

Running Head: Internal Information Survey

Military News: How Troops Get Internal Information

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Abstract

This study explored the audience motives and uses of military public affairs products: online news, base newspapers, internal websites, and the internal base television channels (referred to as “commander’s access channel”). The study also examined the desirability of delivering base newspapers online and collected data on attention and use of non-military media. A sample of 332 respondents from all branches of the military answered questions on internal news sources using the Palmgreen scales of uses and gratifications measures. Findings indicated Air Force enlisted members (which made up the vast majority of respondents) had similar gratifications sought for online base newspapers and printed base newspapers, while the primary gratification sought for internal websites and the commander’s access channel was to “gain information.” Surprisingly, base newspapers scored high in the parasocial interaction dimension as compared to other forms of internal military communication. Similar to previous studies, general information seeking was found to be a strong predictor of online newspapers, local television news, military magazines, primetime television, and radio talk show usage. Contrary to prior research, younger military members sought printed base newspapers more readily than older military members.

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Introduction

On military installations, the base newspaper is considered the “voice of the commander” and its main function is codified in Public Affairs regulations and guidelines emphasizing the newspaper as the base’s primary internal communication product. Much like newspaper readership in the civilian world, the number of troops who read the base newspaper has been on a steady decline. On a recent survey of Navy officers and enlisted personnel, the base/ship newspaper ranked in the bottom 15 as a “source of important information” while “Dining Hall/Mess Deck Conversations” were cited in the top 15 as a “source of important information” in a list that included both military and civilian media types (Navy Personnel Research, Studies, & Technology, 2005). When gossip is perceived to be more important than official newspapers, it is clear that the military needs to address how troops perceive and use internal media.

With readership on the decline, the Air Force even suspended publication of its flagship monthly magazine *Airman*, deciding to put content online only. (It later reconsidered and now publishes the magazine on a quarterly basis.) In contrast, online content at military websites, though largely targeted at outside audiences, has exploded. Internal base websites have also become more sophisticated; with training, information, speeches, commander’s messages, and base newspapers readily available to troops just a mouse click away. One internal communication form that has remained largely unchanged since its inception is the commander’s access channel. Most bases have limited distribution, with content consisting primarily of rotating Powerpoint slides.

Debate within the Public Affairs community has centered on how to best appeal to a diverse audience of military members. Commanders worry that adopting new communication

techniques will curtail the use of traditional media and decrease local information to their troops, so the status quo remains. Colonel Gary Crowder, vice commander of the 505th Command and Control Wing, termed this phenomena *decision paralysis* in a recent interview on leaders resistance to transformation (personal communication, November, 2005). But as newspaper usage in the general public and on base declines, is it time for the military to try something new?

Military leaders wonder if the Internet is a viable alternative to base newspapers espousing local issues, policies, and topics. The popular notion is the Internet is a vast, borderless source of information. In fact, users are more able, and more apt, to connect and seek out local issues. Singer (2001) compared the print and online versions of several commercial newspapers and found online products had a much stronger local orientation than their print counterparts. Avid Internet users also seek out local political issues and candidates (Kaye & Johnson, 2002), read blogs on topics that apply directly to them (Stafford, Stafford & Schkade, 2004), and interact with local government (Kaye & Johnson, 2002). While this trend has steadily increased, viewership of local news broadcasts and readership of local newspapers has progressively declined (Dimmick, Chen, & Li, 2004). Putting military commander's concerns to rest, Dimmick et al. (2004) firmly concluded in their meta-analysis of uses and gratifications and Internet use that "online products have a much stronger local orientation than print products" (p. 20).

Data suggests the typical military demographic (18-30 year olds) has embraced the Internet and rejected military leader's preferred method of communication (Rainie & Horrigan, 2005). Still the paradigm persists — Public Affairs offices publish weekly newspapers they doubt (based on "hunches" and anecdotes) reach their intended audience. With heavy local content and a cost structure far superior to printed news (Mensing, 1997), it would seem clear the

decision to drop base newspapers and rely solely on online communication is ready to be debated. Yet, without clear empirical evidence that troops are ready for a change, the military's ambivalence prevails. In order to quell *decision paralysis*, a scientific study into base newspapers, and other military media, is warranted. If troops have turned to the Internet or other media forms for internal information, what need is being satisfied that traditional internal communication forms are neglecting?

