults in some ways, while in other circumstances they do

not think they are adults. During this time in their lives, Astin (1993) argues, these young adults are developing academically but also personally; by interacting with peers and faculty, as well as attending college by itself, has strong positive effects on various developments and skills, such as being aware of one's cultural surroundings, being able to think analytically, and being able to improve on leadership abilities.

During college, students become more experienced, gain a large amount of knowledge and become more concentrated and dedicated to their studies and their future as they are preparing themselves for a job or career. Furthermore, they come to the age of when they can vote (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Schlagheck (1998) maintains that college students make use of newspapers in order to gain knowledge and collect information, but also to help them make choices in various fields, under which politics. According to Samuelson, Carter and Ruggles (1963), people with a higher education are more likely to see the importance in following the news. One's education level is thus positively linked to one's inclination to follow the news.

Schlagheck (1998) furthermore states that college students read newspapers to gain insights into current events and gain knowledge on various topics. This study by Schlagheck (1998) provides insights on how college students used to use newspapers before the extensive introduction of the internet as we know it now. They read newspapers when they want to find out more information about a news item they have previously seen or they have heard about. However, Huang (2009) argues that the overall news consumption by a younger audience has declined. Nevertheless, they stated that being updated on news was important, as they believed they should be knowledgeable about what is going on in the world. Moreover, they believed that being informed about the news is important as it provided them with primary knowledge to use in conversations.

According to Huang (2009), the youth has several reasons for not being interested in the news. Firstly, a lack of time was reported to be one of the reasons; due to responsibilities for school and perhaps a job, as well as having a need to socialize and do sports, younger audiences have stated that they do not have time to regularly keep up with the news.

Furthermore, they often criticize the news to be exaggerated and scandalous, and often including rumors and scandal, while leaving out news that they found to be worthy of reporting. On the other hand, they said that some of the news was uninteresting and dull, as well as most of the reported stories being saddening. Another important reason Huang (2009) reported as to why youths do not consume news is their surroundings, and especially their parents, who have or have not

stimulated their news consumption. Many students have stated that their parents have not inspired them to read the news, which makes them less interested in consuming news in general.

2.2 Uses and gratifications

This study aims to find out how college students consume and share news on social media and what their motivations are to do so. In order to examine this, a wider understanding of how college students consume and share news, how they use social media in this process and what their needs are with regards to this, has to be created. One approach that studies the needs of audiences and the satisfaction of these needs is the uses and gratifications approach. Used throughout the twentieth century, and still being an important approach in researching audiences needs and gratifications, this approach will be used throughout this study as well.

Uses and gratifications approach centers itself around audiences' needs, which contributes to certain expectations of media and thus distinctive media consumption. This then culminates in the gratification of these needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). This theory or approach mainly came to fruition at the end of the 1950s and beginning of 1960s, as there was prevalent dissatisfaction with the many failed efforts to determine and understand the effects of media operations (Blumler, 1979). The uses and gratifications approach takes into account that people's needs, their media consumption and the gratification of their needs depend on audiences themselves. It relies on one's personality and social environment and their part in it. The approach thus avoids referring to audiences as a mass. Though they might consume the same media, such as watching a television program or seeing a movie, their motives for and needs from this media consumption might differ from one person to the next (Blumler, 1979). Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) argue that one's social surroundings affect their media consumption needs, and thus their media consumption.

The uses and gratifications approach comes with several assumptions. One main assumption is that audiences are not passive, but rather act as active consumers of media who are able to take certain media, such as television programs, movies and news articles and appropriate it to fit their own objectives. The approach aims to discover how audiences are involved in media (consumption), looked at from their own perceptions (Blumler, 1979). Levy and Windahl (1984) argue that people are the ones who decide on their media consumption, under the influence of their social settings, psychological makeup and the restrictions of accessible media. These audiences are capable of recognizing their needs and uses of media, and these individuals themselves are a main driver for the gratification of their needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974).

2.2.1 Criticism

Ever since the introduction of the uses and gratifications approach, there has been several points of criticism on various aspects of the framework. Firstly, Blumler (1979) argues that the concept of an active audience is not explicated and defined properly. An important question to ask is what active means, and how it is translated into media consumption. There are various ways of interpreting the concept of active audiences, and according to Blumler (1979) little effort has been made to clearly define the central term in the uses and gratifications approach. Swanson (1977) takes on a perspective in stating that audiences are active by interpreting media messages and by perceiving messages, but agrees that there is no clear characterization of how audiences are actively perceiving messages precisely.

Moreover, Blumler (1979) maintains that the uses and gratifications approach regards the audience to be active or not at all; it is not taken into account that some types of media or media messages might require a variety of activeness from audiences. A way to identify how audiences are active is by categorizing the moment of activeness in relation to individual consumptions of media messages. Blumler (1979) organized the period of activeness into three parts, namely before consumption, during consumption and after consumption. Audiences may be active in a variety of ways during these three periods. Before consumption, they might schedule or prepare for consumption; during consumption the attention they pay to the media message might indicate activeness; and after consumption activeness might be characterized by how audiences talk about the message or how they reproduce it in their own lives. To deal with this assumption in this present study, questions about college students' level of activity will be asked during the data collection process. This will eliminate the assumption of activity as people's assumed state of being when consuming and sharing news.

Another point of critique on the uses and gratifications approach is the fact that terms which are frequently used within the uses and gratifications approach are not defined properly, and are used interchangeably without considering the differences in meaning (Swanson, 1977). The main argument here is that some terms are used without precisely defining what they mean. It is thus important to recognize the differences between the terms used and take into account their (slight) differences in meaning when using the uses and gratifications approach in research. Some examples are the terms 'use', 'need' and 'gratification'. By defining these terms and creating boundaries of what they mean, uses and gratifications research may be a lot clearer in investigating audiences' media use and gratifications (Swanson, 1977). To avoid this problem during this research, terms will

not be used interchangeably without consideration of their definition. Central terms in the research question will be operationalized and distinguished from other terms that might be similar or used interchangeably.

Another important assumption in uses and gratifications research is that audiences are perceived as rational beings; as most uses and gratifications studies rely on self-reporting by respondents, they are assumed to be able to identify and sensibly and logically report on their behavior, motivations and needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). In order to circumvent problems related to this issue, participants will be asked to extensively explain their behavior and thoughts during the interviews.

2.3 Uses and gratifications in a new age

The uses and gratification theory has been used mainly for mass media in the past (Ruggiero, 2000). However, with the introduction of the internet, mobile devices and social media people's needs have changed, as well as their media consumption and need gratification. This approach has proven to be useful in examining these changes and evaluating how uses and gratifications have changed over the decades.

Ruggiero (2000) states that with the introduction of new devices and new technologies, audiences have a bigger range of media to choose from, which makes motives of use and gratifications an even more vital part of the studying audiences. Ruggiero (2000) identifies three characteristic which new technologies possess that differentiate them from mass media. Firstly, new technologies are highly interactive in nature. Audiences are able to use one device for multiple purposes, such as watching videos and shopping online. Secondly, these new technologies allow for the diminishing of mass audiences. Individuals are able to select media messages and adapt them to their wants and requirements (Ruggiero, 2000). Lastly, messages communication by the medium to individuals might be asynchronised. This means that there is a lag in when the message is sent and when it is received. Although these notions may be widely accepted now, it is good to note that the uses and gratifications approach is adapted to new technologies and new media, and still is applicable provided that it is adapted to our changing needs, media consumption and gratifications.

2.3.1 Uses and gratifications in social media

Previous research indicates that the introduction and rising popularity of social media has resulted in the changing of audiences' needs, and the satisfaction of these needs. Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2014) applied the uses and gratifications approach to the adoption of social media, and examined

which needs social media gratified. Two main needs were identified which are fulfilled when using social media. Firstly, personal needs are gratified in the sense that social media provides users with an experience that satisfies needs of entertainment and enjoyment. Whiting and Williams (2013) agree, and state that users reported that they use social media for entertainment purposes, where they play games on social media as well as watch videos and use it for humorous purposes. It allows social media users to be active, enthusiastic and happy, and makes them feel appealing and fashionable. It is also deemed a good way of spending their free time. Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2014, p. 202) describe it as a “meaningful and rewarding experience”. According to Whiting and Williams (2013), social media is used to seek information; users have identified a wide array of types of information they like to seek for on social media. Furthermore, a reason to use social media is to avoid being bored and pass time. Moreover, a fifth reason to use social media is to relax; users claim that using social media such as Facebook require no in-depth thinking. It is also seen as a means of escapism. Additionally, users are able to articulate their thoughts and opinions, as well as use social media as a way to vent (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Another reason to use social media, as users expressed, is that social media is always accessible for them to use; it is there at all times. Users also use social media to share information with others. This includes information about themselves, but also other types of information that they might share with friends (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

The second need, as identified by Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2014), that is fulfilled by using social media is a social need. Our social surrounding and our friends affect us in our use of social media; through our social environment we are encouraged to create personal social media accounts which allows us to stay connected to our friends. It allows users to be part of their social media friend group and maintain relationships with peers who one sees regularly or friends who live further away (Zolkepli & Kamarulzaman, 2014). Whiting and Williams (2013) similarly argue that social media allows for social interaction; social media is used to connect with existing friends, communicate with old friends or meet new people. Moreover, using social media gives users a topic to talk about with friends in real life (Whiting and Williams, 2013). It furthermore lets users stay up-to-date with what their friends are doing and their social lives in general (Zolkepli & Kamarulzaman, 2014). Lastly, people use social media to see what others are doing, and use it for lurking purposes (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Korhan and Ersoy (2015) maintain that more and more often, social media are accessed through our mobile device, especially through mobile applications. Applications are software created to function on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. Popular social media platforms are

more likely to be accessed through mobile applications rather than browsing on one's mobile device. Among university students, the main needs that are gratified by accessing social media through applications were the need for socialization, entertainment, gaining insights in the news and knowledge-building (Korhan & Ersoy, 2015).

2.4 News and uses and gratifications

News can have a significant effect on the voting public, with topics varying from politics and international occurrences. For students this is especially true, as they are at an age where they can start to vote. Furthermore, they are preparing themselves for their entrance in the full time work force. Vincent and Basil (1997) have identified four main motivations for the use of news media. These are surveillance, escape, boredom and entertainment. Surveillance was classified as the most important and salient motivation, as college students generally desire to understand the world around them as well as what the society is like. They also want to find out things they need to know about daily life and learn things about themselves as well as others through news media (Vincent & Basil, 1997).

According to Lin, Salwen and Abdulla (2005) uses and gratifications do not differ enormously between online and offline news sources. Integrating four gratifications based on previous research, their study shows that they do not change from medium to medium. These gratifications are surveillance, entertainment, interpersonal communication and information learning. Although they have applied these four gratifications identified in previous research on news consumption via traditional media, Lin, Salwen and Abdulla (2005) have altered two gratifications in order to encompass a more action-based approach to fit with both offline and online news. Surveillance was changed to information skimming, while information learning was changed to information scanning. Although all four gratifications were found in both offline and online news media, and no difference was found with entertainment and interpersonal communication between offline and online media, there is a difference with information skimming and scanning between offline and online media. Information skimming was linked more to offline news media, while information scanning was related more to online news media (Lin, Salwen, & Abdulla, 2005).

2.4.1 News consumption and social media

Chyi and Chadha (2011) state that news organizations are active in exploring a variety of new channels to deliver their news in order to reach younger audiences. Diddi and LaRose (2006) argue that college students consume news differently when compared to the general public. And although these college students do integrate news consumption in their lives, the amount of news they

consume is below the amount older audiences consume. With the emergence of new ways of obtaining news, students are experiences a plethora of news sources to choose from. Formerly one could say that people's knowledge on what is happening in the world came from them reading newspapers. Nowadays, however, a large part of this knowledge can be attributed to the internet as well (Diddi & LaRose, 2006).

More and more often, these college students find out about news and current events on social media. Although social media is increasingly seen as an important way to receive news and gain knowledge on current events, it is not likely to replace other news sources (Hermida et al., 2012). Gil de Zúñiga, Jung and Valenzuela (2012) maintain, though, that the information on social media is distinctive, and that it differs from the information retrieved from conventional media channels. This is likely to be caused by the way this information is selected: the information people are subject to is dependent on their social network. These are usually people that users know and trust, and they are likely to select the news their friends see, and thus might influence the information others consume (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012). Hermida et al. (2012) confirm this by stating that many people from their study get news from day to day from their personal network on social media. Many people prefer news content that is provided by their direct contacts on social media such as friends and family members over news that is shared by professional institutions and professionals in the working field. One of the groups which uses social media to gain access through news shared by their social circles are students. With regards to the reason why users of social media find it important to consume news via their social media accounts is due to the fact that they find importance in being aware of current events (Hermida et al., 2012).

Apparent is that social media offer users an interactive platform where they can distribute and talk about content (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011); this essential structure that social media channels offer may not only encourage news consumption in general, but also provide a space where the significance and relevance of the shared information can be discussed with other users. This in turn might provide users with a way of reflecting on the information they take in on social media, and encourage them to comprehend and understand this information (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012). However, despite this availability of a space to discuss news wherein users can take part in a political dialogue, Baumgartner and Morris (2009) state that users most likely do not make use of this function of social media.

With regards to the type of news social media users like to consume, Baumgartner and Morris (2009) maintain that users enjoy consuming news that coincides with their own existing perspectives.

There is usually little interest in consuming news with opposing views. Social media users, according to Baumgartner and Morris (2009), are thus not necessarily looking for diversified news, which can lead to increased contact with people with similar views and perspectives, but discourage communication and discussion with people who have a different point of view. This coincides with the idea proposed by Gil de Zúñiga, Jung and Valenzuela (2012), where news that is shared on social media comes from our existing social circle, which might only represent one or few views or perspectives. Hermida et al. (2012) however argue that social media users do not agree with this notion; they believe that the news shared by their friends, family and other members of their social circle on social media provide them with a wide array of perspectives and news stories.

2.4.2 Sharing practices and social media

When considering motivations for sharing news on social media, Lee and Ma (2012) have implemented the uses and gratifications theory to highlight a number of motivations for users to share news on their social media channels. It is important to note that age and education are important factors in news sharing practices. Although these are not classified as motivations, a higher education level has a positive effect on the frequency of link-sharing of news content on Facebook (Baek, Holton, Harp, & Yaschur, 2011). Besides education, age was seen as an influential factor by Glynn, Huge and Hoffman (2012) as they state that younger respondents were more probable to use Facebook (and other social media) in general and for news activities.

Another predictor for sharing news on social media is previous social media participation and previous involvement of news-sharing (Lee & Ma, 2012). Users who have already shared news on a variety of social media platforms, have gained knowledge on sharing news and they might be less unsure about doing so in the future. This also includes the formation of habitual behavior, or the creation (daily) routines, whereby users of social media get used to sharing news on social media and thus are more inclined to do it in the future (Ma, Lee & Goh, 2011).

Moreover, Weeks and Holbert (2013) argue that an important forecaster of the sharing of news on social media is previous consumption of news. According to this study, the increased consumption of news on social media has a positive relationship with sharing practices of news content on social media; users are increasingly share news as their news consumption increases.

As the past points have illuminated possible forecasters or predictors for sharing practices of news on social media, there are several direct motivations. An important motivation for sharing news on social media, established by Lee and Ma (2012), is one for socializing purposes. Users who share

news on social media might feel an increase in connectedness with their social network when sharing news; it may create the basis for possible social connections. Hermida, Fletcher, Korell and Logan (2012) argue that social media users find sharing news important, in that it makes the news part of an experience that is social in nature; they find it important to be able to effortlessly share news on social media.

A second motive for sharing news on social media is one related to status; users believe that through sharing news on social media, they can improve on their status within their online community (Lee & Ma, 2012). Lee, Ma and Goh (2011) argue that as users share news that is viewed as trustworthy and relevant, they are oftentimes seen as trustworthy as well. Thus, news sharing practices on social media can be motivated by one's desire for status enhancement and reputation creation.

Lastly, users are motivated to share news on social media as a result of their own needs for information. By distributing news on their social media pages, users are able to easily find the information again when needed (Lee & Ma, 2012). Moreover, users are able to filter information and news to their liking, as well as connect with others who have comparable preferences (Lee, Ma, & Goh, 2011).

2.5 What is next?

News consumption and sharing news via social media channels has increased and is increasingly studied over the years. As news organizations are facing difficulties reaching younger audiences, this study will provide them with insights on news consumption of younger audiences. Focusing on Dutch college students, this study will aim to implement uses and gratifications theory to gain an understanding of how Dutch college students consume and share news and what motivates them to consume and share news on social media.

Applying the uses and gratifications approach to this research, and using existing literature about this approach as a theoretical framework for this research, serves as a backbone to this study and offers a way to investigate college students' motives for using social media to consume and share news. Finding out motivations of students, which are likely to stem from needs students might have with regards to news on social media, then creates a clearer of why students consume and share news on social media. The importance of this chapter lies in the introduction of the uses and gratifications approach, and applying it to the specific fields of social media and news consumption and sharing practices. For this study, the notion of the uses and gratifications theory will be taken on throughout

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the research, and the motivations mentioned in this chapter will be used as a backbone for the motivations students identify in this current research. This allows for comparison between information gained on motivations in this current study and knowledge from existing literature.

By investigating and finding out Dutch college students' motives for consuming and sharing news on social media, organizations can understand their needs better, and try to adapt themselves to these needs in order to have a bigger chance at reaching these students. By researching this topics and coming with an answer to the research question, news organizations will hopefully gain an insight in how college students use social media with relation to the news. By understanding this better, it will in turn give news organizations the opportunity to integrate these uses and gratifications in their strategy to reach younger audiences.

The next chapter features the research design and methodology used for this research. This will provide clarification of how the researcher aimed to select participants and which sampling technique were used during that process. Furthermore, the data collection and analysis method are discussed at the end of the following chapter.

3 Method

After introducing the central concepts in this study in the previous chapter, this chapter will give insights into the methods used to conduct the current research. In order to answer the research question posed above, and thus study college students' motivations for consuming and sharing news on social media, a qualitative research approach is taken. Specifically, in-depth interviews are conducted to achieve this goal. This chapter discusses qualitative research, interviews as a specific way of data collection and the sampling technique used to gain access to college students for this research. Furthermore, the data collection and data analysis are discussed in this chapter as well. Lastly, issues around reliability and validity are examined.

3.1 Research design

This study concentrates on college students' views on news consumption on social media as well as the sharing of news on social media. In order to answer the abovementioned research question and to gain more insights in their news consumption, it would be useful to examine their experience, views and opinions on the topic. As this study employs the uses and gratifications approach where respondents' needs and motivations with regards to news consumption and the sharing of news on social media, the appropriate type of research method in this case is qualitative data collection.

Qualitative research is a research method that consists of several ways of data collection and analysis, which include studying people as well as visual and textual data (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). As this research examines college students, it will focus on the studying of people. Qualitative research focuses on accumulating participants' accounts and experiences, their thoughts and opinions and tries to maintain individual participants' unique responses (Ormston, Spencer, Bernard, & Snape, 2014). It is a way of understanding participants' views on a phenomenon in a way that is not standardized; it is a data collection method that acquires in-depth information from participants (Ormston et al., 2014). By conducting qualitative research, one tries to comprehend our social world by discovering how people see the world and imagine it to be. It provides us with data that is intricate and manifold, detailed and elaborate (Ormston et al., 2014).

The data and coinciding findings are generally not derived from statistical processes and are largely non-quantifiable (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Thus, by employing a qualitative research method, this study aims to gain insight and understanding in how college students use social media to consume and share news. By taking on a qualitative approach, it means that students will be able to share their accounts, experiences and give their perception on this topic, in order to come to an answer to the research question.

Qualitative research is often performed in an inductive way, meaning that certain assumptions are derived after the subjects are studied; in this case Dutch college students. This means that, for qualitative research in general, the process of data collection is the initial step in studying participants, after which theories are created or patterns are found in the collected experiences, stories and opinions from participants (Ormston et al., 2014; Blaikie, 2007). However, Ormston et al. (2014) argue that all research methods are not completely inductive. Though one usually cannot find a hypothesis or other forecasts and expectations in a qualitative data collection methods, scholars often have predetermined notions on their topic of study; they will always be affected by the knowledge they already have in their decisions when it comes to their study. Blaikie (2007) thus argues that no inductive study can begin without any prior information on the topic, the participants of the study and how to conduct research. However, this research does include a theoretical framework wherein previous literature is discussed, and existing knowledge is used as a backbone for this current study. Furthermore, this literature mentioned previously is partly used for the construction of the topic list (appendix B). Nevertheless, this study does not incorporate any expectations and no hypotheses are created for the purpose of this research. Thus, though previous literature and existing knowledge on the topics discussed in this research come into play, when classifying this study when it comes to the type of research it is, it is considered to be (semi-) inductive research.

3.1.1 In-depth interviews

As the aforementioned clarifies, there are various data collection methods within the umbrella of qualitative research. This research and the corresponding research question focuses on people, specifically Dutch college students, and studying their experiences with and views on their news consumption on social media and their motivations with regards to consumption and sharing practices. It is therefore important to extract their opinions on these topics, discuss and analyze their thoughts and opinions, and include their experiences to answer the research question. To do so, in-depth interviews will be used to gain more knowledge from participants on these matters.

In-depth interviews are exchanges between a researcher and an interviewee where the researcher has a purpose of finding out what the interviewee thinks about a topic, to learn and document their experiences, thoughts and feelings about a specific topic and what it means to the participant (Mears, 2012). Conducting in-depth interviews helps the researcher identify the interviewees understandings of the social world around us (Yeo, Legard, Keegan, Ward, Mcnaughton Nicholls, & Lewis, 2014). As opposed to a variety of data collection methods which fall under the

umbrella of quantitative research, in-depth interviews offer the researcher a certain flexibility. Coombes, Allen, Humphrey and Neale (2008) argue that in-depth interviewing offers the researcher flexibility, as open-ended questions are used to get responses from participants about their experiences, views, their thoughts and opinions about the studied topic. Due to these open-ended questions largely used in in-depth interviews (Trumbull, 2005), data can be collected that is complex and rich in nature, and data that is very much dependent on context (Coombes et al., 2008). The open-ended questions in the interviews are at least partially a translation of the research questions in answerable questions for the participants (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). As they are open-ended and leave room for the participant to share their thoughts, the participant and their answer are the focus. Since the interviewees perspectives and opinions are of importance to the researcher and are considered to be the researcher's main concern, this allows the interviewee to express ideas and themes that the researcher might not have had expected or believed to be of importance for the study. This makes that in-depth interviews, and qualitative research in general, is good for producing new ideas about a research topic (Coombes et al., 2008).