Literature Review

The publishing industry is at a crossroads; literacy in America is at an all-time high (United Nations, 2005), yet readership in traditional newspapers has steadily declined as Internet usage has increased (Newspaper Association of America Business Analysis and Research Dept Report, 2003). Many newspapers publish online-only stories and special features to keep up with readers who have abandoned newsprint in favor of HTML text. Slow to change and bound to tradition, the military is being urged to "transform" to meet the demands of a new generation of recruits raised with Internet and instant communication while becoming lighter, more agile, and versatile. One area resisting this transformation is the use of base newspapers as the primary internal information tool for commanders and Public Affairs professionals.

Anecdotally, Public Affairs practitioners have complained that readership of base newspapers has seen the same steady decline traditional newspapers have been battling in the broader marketplace. Base readership surveys, though not scientifically generalizable, tend to further bolster their claim (Navy Personnel Research, Studies, & Technology, 2005). In two recent Air Force newspaper surveys, less than 20% of Airmen surveyed read the base newspaper for information about Air Force involvement in world events, and less than 40% (33% & 38%) deemed the newspaper "trustworthy" (U.S. Air Force, 2005). These trends may be all the more

dramatic for internal military communicators as they lack the large budgets, flash, and breadth of multi-national media conglomerates to compete for troops attention, especially in competition with television, national newspapers such as *USA Today*, and Internet sites able to satisfy an unlimited number of predilections.

The media landscape in the late 1940s holds several parallels to the challenges faced today by base newspapers. Radio programming, although popular, had begun to cede its dominance to television. Film going and reading had all but given up their “social problem” character to television as the medium became the popular focus of communication research (McQuail, 1984). A flood of new television programming genres and choices gave consumers the ability to seek out media that would satisfy and reinforce their interests, group identity, values, and associations (Katz, 1959). Uses and gratifications theory was first posited during this transitional period as Lazarsfeld and Stanton examined radio-listening habits in America (Ruggiero, 2000). Herzog delved further to examine daytime radio serials and the women who listened to them, the uses they made of information garnered from the entertainment, and the gratifications they received from their choice of programming (Ruggiero, 2000).

Uses and gratifications theory centers on the concept of the audience as “active” and their usage of media as goal-directed (even if this goal is simply casual in nature) providing personal fulfillment for a number of needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). As television replaced radio as the dominant communication medium, uses and gratifications research shifted its focus. Researchers began to study the role of television as a tool — a medium that allowed one to match wits with another, get information for daily living, provide a framework for one’s day, to prepare oneself culturally, or to be reassured about the dignity and usefulness of one’s role (Katz et al., 1974, p. 20).

Television cemented uses and gratifications research as a functionalist model, moving the bulk of communication research away from effects-based models. Schramm, Lyle, and Parker (1961) best summarized the prevailing research attitude that emerged towards media and the role of the audience as “users” of media during their studies on children’s use of television — contrasting previous models of strong effects on a passive and easily influenced audience.

As uses and gratifications theory grew and was applied to new media, genres, races and cultures, the “role” of the audience diminished and gave way to the “rule” of the audience. The criticism of the uses and gratifications research then logically shifted to the process of measuring a viewer’s intent. Methodologically, the study of uses and gratifications findings rests on data supplied by individual audience members with the assumption that people are “sufficiently self-aware” to accurately report their interests or at least be able to “recognize them when confronted with them” (Katz et al., 1974).

Particularly pertinent to this discussion is the concept of functional alternatives. If two media serve similar needs then they can act as functional alternatives, gratifying similar needs because of their structural similarity (ex: television/watching a program recorded on VCR) (Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973). Yet, while the Internet may be structurally similar to television and print media, it is not identical. As Stafford and Stafford (2001) and Pew Research (Rainie & Horrigan, 2005) have indicated, the Internet provides a richer and more personal experience which allows for both informational, interpersonal (socialization), entertainment, and even intergovernmental interaction (Kaye & Johnson, 2002). As a functional alternative, the Internet has largely replaced print media for some key demographics while also offering an experience television cannot replicate (Fox, 2005).

Print studies have often compared one form of media against another. Vincent and Basil (1997) found current events knowledge was predicted by print media use (a surveillance gratification) but not by electronic media. The research team also found the most important demographic factor of surveillance gratifications sought was “year in school” (Vincent & Basil, 1997). In essence, as college students progressed through school (and obviously age), their need to gain more knowledge on current events increased. Users with higher surveillance needs tended to gravitate towards print media, while those with higher entertainment needs sought out television media (Vincent & Basil, 1997).

Even more than 30 years ago, long before the advent of the Internet Age, researchers sensed one of the primary gratifications sought from media is to connect to others. Katz et al. (1973) central theme is that media is used by individuals to connect with different kinds of others (self, family, friends, nation, etc.). Ko, Chang-Hoan and Roberts (2005) found five primary motives to Internet use: interpersonal utility, pastime, information seeking, convenience, and entertainment. Consumers who had high information, convenience, and/or social interaction motivations tended to use and stay at Web sites longer to satisfy their corresponding motivations. The uses and gratifications model attempts to comprehend the whole range of individual gratifications of the many facets of the need “to be connected.”

General Information Seeking

The uses and gratifications perspective presumes that the audience is active in seeking and consuming media content, including news. While the mode of communication may be different across the four media types compared in this study, much of the information presented by them is identical. This duplication is also seen in commercial news. Eveland, Seo, and Marton (2002) found “much of the information presented on the Web, including much of the content of

online newspapers, is ported directly from a print source” (p. 359). On military installations this is no exception, for example, an announcement about a policy change will be published in the base newspaper, the online newspaper, posted on the internal website, and transmitted on a Powerpoint slide via the commander’s access channel.

Gratifications for newspaper usage have long been studied by uses and gratifications researchers. Commercial newspapers scored highest as a source of information in O’Keefe and Spetnagel’s (1973) study of college student’s media use. These findings are consistent with a number of studies of gratifications sought from commercial newspapers (Elliot & Rosenberg, 1987; Massey, 1995; Vincent & Basil, 1997). While internal military newspapers are not commercial entities, they are functionally the same as commercial newspapers in form and also function to convey pertinent news to troops.

Internet use seems to clearly favor general information seeking. While the reasons (uses) for Internet usage are many, after email, between 72% to 84% of Internet usage consists of news and information-gathering activities (Fox, 2005). For persons of typical military career ages (18-50), the Internet serves as a means to “get news” at a startlingly similar rate: between 72 to 76% of time spent online is for this purpose alone. Most important for military applications, research indicates that the youngest group of adult Internet users hold the Internet in the highest esteem. Fully 96% of these adults value the Internet as an important information source and only 45% of Internet users get news from both online and offline resources (Fallows, 2004). Unlike base newspapers that are only available on military installations, the Internet is obviously available from any location. So users are not only connected while in garrison, where virtually all troops have access via personal computers or shared terminals, 87% of U.S. Internet users have access at home (Fox, 2005). Hence,

H1: Gratifications for possible online news use will be positively related to gratifications for base newspaper use.

RQ1: What are the gratification dimensions for the commander's access channel and internal website?

Entertainment

While military media are not primarily intended as "entertainment," the escapist value of news and information should not be overlooked. Base newspapers may contain stories on celebrity appearances, movies shot on base, or other stories that are not considered "hard" news. Additionally, military members can see pictures and stories about their peers in action. This information is largely duplicated online (Eveland et al., 2002).

Obviously, users pursue overt entertainment activities more frequently on the Internet than while reading newspapers, but under the uses and gratifications model, the mere *act* of reading a newspaper can provide significant entertainment value. Content gratification includes *use* of the messages carried by the medium, and process gratification relates to enjoyment of the *act* of using the medium, as opposed to interest in its content (Stafford & Stafford, 2004). While the primary intent of military internal media is to convey command information to troops, many may seek out base newspapers and online newspapers to satisfy entertainment gratifications. Internal websites and commander's access channel have virtually no entertainment virtues, therefore we expect there to be no entertainment gratifications. Therefore we posit:

H2a: Online newspapers and base newspapers will have high entertainment gratifications for military members.