3.2 Sampling

In order to be able to conduct the in-depth interviews, participants for the study need to be found. As the research question focuses on Dutch college students, they will be the population for this study. Yet, not all college students are prioritized in this study. As the research aims to find out how they consume news on social media and what their motivations are, the study centers itself around Dutch college students who have at least one social media account, as they are most likely to come across news on social media.

It is important to clarify that this research will center itself on current college students. However, as the Dutch education systems offers different levels of higher education, it is important to recognize these levels of education and clarify which students will be interviewed. For the purpose of this study, two higher levels of education are taken into account. Firstly, the Dutch educational system includes 'Hoger Beroepsonderwijs' (HBO), or University of Professional Education (also: University of Applied Sciences). Secondly, the educational system contains 'Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs' (WO), or university-level education. The participants of this study will be taking part in either of these two education levels. According to Samuelson, Carter and Ruggels (1963), education is positively related to interest and consumption of news and overall knowledge of current events. Therefore, choosing to interview college students from the Netherlands who thus enjoy a higher education, means that they are more likely to pay attention to current events and have general

knowledge of the news.

However, interviewing all Dutch college students who have at least one social media account is impossible. Therefore, a sample must be created with an appropriate sampling technique in order to be able to gain access to the population. There are two main types of sampling methods: probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Ritchie, Lewis, Elam, Tennant, & Rahim, 2013). Probability sampling is often considered to be inappropriate for qualitative research, as the sample usually is chosen randomly. The aim of probability sampling is to create a representative sample of the population, which is the case for quantitative research, but generally not for qualitative research. Qualitative research, however, employs non-probability sampling, whereby the sample is intentionally chosen in order to exhibit certain characteristics of the population. Within the umbrella term of non-probability sampling a variety of sampling techniques can be identified (Ritchie et al., 2013).

3.2.1 Purposive sampling

To create the sample for this study, purposive sampling – or judgement sampling – will be used. This sampling technique is characterized as a method to reach specific respondents, who are chosen based on certain traits or attributes (Tongco, 2007). This is a common sampling technique, where the researcher thus seeks to find a sample that is most useful in answering the posed research question (Marshall, 1996). According to Devers and Frankel (2000), purposive sampling is used to encourage and increase understanding of the chosen respondents and their experiences. To do this, researchers' goal is to find people who will be able to provide the best information for the study at hand. Ritchie et al. (2013, p. 113) similarly argue that “members of a sample are chosen with a ‘purpose’ – to represent a type in relation to key criterion”. This has two objectives. Firstly, this makes sure that the main respondents are included. Secondly, it makes sure that, when looking at each key characteristic, the respondents are adequately diverse so that the influence of the characteristics can be discovered (Ritchie et al., 2013). For this study, respondents are purposefully chosen based on their education level – all respondents are attending either a WO or HBO study program in the Netherlands. Another feature the respondents have is that they use at least one social media platform to either consume or share news. These respondents will be best suitable to provide information that will help answer the research question.

For this research in particular, the largest news website and mobile application in the Netherlands, NU.nl, helped with the sampling process. This organization has a desktop web site, as well as a well-used mobile application. Their web site and mobile application aggregate

approximately eight million unique visitors per month, which sums up to around one billion page views on a monthly basis (Hoek, personal communication, May 3, 2016). NU.nl is also relatively active on a multiplicity of social media platforms on a daily basis. The news organizations focuses mainly on being the quickest in reporting the news, while remaining accurate in their reportage (Heijnk, personal communication, April 26, 2016). As NU.nl has a large reach on social media, they posted several Tweets and Facebook posts in order to appeal to students in the Netherlands to take part in this research. These social media appeals were specifically aimed at students at HBO or WO level of education. A majority (44 percent) of NU.nl readers are highly educated, meaning at least at a level of HBO education. Social media followers of NU.nl were asked to participate in a research about reading and sharing news on social media; specifically, students who read and share news on social media themselves were requested to participate. Dozens of students sent in emails to participate in the research.

Although this research does not solely focus on news that originates from NU.nl, but as it is the biggest news web site and application in the Netherlands, it could be considered an indication of the popularity of these social media channels in relation to news consumption and distribution. Furthermore, by sampling through such an organization, one makes sure that participants use social media – they have been recruited through social media after all – and follow at least one news organization, namely NU.nl.

The sample size for this study was difficult to determine precisely beforehand. The general aim for this research was to conduct between ten and fifteen in-depth interviews with Dutch college students from various ages and study programs. The overall goal is to reach saturation, meaning that interviews will be conducted until no new information emerges from the collected data (Sandelowski, 1995). With help of NU.nl, thirteen students from different study programs were recruited to be interviewed for this research (appendix A).

3.3 Operationalization

The goal of the interviews is to find the answer to the research question and thus find out what motivates college students to consume and share news on social media, and find out the coinciding needs which they are satisfying. The interviews are introduced as a study to find out what motivates the target audience when it comes to consuming and sharing news on social media. To do so, the order of questions went from general questions about the respondent, such as age and study background, to more specific questions about their news consumption and sharing practices in general and on social media. The topic list is set up in a way to make respondents feel comfortable at

first, and build rapport, so that they feel at ease when sharing their perspectives and opinions.

The topic list was created as a form of guidance for the interviews. Concepts from previous literature were used to form this topic list in order to be able to answer the sub and research questions. The topic list serves as a guide for the interviews, and provides the interviewer or researcher with an overview of the general topics which are to be discussed during the in-depth interviews (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003). The topic list was deliberately kept short. According to Arthur and Nazroo (2003) keeping topic lists short allows for the data collection to be more in-depth.

An important part of the topic list, and thus the interview questions are the motivations of consuming and sharing news. In order to be able to clearly measure students' motivations for consuming and sharing news on social media, a variety of topics need to be clarified and explained in order to gain an overall comprehension on what the terms entail and what they include and exclude. Important is to relate concepts to the research question, and clearly identify why the research question is important, how it relates to theory and how the sub questions relate to the main research question. Firstly, the research question is aimed to investigate college students' motivations in relation to consuming and sharing news on social media.

When looking at the uses and gratifications approach, one can conclude that audiences are active and act on their (media) needs to gratify them. By focusing on college students' motivations for consuming and sharing news on social media, their needs when it comes to reading and sharing news might become clear. By looking at why one consumes or shares news on social media, we can simultaneously identify which needs they are gratifying by doing so – it provides us with the reasons for consuming and sharing news on social media. Katz, Blumler, and Gurevich (1974) state that audiences are able to recognize their needs and they themselves are able to gratify them; as their needs motivate them, it is important to recognize what motivates college students to consume and share news on social media. In order to do that in the interviews, questions about one's news consumption and sharing practices will be posed. These include questions about their news consumption in general, but also how and why they consume and share news on social media.

As apparent from the above, consuming news and sharing news are important terms used throughout this research. During the interviews, the consumption of news manifested itself as any form of news consumption, including reading, watching and listening to the news. Participants were asked via which media and which devices they consume news in every sense of the word. Similarly, sharing news pertained to sharing news in variety of ways, whether that be in person, via instant

messaging platforms or social media.

When it comes to social media, several questions were asked. When it comes to both consuming and sharing news on social media, the focus within this research lies on two social media platforms. Although there are many more on which news is consumed and distributed, Facebook and Twitter are two social media platforms that play a central role in this study. What motivates this choice, firstly, is the fact that students were approached through these platforms to participate in this research. Secondly, they are the main social media platforms used by NU.nl, as they are used most frequently to share news. Furthermore, at the time of writing they have accumulated approximately 360,000 likes on their Facebook page, and have a monthly reach with their posts of more roughly five million people. The numbers for Twitter are high as well. NU.nl has more than one million followers on Twitter, with around 40 to 50 million Tweet impressions per month. NU.nl uses Instagram as well, but it is the least used social media platform they employ (Hoek, personal communication, May 3, 2016). Thus, when referring to social media during the interviews and in the results, this entails Facebook and Twitter, unless stated otherwise.

3.4 Data collection and analysis

The interviews featured respondents from all over the country in diverse locations. A variety of HBO and WO students sent in emails after seeing that NU.nl was looking for students for a research project. The platforms varied, with students applying based on both social media messages as well as a request for students on the official NU.nl web site and mobile application. Among the participants, the education was varied, including approximately an even amount of HBO and WO students. When it comes to gender, this was not very equal; the large majority of participants were male, with less than half of respondents being female. When observing the email applications, it becomes apparent that more male students agreed to participate. It is not clear, though, why this number is skewed (appendix A).

By requiring students to register through email, instead of the same channel as the message, might have been less approachable than having them apply through the same platform they saw the message. However, by asking for email applications, it made for a clear application process. Furthermore, it might have encouraged applications from students who were willing to take an extra step to participate, possibly giving more insurance that they were willingly and happily participating in the research.

The interviews were scheduled with participants individually via email, meeting at a location

of their choice or an agreed-upon medium between the participant and researcher. The scheduling of interviews proved to be a difficulty; due to the variety of locations in the country participants live or study in, scheduling multiple interviews in one place on one day needed elaborate planning. The interviews were conducted, transcribed and analyzed by the researchers. The researcher has not received formal training for interviewing participants specifically, but has previous experience with focus group interviews.

3.4.1 Data analysis

Once having conducted and recorded the interviews, each individual interview was transcribed. The collected data needs to be processed and analyzed, to discover patterns or themes across the board. For this research, the coding process often used thematic analysis will be used to process and analyze the accumulated data through interviewing (Boeije, 2010). Thematic analysis is a way to recognize, investigate and report themes that come up in collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis shows similarities with grounded theory. Grounded theory is a way of researching that falls under the umbrella of qualitative research. As the name suggests, the purpose is to build theory that is grounded in the collected data. Grounded theory allows researchers to discover wide-ranging concepts, create new theoretical explanations and offers researchers a new way of looking at certain phenomena (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Although this is a very useful type of research, it is important to note that only the coding procedure as used in grounded theory will be used for this current study. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that “grounded theory seems increasingly to be used in a way that is essentially grounded theory ‘lite’ / as a set of procedures for coding data very much akin to thematic analysis” (p.81). Thus, as Braun and Clarke (2006) maintain, one does not make use of the full potential of grounded theory; thematic analysis makes use of the coding process as employed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), but does not require the development of a theory.

Grounded theory often uses a specific set of steps for the analysis of data. This coding process is done to gain an understanding of the data. It is only the coding process often used within grounded theory that will be used, and no theories will be established based on this research. Thus, grounded theory in this particular study is merely used as a toolbox for data analysis rather than an approach to construct new theories. The coding steps identified by Strauss and Corbin (1990), and employed by Boeije (2010), are useful in analyzing the interviews in a detailed fashion.

Essentially, coding of data in relation to grounded theory is the process of understanding the collected data, whereby codes are created as the researcher goes through the materials and analyzes

them (Charmaz, 1996). Strauss and Corbin (1990) identify three steps in the coding process, which are correspondingly used by Boeije (2010). First, after the transcription of the interviews is done, the process of open coding is performed. Throughout this first step, initial codes are assigned to particular words, expressions or sentences. Charmaz (1996) names this line-by-line coding, as the researcher starts coding each line, resulting into them staying connected to their data. She states that it is important to ask oneself why analyzing what is going on in the data, what is being said and which concepts or ideas are taken for granted. These open codes are likely to vary in topics (Charmaz, 1996). Boeije (2010) bases the open coding procedure on Strauss and Corbin (1990), and identifies several steps within the open coding process. These including reading the document, in this case the interview transcriptions, and judging which sections are important and relevant to the specific study. Codes are assigned to each section, and all codes are subsequently compared some sections are likely to receive the same code.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) identify two other steps in the coding process. The second step of coding is axial coding. Hereby, dozens of open codes are evaluated, and general patterns are identified after they are put into categories, or axial codes. These categories are thus principally a group of open codes gathered together that are related in topic or thematically connected (Stern, 1980). Approximately a dozen axial codes remain. Boeije (2010) again enumerates a number of steps within the axial coding process. All sections of the data should be coded with codes which encompass the entirety of the contents of the data. If needed and if possible, certain codes should be combined into one. Furthermore, it is important to recognize whether the categories are similar or different from each other. One should also check whether the codes are descriptive enough in nature (Boeije, 2010).

The last coding process is that of selective coding (Boeije, 2010). Hereby one or a couple of selective codes are created after the analysis of the axial codes. The selective code, or codes, represent the central themes that emerged from the data and are thus always related to the themes of the axial codes (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). These themes will allow the researcher to relate it to the research question (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this last step, it is important for the researcher to question what the main idea is of the data after performing open and axial coding. With help of this newly created selective code, the researcher will be able to explain in a few sentences what the data is about (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Here, the steps to come to the selective codes are the following: identifying which themes recurrently come up in the data, what the participants are mainly articulating, how the themes are connected, and what is important to describe and understand

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participants' thoughts (Boeije, 2010).

This entire coding process as explicated above was applied to the collected data from the interviews. The interviews, as the aforementioned clarifies, were transcribed, after which they were printed on paper. The coding process was performed by hand, and thus no software was used in the process. The separate transcripts were looked at as individual sets of data, and coded in such a fashion. As each transcript was coded individually, and each interview contained a variety of answers and information, the interviews were conducted and coded until saturation was achieved. Examples of open codes, axial codes and selective codes are provided in appendix C.

3.5 Validity and reliability

The notion of validity has generally been ascribed to quantitative research methods; however it has been applied to qualitative research as well (Johnson, 1997). Validity in qualitative research pertains to the right interpretation which the researcher makes, and whether the assumptions that are made are sustained by the collected data, and whether they are reasonable when taking into account existing literature (Peräkylä, 2010). For qualitative research, validity means that the study should be conceivable, reliable and trustworthy, and thus defensible (Johnson, 1997). Furthermore, an important part of validity in qualitative methods is that researchers should actively engage in precisely reporting information, as well as making sure to accurately portray the accounts and perspectives of respondents (Johnson, 1997).

Reliability is another concept mainly used in quantitative research. However, it can be applied to qualitative research as well (Golafshani, 2003). As maintained by Healy and Perry (2000), there is need for trustworthy methodology of the research at hand. They state that this can be done by providing transparency when it comes to the data collection, and using direct quotes from the data when reporting on the results. Furthermore, a clear description of any methodological procedures ensures trustworthiness with regards to the methods used (Healy & Perry, 2000).

3.6 What is next?

After stating that a qualitative approach will be taken to investigate college students' motivations when it comes to news consumption and sharing practices on social media, with in-depth interviews as the data collection method, the following chapter discusses the results found in the data. This section includes the main themes that came up from the interviews, and what they mean in relation to the previously illuminated theories and past research. This section will give answers to the sub questions posed in the introduction, and already hint towards an answer to the research question.

4 Results

After the previously mentioned data collection and analysis process, the results of the in-depth interviews are discussed in this chapter. The thirteen conducted interviews were analyzed and several general themes came out as important with relation to the research question: *What are Dutch college students' motivations for consuming and sharing news on social media?* This section will, by answering the sub questions and incorporating participants' responses, thus answer the main research question for this study.

Through the data analysis process, and in using thematic analysis to process the data collected with the conducted interviews, several main themes are identified. The three steps as explicated above – open, axial and selective coding – were conducted on the interview transcriptions, wherefrom 404 open codes were found, 14 axial codes were found and three selective codes were found. These selective codes signify the three main themes based in the data from the interviews. The selective codes are: 'accessibility', 'societal needs' and 'low control'. Mostly mentioned are the themes of 'accessibility' and 'societal needs', whereas 'low control' is not as prominent as the first two themes. These selective codes are based on the entirety of all transcripts, and can thus be linked to a variety of topics discussed during the in-depth interviews; one code is not specifically matched to one topic. Throughout this chapter, the themes will be discussed and explained. This will be done based on the respective axial codes, as well as direct examples and quotes from the interviews. Furthermore, the outcomes of the interviews will be linked, where possible and applicable, to previous literature and research.

4.1 Students and news

In order to be able to come to an answer to the overall research question, the sub questions will give a better idea of how students consume news, on and off social media. The first sub question asks: *How do college students consume and share news overall?* Respondents were first asked how they consume news in general, to which a variety of answers came up. Participants thus consume news and share news in diverse ways and on a variety of platforms outside of social media.

First, it is important to note that at the time of writing, terrorist attacks and bombings have been taking place around the world. Bombings in Paris and in Brussels especially have made an impact on people in general, as well as the students participating in this research. This is apparent from the interviews, as a majority of students mention bombings, both at closer proximity to the Netherlands as well as further away. Furthermore, they talk about what happened in Brussel, and often relate it to the Netherlands; what if it happens here? A student states:

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“It is of course very fast. So if, let’s hope it doesn’t happen, but imagine if something like Brussels happens a 100 meters from here. It is on Facebook within 10 seconds. And on Twitter. And on web sites. Thus, information moves really fast.” (Student 11, male)

Others students have mentioned the recent bombings in similar ways. It is thus a topic that is very recent and relevant in their lives. Although this might not completely change how students consume news, it might affect their news consumption slightly, or it might have influenced their answers to the interview questions for this research. It is thus important to keep in mind that these recent events have happened, both further away from the Netherlands as well as in the neighboring country, which might affect one’s news consumption and sharing practices as well as how they perceive the news in general.

4.1.1 How do students consume news besides using social media?

Starting with the most popular way of consuming news, most students have indicated that they use their smartphone to access news through a variety of mobile applications. One student, when asked via which media he consumes the news, says the following:

“I of course have the apps on my phone. When I am on my phone, I’ll always take a look at the apps. I actually have two news apps. The NOS app and the NU.nl app.” (Student 7, male)

This is the most popular way of consuming news, other than social media, and most students state that they use it on a daily basis, and check it multiple times a day. Another application that was mentioned is Teletext. Teletext, originally a service offered on television, is also accessible through a mobile application. However, only few students reported to use this application to consume the news.

Another popular way of consuming news is via news organizations’ web sites. Many participants have stated to use their laptops or desktop computers to access certain web sites to read the news. They visit a variety of news web sites, such as the NOS website, or NU.nl. A few respondents have said to do this especially when in class or at their internship when looking for distraction. As they are already sitting behind their laptops or desktops, they tend to find it easy to visit news web sites to consume news.

Moving to traditional media for news consumption, several respondents have said to use their television as a way to consume news. However, they do this in varying manners and in varying degrees. Some students are more regular watchers than others. One participant watches the news every morning on his television before he goes to work or school. A different student states, if he is

home on time after his internship, he will watch the news with his family. Another student argues that she does not have a television as she lives in a student house, but she tries to watch the televised news back on her mobile phone every day, via a mobile application of a Dutch news organization, NOS. On the spectrum of less frequent watchers, one respondent states that her family does not watch the news on the television, but her in-laws do every day. When she is visiting, she watches the news with them. This thus classifies as a more incidental approach to watch the news on television.

Another traditional medium to consume news is the newspaper. A minority of students have said to read the newspaper as a way to get access to the news, but only one has said he has his own subscription to a newspaper. This participant, a journalism student and freelance journalist, gets *de Volkskrant*, a well-known Dutch newspaper, every day. Others have stated that their parents or siblings have a subscription, and when they are at home, they tend to read the newspaper. Furthermore, another newspaper that is mentioned often is the *Metro*. *Metro* is a free newspaper, given out to read in public transport. One participant states that she reads it for convenience purposes:

“Because I have to travel one hour and forty-five minutes in one direction and one hour and forty-five minutes back in one day, I usually always read the Metro. Not because I think it is a good newspaper, but it is easy as it is there.” (Student 10, female).

A third traditional medium on which only a couple of participants said to consume news is radio. Two students, both currently enjoying journalism study programs, disclosed they use radio to consume news. The first said that she listens to the radio when she is at home, and comes across the news in that way. Also, she uses a mobile application which features the news on the radio as well. The second participant who uses the radio for the news states that he uses it on a daily basis to consume news.

“So I have a clock radio with Radio One, so when I wake up, I just lay and listen: ‘what are they talking about? Have I heard this before or is it new?’” (Student 1, male)

What firstly becomes apparent from the abovementioned and the interviews is the first theme, which is ‘accessibility’. This theme has the most axial codes attached to it; it is comprised of six axial codes. These six categories are: ‘speed’, ‘convenience’, ‘variety’, ‘effortlessness’, ‘frequency’ and ‘personalized’. This core theme thus describes how students access news, on and off social media, and what they value when they consume and share news on social media.. As stated, one axial code found within the main theme of accessibility is ‘variety’. As proven from the interviews and the

answers respondents provided, they generally enjoy a diverse news consumption in the sense that most participants state that they generally consume and share a variety of types of news. Most participants state that they consume a large assortment of news such as general current events, sports, entertainment and more. Moreover, they use a spectrum of devices to get to their news, and share news as well. This varies from using phones, laptops, and other devices to be able to consume and share news. Furthermore, many participants state that they consume and share news which comes from a selection of news organizations, journalists, friends and mobile applications. This includes newspapers such as de Volkskrant, news web sites and applications such as NOS and NU.nl, but also individual journalists who share news as well. Furthermore, many participants have stated to find news through what their friends share or like on social media.

4.1.2 How do students share news besides using social media?

Sharing news via social media channels will be discussed in the following section of this chapter. However, when it comes to sharing news outside of social media, many participant denoted that they discuss news and current events with people in their personal surroundings. Some say that they have face-to-face discussions with friends or family members about the news. A few participants even stated that the only way they share news is with their friends directly when in their physical presence, rather than on social media altogether.

Others say that they enjoy sharing news on WhatsApp, a messaging service, where one can send messages to a single person or a group of people. When the following student was asked how she shares news, she said that WhatsApp is a well-used medium for that.

“(...) I think mainly WhatsApp. And then just in one-on-one conversations, where I take a picture or make a screenshot of certain articles or certain topics I come across, maybe on social media, on Facebook or just NU.nl or Teletext.” (Student 10, female)

4.2 News on social media

The second sub question to be answered is: *How do Dutch college students use social media to consume and share news?* The answer to this question will give more clarity on how students consume and share news on social media; where they get the news from and who they share it with.

All participants use social media in varying ways for news. Some consume and share it, others only consume news via social media. The main platforms discussed in the interviews were Facebook and Twitter, and are the most used social media among respondents to consume and share news. Other social media that were mentioned for the use of news consumption and sharing practices

are Instagram and Snapchat. Although they were taken into account during the interviews, this research will essentially focus on Facebook and Twitter as they are the primarily mentioned social media platforms. These two platforms are approximately as frequently used between respondents, but used in various ways.

4.2.1 How students consume news on social media

As accessibility is one of the main themes found in the data, one of the coinciding axial codes which make up the core theme of accessibility is 'frequency'. Open codes such as 'daily', 'constantly keeping up' and 'it never stops' indicate how frequent students use social media to consume news, and whether they do this in a regular or irregular basis. All participants have stated to consume news very regularly, and all do this on a daily basis. News sharing on the other hand was a less frequent phenomena under participants.

Most people, if using Twitter to consume news, use it to actively obtain news through a variety of ways while fewer people do so on Facebook. Although some respondents certainly do follow news organizations on Facebook to ensure they consume news, more often it was reported that their news consumption on Facebook is incidental; they are not actively looking for it.

"It is basically presented to you. You do not have to intensively look for it, it is just there in-between all your other social media activity. Sometimes you just see a news item in-between." (Student 9, male)

Students have stated to use social media to consume news daily. This means that they all consume news via social media daily, but the way they consume is different. This means that some participants actively look for news on social media, while others come across it by chance, as the aforementioned states. Furthermore, it becomes clear that participants have integrated social media in their daily routine. They use social media when they wake up in the mornings, when they are bored in public transport, in between classes and before going to bed. For many participants, news consumption, whether actively looking for it or accidentally consuming it, is a regular occurrence, or even a constant experience.

When it comes to how they get their news on social media, there are three options. Students follow a variety of news organizations and professionals such as journalists or people from various fields who share news as well. Others have stated to only consume news their friends or people from their personal network share or like on social media. Lastly, some students have stated that their supply of news on social media comes from a combination of both; they follow news organizations

and professionals as well as friends or personal contacts who share news on social media.

This means that students are able to access personalized news, which is an axial code for the main theme of accessibility. According to participants, news on social media is highly personalized. This is due to the fact that users are able to pick and choose who they follow, whether that be personal contacts, news organizations or journalists. All these sources may supply them with news, but by creating a certain selection of sources, the news they come across is very personalized and filtered. As the aforementioned explicates, Gil de Zúñiga, Jung and Valenzuela (2012) argue that news on social media is distinguishing and unique when compared to more traditional media. This is due to the fact that news is selected by the people in one's network, which are generally people users know and trust (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung and Valenzuela, 2012). This is certainly the case for this research as well, as some respondents state they do consume news they come across because of friends or personal contacts. However, many participants do not just follow friends and people they personally know. Firstly, some participants state that they are not very close to all Facebook contacts for example. One student says:

“But Facebook of course is a little less personal; you obviously have people on your Facebook with whom you might not necessarily have a very good connection.” (Student 10, female)

Thus, although news is filtered by the people who make up your social network on a social media platform, these might not always be people who one trusts. However, they are still able to influence one's news consumption. Furthermore, students do not just follow friends or people they know on social media; news organizations and journalists often have social media platform which students can follow for their news consumption. Thus, it is not just friends and other personal contacts who select the news students are subject to. News organizations and people they are unfamiliar with, such as journalists or other professionals, might be able to influence their news consumption as well.

Another important way of consuming news that came up based on the interviews is that students enjoy using social media for news while they are on their way somewhere, or in-between certain parts of their day, such as classes. The notion of public transport came up relatively frequently in their descriptions of when and how they consume news. Many students travel to their university or university of applied sciences, to their internship or their jobs. One participant states:

“On the bike. I have to ride my bike for quite a bit, so then I'm reading and scrolling on Facebook. Not always clever when in traffic. Scrolling on Facebook and then you come across something, and

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you think, well I should read this. And then you're reading it in the meantime and you get to your train. And you think, I'll read it later, and sometimes you forget. If I think it was very interesting, then I'll look for more information in the train. Meanwhile I'm at school and have two classes. And sometimes in-between classes as well of course." (Student 13, female)

The corresponding theme here again is 'accessibility'. Students are able to use social media to consume news when they are on their way, or bored in the train. The matching axial code is 'convenience'. This category is comprised of a variety of open codes which indicate that participants value convenience in their news consumption in general, but specifically on social media. Open codes include for example 'news anytime', 'news anywhere' and 'short'. These indicate that students appreciate the ease with which they are able to consume and share news via social media anywhere they are.

Another important issue that comes up in several interviews is 'credibility'. This axial codes partially makes up the theme of 'low control'. Several students have expressed that they believe it is hard to trust news on social media. Open codes that make up this axial code include 'misleading', 'questions about trustworthiness' and 'verified account'. According to one students, some news organizations can create misleading titles, so that people are more inclined to click or comment on the article:

"Sometimes chaos can be created when for example people comment on an article that they have not even read, but they have only seen the title and then the title is a little misleading, because that is what people click on." (Student 6, female)

The category of 'credibility' is represented in the data mainly by participants stating that it is difficult to determine whether news on social media is credible and trustworthy. Participants state that they do not know whether the information is accurate and confirmed, and the coinciding open codes show that students have questions about the trustworthiness of news on social media.

The subjective code found through thematic analysis is 'low control'. This theme is made up of three axial codes, namely 'credibility', 'negativity' and 'public'. The aforementioned axial code 'credibility' is grouped under this overarching theme. It becomes clear that students thus have questions about how trustworthy or credible news on social media is.

4.2.2 How students share news on social media

When it comes to sharing news on social media, it immediately becomes clear that participants are

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more likely to consume news; fewer participants were active in sharing news on social media. A few participants even stated to just consume news, and not share it on social media at all. One participant states that he does not share news on Facebook because he is not active on Facebook anyway in terms of sharing anything, and says that he enjoys consuming news more. He also argues that his not sharing news, or sharing anything for that matter, partially has to do with privacy. A second participant who does not share news on social media states that he has in the past, but now does not share anymore, as his social media contacts did not interact with him based on the shared news. He states that when he shared news in the past, it did not spark interest in his social network:

“Yes, first I shared [news] because I hoped to spark all these conversations. But I saw that it did not happen, and actually what you just said, that people follow read news that they are interested in and with which they completely agree. So I noticed that there is no point whatsoever. That is what I think. If someone else shares something about a sport I don’t follow, I think it is pretty interesting. But if I share something about Djokovic, it only gets ignored so to say. And I think to myself, what is the point of sharing? You post something and nobody does anything with it.” (Student 5, male)

Several participants who use both Facebook and Twitter to share news have indicated that they make a distinction between the two social media channels in what type of news they share and how often they share it. When asking one participant on which social media channels he shares news, he states the following:

“On Twitter. Yes, I post something on Facebook once in a while, but that is more personal. That is where I only have friends. On Twitter I have 2500 strangers who follow me because, I don’t know, they want something.” (Student 1, male)

Another participant also distinguishes between the two social media channels in relation to sharing news. Although active on both, there is a difference when it comes to frequency and topics; he shares news more often on Twitter, while this number is far lower for Facebook. Moreover, the general theme of news on Facebook is more personal and relevant to his life, while the news he shares on Twitter is less likely to be news that relates to his personal life.

One participant states that he does share news on social media often, but only does so when the news is generally unexpected. He maintains that unexpected news is more newsworthy, as it is less likely that someone saw it coming. Others state that they only share news on social media if it is very recent; if it is already shared too often, it loses its value. They have stated that they do not want to repeat others in sharing the same news.

“Yes, because indeed, 500 others are sharing it as well. So then I do not see the value sharing it myself has for others” (Student 8, male)

A theme which coincides with this is ‘societal needs’. This main theme consists of five axial codes, which are ‘personal development’, ‘discourse’, ‘exchange thoughts’, ‘acknowledgement’ and ‘value delivery’. This selective code and the coinciding categories entail all needs that participants have pertaining to their social and professional lives, including how they communicate with others, and how they are perceived by others. This theme is thus very broad in its meaning, but essentially describes students social and professional needs, as well as their need for ‘value delivery’ to their followers, friends and other social media contacts. This is an axial code which signifies the fact that participants stated that it is important for them to share news that is relevant to their followers or friends. Students want to share newsworthy items so that they can provide value for their network on social media. This gives people a reason to follow them. According to one participant, he produces value by creating his own angle when sharing news. Furthermore, this can be done by not repeating news that is already shared frequently, but being the first to share news.

The second theme that coincides with how students share news online is ‘low control’. This includes a variety of open codes, and shows what influences students in their news sharing practices on social media. The first axial code is ‘public’. This means that participants have stated that sharing news on social media is something they are careful about; open codes include ‘careful sharing’, ‘job application’ and ‘lose job’. Multiple respondents have stated that (potential) employers are able to see what you are sharing, and sharing certain news, possibly including your opinion, might influence your career negatively.

“But it is common knowledge that with a job application you have to keep in mind that you will be looked up online, and that they will look at what you share and how you talk about it.” (Student 2, male)

Furthermore, under this axial code, open codes such as ‘regrettable tweets’ and ‘judgment’ can be found. Participants state that if they share news publically on for example Facebook, people might judge them or have an opinion or certain (negative) perception of them. An example:

“ It is a disadvantage that everything is so visible, and that the perception people have of you can be influenced because of it. Not so much about evoking discussion, but more so that people can view you differently based on what you share.” (Student 8, male)

This selective code of ‘low control’ can best be described as students arguing that they have little control over news on social media, and the discussions about news on social media. They also state that their news sharing practices and their efforts to discuss news are affected by negativity found on social media.

4.3 News consumption on social media

This section will answer the third sub question, which is: *What are Dutch college students’ motivations to consume news on social media?* Based on the in-depth interviews conducted, a large number of students stated that social media platforms, which mainly included Facebook and Twitter, are able to provide them with news in a very fast way. Eight out of thirteen participants mentioned ‘speed’ to be one of their motivations for consuming news on social media, if not the main motivation to do so. One student says, when asked about their motivations to consume news on social media:

“The first one is ‘fast’. Like I said, I believe that you get information the fastest via Twitter. It is the quickest way to get news.” (Student 3, male)

One participant, who is a freelance journalist and studies journalism, agrees. His main motivation to use social media for news consumption is speed as well. He states:

“Well, the first is ‘speed’. Twitter is always, always the fastest. (...). If something big happens, it is on online in a matter of seconds.” (Student 1, male)

Another student stated the same. He argues that his first motivation to consume news via social media is because he wants to be the first to read the latest news. The social media platform of his choice to do so is Twitter. When asked why Twitter is suitable for this purpose, he responds:

“Twitter, because Twitter is an online platform which, in my eyes, is even faster than any app, such as NU.nl. Every other medium shares [the news] on Twitter before they do so on their own platforms. Thereby I am informed faster, and I find that important.” (Student 8, male)

Thus, it becomes clear that participants value the speed that comes with social media. Herein, Twitter was the social media platform that was mainly mentioned to be the quickest specifically. However, one student who has stated speed to be a motivation to consume news on social media, has not specifically mentioned whether he finds that on Facebook or Twitter. Another students stated that social media is a fast way to know what is going on in the world, and recognized all social media to be fast, although he uses Facebook only. All other participants who have identified speed as a

motivation for the consumption of news via social media, reported using Twitter as their main social media of choice to consume news.

The abovementioned appreciation for speed has to do with the core theme of accessibility. An axial code which comprises the core theme of accessibility is 'speed'. Many students have thus specified that they value speed when it comes to news on social media. They state that news quickly appears on social media, sometimes even faster than news organizations can pick it up.

A second important motivation, which was mentioned by a total of eight respondents, is to use social media to consume news because they claim that they are able to stay updated on news through social media. As Schlagheck (1998) states that students want gain knowledge on current events and be informed about a variety of topics. A few students have confirmed this, stating that social media helps them stay informed and stay updated on what is happening around them and in the world. Huang (2009) reported that students indeed find it important to be up-to-date by consuming news. Moreover, students think they should be informed on what is happening in the world. Hermida et al. (2012) argue that students progressively use social media to stay aware of what is happening in the world. One respondent states that if you want to be informed and updated on the latest news, it would be of benefit to use some sort of social media platform to consume news. A communication student states:

“It is not necessarily better than a physical newspaper, but the newspaper circulations are decreasing of course, so I think you cannot deny [social media]. It is becoming more and more digital. And I do not find social media to be better than for example an online newspaper by NRC, that is for sure. But I think, because so many people have social media, if you want to know about the world and it has to be via social media, then it has to be via social media.” (Student 10, female)

Thirdly, finding news that is relevant in their own lives is another motivation why participants use social media to consume news. This was mentioned by six out of thirteen participants. The term of relevancy, in this case, refers to either location of the news or current event or the topic of the news. One student, when asked about being motivated to consume news because it is relevant to her life, says:

“Yes. So, reading the news, like I said, from discipline. I find it interesting and I enjoy reading it.”
(Student 13, female)

Another student states that this is an important motivation for her too, as she said that she gets

local news only through social media. When asked if relevancy in her own life is a motivation to consume news via social media, she says:

“It is. It is always pretty interesting to see what is happening in your surroundings. At the minute in Ede, a neighborhood called Veldhuizen. I would not have known without coverage by the media, because Veldhuizen is a completely different neighborhood than where I live. It is thus interesting to read it on [social media], and it gets shared by other people from Ede. Then I get to see it too.”

(Student 6, female)

One other student states the following:

“Yes, that is important. I find news in the Netherlands often more interesting than international news or something. It is in fact further away from you. Unless it is something that is very intense, or if you have a special interest in it. But other than that, I think national news... I also follow BN De Stem, which is a local paper in the Breda area, I follow that. It is about just small news items, it is not such a big deal. But it is from Breda, so oftentimes you will find it interesting to read.” (Student 3, male)

An important motivation mentioned by six out of thirteen student is that they are motivated to consume news via social media, as it allows them to discuss news on there as well. Although certainly not all students do this, which is touched upon in the next section of this chapter, a relatively large number of student does discuss news on social media. One student says this is a motivation for him to consume news on social media:

“You send a link, and sometimes you think, I’m super curious to see what someone thinks. And then there is a link, and I say: ‘What do you think of this?’. And sometimes I find something bizarre, and I send a link and I immediately say how bizarre it is. And then a discussion starts.” (Student 11, male)

Five respondents argue that they are motivated to consume news on social media because it is easy. It does not require a lot of effort to consume news via social media. Another category that was found within the theme of accessibility is ‘effortlessness’. This category signifies the little amount of effort participants need to put in when consuming news on social media. Open codes under this category include ‘incidental supply’ and ‘already on social media’, meaning that students are already using social media for other purposes, and it so happens to feature news from time to time. The following student explains:

“The most important reason I think why I follow the news on social media, is because it is just very easy. I am on social media the entire day, so it does not require effort.” (Student 6, female)

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Another student states that it is an easy way to come across news your friends share, while you might have not looked that news up yourself. He calls it an easy incidental supply of news and states that social media enables him to thus come across news in an easy way.

Furthermore, a motivation to consume news on social media is to find news with the same or similar perspectives or standpoints as the student has. Three participants have stated that this is a motivation for them to consume news on social media. One student, who follows soccer news very well and has his personal preference for a Dutch soccer team, says that this is commonsensical, as he likes to follow certain journalists who are specialized in his favorite team. He thus consumes news with the same perspective he has.

However, many students have stated the exact opposite; they do not consume news on social media to read the news with similar or the same perspectives. They value a diverse spectrum of news. One student states:

“I have a lot of people from a lot of different European countries on Facebook, and also on other social media channels. Then it is really is. Because normally, if I for example want news from Turkey, or I want an Estonian perspective or whatever, I would have to look up all the materials myself. That is not possible. And on Facebook, I see it come by. It is fun to see a different perspective.” (Student 12, female)

An axial code under the theme of societal needs is ‘personal development’. This axial code consists of a variety of open codes which signify developing oneself in several ways. By consuming and sharing news, one gains knowledge on a variety of topics, which contributes to their personal development. Furthermore, one student (student 9, male) said he wants to ‘expand [his] horizon’, meaning that by reading a variety of news and experience diverse perspectives, they are able to broaden their horizon.

Thus, to recap the main motivations mentioned above, students stated that they are motivated to use social media to consume news because it enables them to get access to the news fast. Besides this point of speed, it also allows them to stay updated. Furthermore, students are motivated to use social media to consume news because they can find news that is relevant to their own lives. Moreover, ease is another motivation that was mentioned by students. Lastly, student said that finding news with the same or similar perspectives motivates them to use social media in order to consume news.

4.4 Sharing practices on social media

The fourth and last sub question posed in the introduction is: *What are Dutch college students' motivations to share news on social media?* This section will provide an overview of these motivations and describe them in detail. It is important to note that eleven out of thirteen participants share news on social media. Furthermore, one student stated to only share news on Snapchat. The results from this student will not be taken into account with regards to the motivations.

When looking at sharing practices on social media, participants have many different motivations to do so. For this part, several motivations were mentioned and stand out. However, it is to be noted that the motivations for sharing were less consistent between participants. This means that fewer participants stated the same motivations, which happened more frequently with the motivations for consuming news on social media. Thus, it is important to note that some motivations will be clustered together based on the type of motivation. Furthermore, the motivations for news sharing practices on social media seem to be more related to one another. Although they are different from each other in terms of why students share news on social media, they were more likely to be connected than the motivations for consuming news on social media. This is also a reason why the motivations will be clustered in this section.

The first motivation that was mentioned most frequently when it comes to sharing news on social media is to discuss news. This motivation was mentioned by six out of ten participants who share news. Respondents have also said that they share news in order to talk about it, and socialize with others by talking about and discussing current events. When asked how he likes to start a discussion on his social media of choice, which is Twitter, one student says:

“By summarizing the news from an item in half a tweet and suggest something right after: ‘should it be like this?’ or ‘am I the only one?’. I know someone will bite, something will always happen.”

(Student 1, male)

Another motivation that somewhat coincides with discussing news on social media is socializing. This was mentioned by four students out of the ones who share news on Facebook and Twitter. This includes participants stating that they enjoy sharing news in order to start a conversation with friends or their social network. One student, when asked if socializing is one of her motivations to share news, said:

“Yes, I think so. When I share something personal, and I have shared it [on their personal page], it is partially to socialize. I mean, when I tag my sister or I share a news item on her page about a

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hangover breakfast, it does not add much. But I think it is funny for my conversations with her. I am not sure if she finds it funny, but I... It is purely for socializing indeed. For example, the comments you get on [such posts], yes.” (Student 12, female)

One trend or a common thread which can be identified is that several participants have stated that they like to give their opinion, and identified that as a motivation to use social media to share news. Others have said that they are curious about others think, and that this motivates them to share news online, so that they can collect others’ opinion. Furthermore, one participant said that a motivation for him to share news on social media is because it is easy to share opinions and discuss them via social media. Moreover, he said that by doing so, one can possibly convince others of their own opinion.

“And as my second point I have, I think it is easy to hear each other’s opinion, and that you can discuss it. Following on from that is my third point. By sharing you can convince other people that things are really good, or really bad. And through these discussions others can convince you as well, so that you might look at certain things differently.” (Student 2, male)

These motivations mentioned by respondents coincide with a motivation mentioned by Whiting and Williams (2013) for the use of social media in general. A motivation to use social media in general is to be able to express opinions and thoughts. Although Whiting and Williams (2013) did not study uses and gratifications in terms of news on social media but social media in general, certain motivations they found are similar or the same as motivations students mention in this current research.

Looking at other previous literature, Kietzmann et al. (2011) state that social media offers people a platform to discuss certain content, which might include news. Students have mentioned to share news in order to be able to talk about it on social media, or have a conversation about it via social media with their friends or acquaintances. However, two participants have said to not discuss news on social media at all, and others make a distinction between privately discussing news with friends compared to discussing it where everyone can see:

“And that happens on Facebook, via private messages. Not so much out in the open, because, as I said it the beginning, if you share it more openly and you put it on your wall, you can get a lot of people who cause hatred. Or people who share, and have their profile publically visible, get random people on Facebook who comment. We know of each other that we are respectful of each other and we keep it clean. We are not going to curse, we are not going to bullshit, we are not taking it

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One of the three main themes is societal needs. This theme fits with the fact that participants share news in order to create a conversation, discuss news and share opinions, ideas and thoughts. The fitting axial code is ‘discourse’. This category symbolizes certain aspects of talking about news and discussing current events, both on and off social media. Open codes fitting to this category are, amongst others, ‘start discussion’, ‘socialize’ and ‘conversation topics’. Respondents suggest that, through social media, it is easier to discuss news, on and offline. When taking into consideration previous research, students have mentioned that they are motivated to share news on social media in order to socialize; Lee and Ma (2012) have previously identified this as a reason for people to share news on social media as well.

Another axial code under the umbrella of ‘societal needs’ which fits the abovementioned motivations is ‘exchange thoughts’. What becomes apparent from the open codes and the abovementioned examples is that participants largely enjoy sharing opinion and perspectives; both by giving their opinion, but also being curious about other opinions. By consuming and sharing news, they are able to do so, and collect opinions of friends and strangers.

On the other hand, some students have said to rather not discuss news on social media for similar reasons. One student says he does not like to share news, and does not like to discuss news on social media. However, he recognizes that others might see this as an advantage of using social media to share news:

“An advantage of course is, and this might not be applicable to me, but people who want to discuss news. I personally do not think it is the right way, because, like I said, it is an open sewer where people throw things, and eventually nothing is done with it.” (Student 7, male)

This point coincides with Baumgartner and Morris’ (2009) statement, arguing that although there is a possibility to use social media as a way to discuss news and have a dialogue, users are not likely to make use of this possibility social media offers. Many students in this current research have stated that they generally do not enjoy discussing news on social media. They argue that they are affected by the ‘negativity’, in for example the comments. This axial codes consists of open codes such as ‘sewer’, ‘curse words’ and ‘fights’.

Another important motivation to share news on social media is keeping others updated on the news and current events. This motivations was mentioned by four out of ten students who share news

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on Facebook or Twitter. One student also states that one of his motivations to share news is to help others. He says he shares news on Facebook and Twitter to help others make decisions. He gives an example of the public transport in Amsterdam:

“Number one is that I can help others by sharing news, directly or indirectly. (...). I mean, imagine I am on my way to school with the metro and something happens, I can share it on social media immediately. Or I can share a news item that I found, so that for example others who are still at home can think ‘the metro is shut down, so I should not take the metro but take the tram instead’.”

(Student 9, male)

A different motivation mentioned includes others’ perception of the participant, or how others view them as they share news on social media. Several motivations fall under this umbrella. Three students have stated that status enhancement is a motivation for them to share news on social media. One student said that for him status enhancement is a motivation to share news on social media. Though he does recognize this as an important motivation for him, he argues that this only applies when one can prove that they can share news quickly and in a fun way. He maintains that he can see results in the amount of retweets or new followers. This idea corresponds with an argument by Lee and Ma (2012), who state that one’s status can be enhanced if they share news is trustworthy and relevant.

A different student said that he shares news on social media in order to show others that he is involved with the news and that he is aware of current events. Coinciding with this, a third student’s motivation to share news is to come across as interesting to others when sharing news. Lastly, someone said that she is motivated to share news on social media so that she can show her social media contacts that something affects her:

“The first one is to show that it excites me, or that I am surprised. Basically that it affects me, so to say. I want to show that.” (Student 6, female)

‘Acknowledgement’ is the axial code which coincides with the abovementioned, which falls under the main theme of societal needs. This category encompasses several open codes such as ‘seem involved’, ‘gain authority’ and ‘being seen as important’. Furthermore, the open code ‘status related’ is an integral part of this category. Several participants stated that they share news on social media so that they are seen as interesting or knowledgeable. Not only through sharing news, but by consuming news on social media as well, they come across as interesting because they are able to talk about current events with peers, both on and off social media.

Thus, important motivations for sharing news on social media include the ability to discuss news. Although not all participants like to discuss news on social media, this was however mentioned as an important motivation. Another motivation that coincides with the former is that students are motivated to share news on social media for socializing purposes. Furthermore, a cluster of opinion-related motivations were mentioned as motivations to share news on social media, including giving one's opinion and collecting others' opinions. Furthermore, news is shared by Dutch college students because they want to keep others updated on the news or current events. Finally, a motivation mentioned by students for sharing news on social media is the perception others have of them, including seeming interesting to others or showing one is involved.

4.5 What's next?

This chapter has given insights in the results of the data analysis process, and already provided some answers to the sub questions, as well as hinting towards an answer of the main research question. Investigating the first sub question, it became apparent that students are most likely to use the internet for their news consumption and sharing practices. They do this in a variety of ways, but all students reported to use their phone to gain access to news. Others said to use their laptops or desktops, and a few students mentioned tablets, such as the iPad. News is consumed via mobile applications, as well as websites. Students thus use a variety of devices and media to consume news on and offline. When it comes to sharing news outside of social media, students state that they enjoy discussing news with friends or family, and they regularly share news with people in their social surroundings offline.

Looking at the second sub question, which focuses more on social media, students state that they use a variety of social media platforms. However, Facebook and Twitter were mainly mentioned, and thus the focus of this research. Even on social media, students have a diverse way of consuming and sharing news. Focusing on consuming news via social media, students state that this is a daily procedure. From the interview data, it becomes apparent that social media is an integral part of their daily lives, and students are thus consuming news via social media frequently. Students argue that they get news from friends, news organizations and journalists, or both. However, they have pointed out that they have questions about credibility when it comes to news on social media.

Sharing practices on social media are usually a less frequent occurrence. Some participants said to not even share news at all on social media. This is done on both Facebook and Twitter, but it is clear that some students make a distinction between the two platforms in what they share and how they share it. Furthermore, what many students have mentioned in their interviews, is that they find that there is a lot of negativity with news online. Thus, this might at least affect them in discussing

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news, but several participants have stated that they do not even share news publically anymore because of this reason. How they share news might also be affected by this.

The coming chapter will include a summary on the main results of this research. By creating an overview of the most important themes and motivations, the research question will be answered. Moreover, the motivations for consuming and sharing news on social media will be compared to see whether they are different in nature. Furthermore, theoretical and societal implications will be expressed, and future directions for research will be identified.

5 Conclusion

After reporting the results based on the interviews, and the data analysis, this chapter will provide a summary of the main findings. This will include the main motivations students recognized from the data, as well as the main themes of the data. Hereby, the research question will be answered: *What are Dutch college students' motivations for consuming and sharing news on social media?*

Furthermore, implications for theory will be identified: what does this research mean for the uses and gratifications approach? Previous literature will be included to see whether the results of the current study harmonize with what has been reported in previous works. Moreover, implications for society will be articulated. In relation to this research, this essentially means that news organizations will be addressed in terms of the results of this research. How can they use this study and what can they learn from it?

Lastly, directions for future research will be given at the end. This will include some limitations of the current study, and how they can be improved for research in the future. Furthermore, this section will provide suggestions for yet to come studies on this topic.

5.1 Motivations and themes

To answer the abovementioned research question, several motivations are mentioned for consuming and sharing news. When it comes to consuming news on social media, Dutch college students stated that they are motivated by the speed they can consume news, they can stay updated, and find news that is relevant to their own lives. Furthermore, motivations mentioned for consuming news on social media are discussing news, the ease with which they can consume it, and they are able to find news with the same or similar perspectives. The motivations for sharing news on social media is so that Dutch college students can discuss news, and they share news for socializing purposes. Furthermore, a number of opinion-related motivations were mentioned such as giving one's opinion as well as seeing other people's opinions. They claim a reason to share news on social media is to keep others updated, and show others that they are interesting and involved.

5.1.1 How do motivations compare?

As this study includes motivations for both consuming news on social media as well as news sharing practices on social media, it creates an opportunity to draw a comparison between the two. The aforementioned section answers the research question by stating the various motivations. What becomes apparent is that there are some similarities. Firstly, students are motivated to both consume and share news on social media to be able to discuss news on social media. For both the consumption and sharing practices, six participants mentioned to be motivated to share news on social media so

that they can discuss it. However, as fewer participants in general share news on Facebook and Twitter, the number of six students is relatively high amongst the ten students who do share news on social media. This compares to six out of thirteen students who consume news on social media.

Another similarity can be found in that students are motivated to consume news on social media because they like to stay updated on the news and current events. This was one of the main motivations mentioned by students, as stated in the results section. When it comes to sharing news on social media students have said to be motivated to do so, as they can keep others updated on the news and current events. This signifies the importance of staying updated on the news, as well as providing others' with this service when sharing news on social media.

However, differences can be found as well. Motivations mentioned for consuming news on social media more often relate to the contents or topics of the news itself. This is apparent from two of the motivations mentioned with relation to consuming news, which are consuming news that is relevant to students' lives and consuming news with the same or similar perspectives. The motivations mentioned for sharing news on social media do not pertain to the contents or topics of news.

5.1.2 Themes

The main themes, and thus selective codes, found in the data are 'accessibility', 'societal needs' and 'low control'. These core themes were found based on the coding process as used in thematic analysis (and grounded theory research). It is important to again note that this coding process is based on Strauss and Corbin (1990), but used by other scholars (Boeije, 2010; Braun & Clarke, 2006), and are solely used as a tool box to code the data from the current study, and that no new theories will be generated; the coding technique used by Corbin and Strauss (1990) is thus simply employed for the analysis of the data. For the purpose of this research, no new theories are created.

To summarize the main themes, the first theme is 'accessibility'. Students have stated that they very much so value the speed of news on social media, as well as the ease it comes with. News on social media offers students a way of reading very diverse articles that are easy to read, and they only have to put in little effort, if any.

The second selective code is 'societal needs'. This code is a broad one, touching on a variety of topics and categories within the theme. This selective code and the coinciding categories entail all needs that participants have pertaining to their social and professional lives; they are able to discuss news, give their opinion and collect others' opinions. This theme thus includes how students communicate with others, but also how they are perceived by others.

The final main theme found in the data is 'low control'. This theme was the least prominent of the three. This selective code can best be described as students stating that they have little control over news on social media, and the discussions about news on social media. Students have questions about how trustworthy or credible news on social media is. They also state that their news sharing practices and their efforts to discuss news are affected by negativity found on social media.

5.2 Implications for theory

In the previous chapter, some links to existing literature have already been made in relation to the results of this current study. This section will do this more in-depth and create a link between previous studies and the results of this study. First, it is important to note that although news consumption among youths has decreased, they simultaneously believe it is important to stay updated on what is happening in the world (Huang, 2009). From input by participants in the current study it becomes clear that they indeed enjoy being aware of current events, and that they find it important to know what is going on.

Furthermore, as articulated above, Henke (1985) states that college students are likely to start preparing for life after college. College has a somewhat prearranged time period. This can certainly vary per student, but graduation from college is generally in the foreseeable future for most college students. Therefore, they are likely to start preparing for their entrance into the labor market. Henke (1985) argues that because of this preparation, college students are likely to be aware their news consumption, and especially their news sharing practices, with regards to this change in their lives.

When looking at what participants stated during the interviews, their sharing practices are especially affected by the fact that they are currently or in the near future looking for internships or jobs. They state that social media is public and when sharing news, or anything for that matter, is visible to others. They have therefore stated that they are careful in what they share and how they talk about news, as it can have consequences when it comes to applying for jobs.

Based on literature by Lin, Salwen, and Abdulla (2005), uses and gratifications do not differ between online and offline news consumption. However, based on news consumption via social media, students have expressed that they consume news via social media because it is likely to be faster than other media. The main motivation to consume news via social media channels, is because of this speed element. Participants create a distinction between and compare news social media and news on other platforms. Although motivations for news consumptions via other platforms are not directly investigated through this research, students are unquestionably making a distinction between social media and other media when it comes to speed of news delivery, thus specifically identifying

speed as a motivation for their news consumption on social media. This thus means that it is likely that students, and possibly other demographics, are using social media for news consumption and sharing practices differently from other media. Studying these differences in future research might be key to understanding how certain audiences consume news in general, and what motivates them to consume and share news via a variety of platforms.

When it comes to the motivations for consuming news on social media, most of the main motivations mentioned by participants coincide with previous research. This includes the motivation to use social media to consume news because one wants to be updated on current events (Hermida et al., 2012). However, some additional motivations have surfaced based on the interviews with students. As the aforementioned explicates, one of these motivations is speed, which was mentioned by many participants. Another motivation mentioned by respondents, but not in previous literature, is ease. This pertains to the ease with which students can consume news on social media. The finding of these new motivations to consume news on social media means that there is need for more research to be done in order to gain a better understanding of why social media is used for news consumption. These findings enrich existing knowledge on this topic, as well as prove that there is however more to be investigated when it comes to why college students consume news on social media.

This similarly applies to the motivations identified for sharing news on social media. Only one of the motivations mentioned above from previous research appeared to be relevant for the students in this particular study. This motivation, as argued by Lee & Ma (2012), is related to status: students share news in order to enhance their status. The other motivations were not significantly mentioned by participants. However, other motivations came up more frequently. Students are motivated to share news, as it gives them a platform to give their opinion, as well as collect others' opinions. The third motivation is that students share news to start a discussion, and the final new motivation to share news is to keep others updated.

This implies that, as social media is evolving and it is increasingly used to consume news (Hermida et al., 2012), new motivations can be found as to why students consume and share news on social media. It is thus valuable to investigate these motivations as they, together with social media use in general, are subject to change.

Another implication for theory is that the uses and gratifications has proven valuable for mass media in the past. However, it has become clear that this approach can also be used for more modern

types of communication practices, such as social media. This coincides with what Ruggiero (2000) argues: uses and gratifications can be applied to newer media, not just as it fundamentally was applied to mass media alone. It furthermore means that it is not only applicable to the consumption of news, as it was essentially used. News sharing practices can also be investigated in the light of the uses and gratifications approach.

Lastly, the outcomes of this study imply that the notion of an active audience is indeed challenged. Blumler (1979) states that the uses and gratifications approach assumes that audiences, in this case Dutch students, are active in their media behavior. However, the notion of an active audience is unclear, as criticized by Blumler (1979) as well. In relation to this study, this notion of an active audience especially relates to how students consume news. As the aforementioned explains, some students specifically follow or like certain organizations on social media in order to have access to news. Others, however, have stated that their news consumption on social media is accidental; they come across news as they are using social media for other purposes as well. This thus means that the concept of an active audience still is somewhat unclear.

For future research, it is important to thus take into account the assumption of an active audience is taken on within the uses and gratifications approach. More importantly, it is important to be transparent and clear in explaining what the notion and active audience means within individual studies. Understanding how active audiences are in consuming and sharing news, and consciously making an effort in reporting on this issue is important for any future research.

5.3 Practical implications

Based on the stated research problem in the introduction, it becomes clear that news organizations are losing young consumers – younger audiences such as college students are less interested in consuming news (Huang, 2009). From this study indeed it is evident that students are less likely to use traditional media to consume and share news. However, participants seemed enthusiastic about and interested in using mobile applications and social media to consume and share news. This coincides more with Meijer (2007), who similarly claims that Dutch students do in fact enjoy consuming (and sharing) news. However, they do this less and less via traditional media channels, and are using the internet to consume and share news.

What can we learn from this? Students are motivated to consume news on social media because it is fast and easy. They can stay updated, consume news with comparable perspectives to their own, and they are motivated to find local news and other news that is relevant to themselves.

Furthermore, students share news on social media as well. What motivates them to share news is the opportunity to give their opinions, but also gather others' opinions and see what people think. They like to discuss news online, and keep other updated. Lastly, students share news on social media to enhance their status and create a (professional) reputation.

Likewise, there is something to be said about how students use social media to consume and share news. Students use a plethora of platforms, both online and offline, to consume and share news. This thus varies from traditional media, to more modern or unconventional platforms – the internet. Students say to consume news very regularly and frequently, and many indicate that using social media and consuming news on social media is a constant occurrence in their daily lives. When it comes to sharing, this happens less frequently and fewer student share news online. However, they do enjoy sharing and discussing news during face-to-face communication with friends or family.

News organizations can learn from these results in terms of gaining insights in the news consumption and sharing behavior of Dutch students. This research provides them with more information on how students use social media to consume and share news, and what motivates them to do so. These results show news organizations what is of importance and of value for students with regards to consuming and sharing news online.

As Meijer (2006) argues, news organizations are encountering obstacles when it comes to reaching young audiences, such as college students. By learning more about this demographic, especially how and why they consume and share news, these organizations can incorporate this knowledge in their strategies, or even create a separate strategy based on this demographic alone. Furthermore, news organizations could apply this knowledge to their social media use and adapt their social media management based on the aforementioned motivations. As mentioned before, Chan-Olmsted, Rim, and Zerba (2013) maintain that news institutions are progressively investing in social media. Essentially, knowing what students find important when it comes to news and having a better understanding of what drives them to consume and share it, can benefit news organizations in possibly knowing how to more efficiently reach this audience.

Looking at the motivations students mentioned for consuming and sharing news on social media specifically, organizations should keep in mind what students value when consuming and sharing news on social media, and why they do so. Speed seems to be an important motivation for participants for consuming news on social media. Organizations can thus adapt their strategies in aiming to provide their target audience, including students, with news quickly and immediately when

something occurs. Furthermore, organizations can target their news to students in order to provide them with news that is relevant to their lives. This can be done by picking topics or content to match the general interests of students, as well as using the possibilities social media platforms offer in choosing a target audience. Moreover, students stated to find it easy to consume news on social media. This should be taken into account when news organizations post news or articles on social media; providing students with news that is easy to find and easy to read can result in a better reach when it comes to students. By carefully selecting news items and adapting to the motivations students have pointed out, this may result in news organizations' posts getting shared more by students as well.

5.4 Limitations and future research

Based on all of the abovementioned, this research has contributed to previous research in finding motivations students have for consuming and sharing news on social media. As the aforementioned states, motivations are found that have not previously been mentioned in existing literature. However, there is still a lot more to study when it comes to students' news consumption and sharing practices, and their use of social media to do so.

Firstly, it is important to note that there are limitations to this particular study. During this study, 13 students were interviewed. This is not a very large number of students. Although information did start to repeat itself, showing signs of saturation, this number could be increased slightly in order to gain more insights in possible themes and motivations. Furthermore, another point with regards to the participants applies: many respondents who applied to participate in the research are currently in a journalism study program or a communications related program. Although the researcher has not picked these students on purpose, and they were thus chosen by chance, it gives insight in what type of students applied for the interviews. These participants can be biased and might have more knowledge on the topics discussed during the interviews. This was noticeable when talking to these students, as they had more knowledge on for example how (online) newspapers generate revenue, or how news items are created.

The application of these students specifically can be explained by the fact that, related to their study and possible future career paths, these students generally find topics such as news consumption and sharing practices as well as social media interesting. However, it is to be noted that other participants with unrelated study programs also stated to be interested in participating, as this topic seems interesting to them. Although this does not invalidate the study as a whole, and these are in fact Dutch students, it is certainly something to keep in mind.

Furthermore, as mentioned in a chapter above, the uses and gratifications theory has received some criticism about the rationality of audiences (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). One suggestion for future research is to acknowledge this; people in general, and students in this particular case, might not always be capable of providing clear motivations when it comes to their news consumption – or any other explanations for their media-related behavior for that matter. Thus, as done in this current study, participants' answer should be questioned. This was done by applying the technique of probing during the interviews. By doing so, participants are encouraged to think about their answers and give more clear responses. Though one cannot be sure of the fact that participants are able to answer questions about needs and motivations rationally, but employing such interviewing techniques, it might make it easier for participants to express themselves.

Another point of critique that is mentioned earlier is the notion of an active audience. Although previously criticized in relation to mass media, this research has indicated that this unclear assumption of an active audience applies to news consumption on social media. Therefore, it might be interesting to clarify this notion of an active audience; what does it mean exactly when it comes to news consumption on social media?

Another suggestion for future research is to include other social media platforms. Some students have mentioned alternative social media platforms to Facebook and Twitter during the interviews, such as Instagram and Snapchat. News organizations, such as but not limited to NU.nl, are increasingly using such visual-based social media platform to provide their target audiences with news. Including these newer social media platforms in terms of news consumption next to Facebook and Twitter, or just researching them on their own, would be interesting additions to research on news consumption and sharing practices on social media.

Lastly, this final suggestion is not necessarily related to social media. Nevertheless, it might be a valid suggestion for future research on news consumption and sharing practices in light of the uses and gratifications approach. From the interviews quickly became noticeable that students enjoy using mobile applications, and their phones in general, to consume and share news. Although this is not social media, it is mentioned largely by students, and might thus be an indication of the popularity of the use of mobile applications for the purpose of consuming and sharing news.

5.5 Conclusion

Students participating in this research thus have a multiplicity of motivations to both consume and share news on social media. A uses and gratifications approach was taken on in order to be able to

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investigate these motivations, as well as find out how these students consume and share news in general as well as on social media. As news organizations are trying to reach their (younger) audiences increasingly on social media, this study offers them important insights on Dutch students at least. Although this study has certainly added new insights into studies on news consumption and sharing by students, as well as the overall body of literature on uses and gratifications, there is still a lot of room for future research on news consumption and sharing practices on social media. After all, social media is an ever-present and ever-changing phenomenon.

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Appendix A

The participants of this study are diverse in gender, age and study programs. This list includes all students and states these characteristics.

Student 1

Male
20 years old
Studies Journalism (HBO)

Student 2

Male
20
Application development student (HBO)

Student 3

Male
21
Law student (HBO)

Student 4

Male
22
(sports) communication student (previously started journalism) (HBO)

Student 5

Male
25
Spanish teacher program (HBO)

Student 6

Female
21
Journalism student (WO)

Student 7

Male
20
Technical business administration (WO)

Student 8

Male
21
Commercial economics (HBO)

Student 9

Male
22

Communication student (HBO)

Student 10

Female

18

Communication student (WO)

Student 11

Male

26

Biology (WO)

Student 12

Female

22

Sociology student (WO)

Student 13

Female

19

Pedagogy student (HBO)

Appendix B

This appendix features the topics list used during the interviews. This is a very short view of the general topics discussed during each interview.

Consent

Personal details

Age

Study program

Leisure

Why they are participating

News consumption in general

What type of news

How often

On which devices

News consumption on social media

Which social media platforms

What type of news

How they get the news

Motivations

Sharing practices on social media

Which social media platforms

What type of news

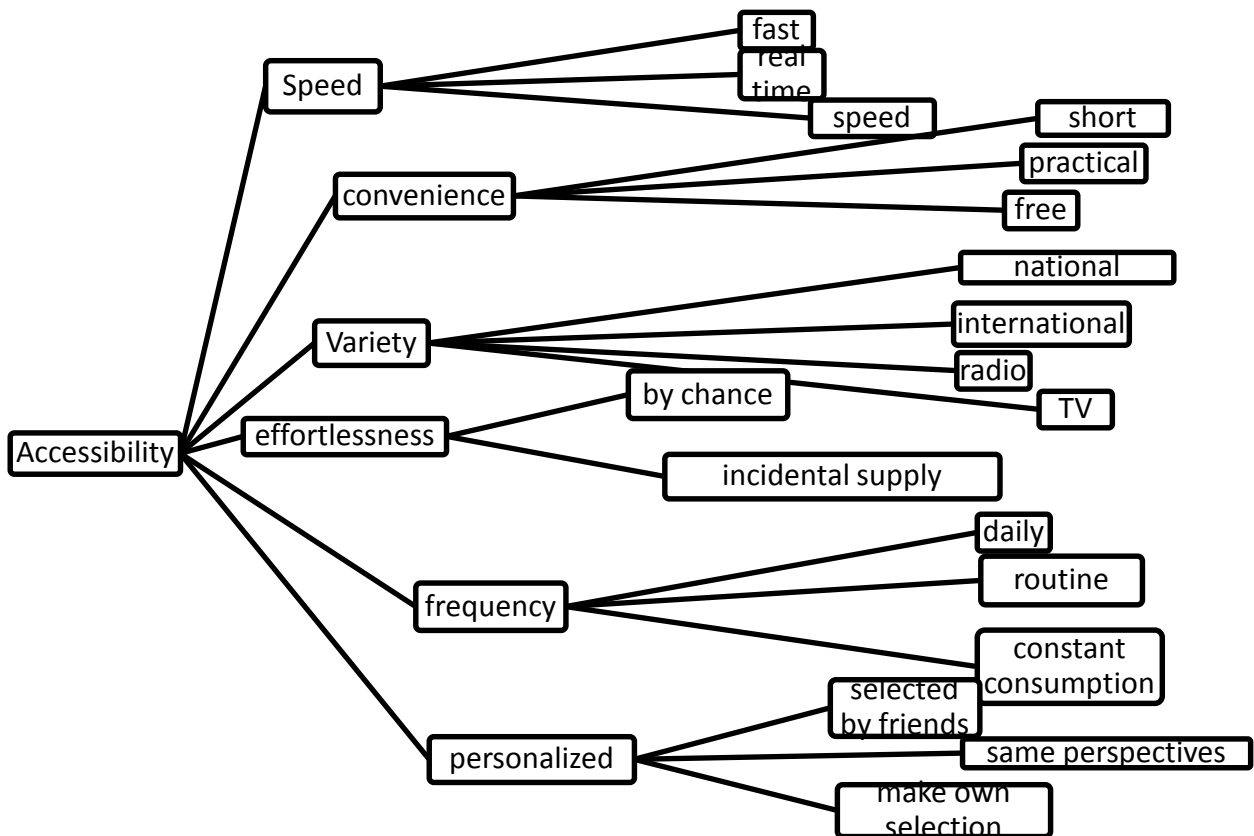
How they share it

Motivations

Advantages and disadvantages news on social media

Appendix C

Beneath, examples of the coding scheme are given. All selective codes and axial codes are mentioned. However, as there are hundreds of open codes, these are not all included. A handful of open codes are mentioned.



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