H2b: Internal websites and the commander's access channel will have little/no entertainment gratifications.

Decisional Utility

Fully 80% of Internet users have looked for answers to specific questions about a broad variety of issues, including news, while 92% of Internet users believe the Internet “is a good place for getting information” (Fallows, 2004). Despite dramatic differences in the ways men and women, young and old(er), racial and ethnic groups use the Internet to satisfy information and communication needs (Madden, 2003), the information gathering function of Internet use speaks directly to the uses and gratifications model. Stafford, Stafford, and Schkade (2004) contrasted the entertainment value of the Internet and showed that gathering informational content for special consideration was one of the top desired outcomes of Internet usage. Despite online base newspapers appearing to mirror much of the same content from their offline counterpart, Internet users may view the online form as having much of the same decisional utility that they expect from general web usage. Base newspapers contain movie showtimes and information about social events on base, therefore troops could view the medium as an assistant to help them plan their week, leading to a possible decisional utility gratification. Commander’s access channels and internal websites may offer little in decisional utility as they are almost wholly information-only media. Therefore:

H3a: Online base newspapers will have moderate decisional utility gratifications.

H3b: Base newspapers, the commander’s access channel, and internal websites will have no decisional utility gratifications.

Interpersonal Utility

Rayburn (1996) suggested during the early stages of the Internet that the medium is a perfect fit for the uses and gratifications model, more so even than television, as the Internet is “intentionally consumed” as audiences must make purposive choices about which sites to visit

(news, entertainment, travel), what types of activities to engage in (chat, shopping, email), and whom to engage online (anonymous chat room, email to family). While previous research had grouped gratifications into two specific areas, process-related or content related, further inquiry suggested a new Internet-specific media gratification: socialization (Stafford & Stafford, 2001). While online base newspapers do not have the same interpersonal utility as the Internet as a whole, the online form may lead users to seek an interpersonal utility gratification from the medium because of its similar online experience.

85% of Internet users believe the Internet is a good place for communicating with people (Fallows, 2004). Despite the obvious challenge of other media (except the telephone) to compete with the Internet as an interpersonal tool, each medium nonetheless offers a dimension of interpersonal utility. For example, “personal ads” in newspapers are presented as “interpersonal” messages, yet are not located in an interactive medium (Stafford & Stafford, 2001) and commander’s access channels may have information on base social events. Each provides the user with interpersonal gratifications while not directly involving interpersonal communication. Readers may read information about “parent groups” or other social activities (dining out functions, holiday socials, and religious activities) in the base newspaper, the corresponding online version, or the commander’s access channel. Base internal websites do not display interpersonal information, rather the focus of this medium is for more technical and “pure information” transmission. This study therefore predicts:

H4a: Base newspapers, online base newspapers, and commander’s access channel will have a moderate amount of interpersonal utility gratifications.

H4b: The internal base websites will have no interpersonal utility gratifications.

Parasocial Interaction

In a parasocial interaction, viewers “identify” and form relationships with performers, situations, and programming from remote media communications (Perse & Rubin, 1989). For the most part, military media tends to be stale and impersonal, while Internet communication is full of interactive communication. Yet, troops viewing or reading military media there have an inherent “sense of belonging” as the source and receivers are both part of a larger peer group or fraternal organization. More insight into the parasocial relationship between military media is a desired outcome of this study. Thus, this study simply posits the question:

RQ2: How do military personnel use internal communication forms (internal base website, base newspaper, etc.) to meet the dimension of parasocial interaction?

Predictors of Communications Use

Perhaps the most important practical application of this study is to help Public Affairs practitioners predict which forms of internal communication will appeal (and/or reach) certain demographic groups. Once one understands what communication forms the military member actively seeks, messages can be crafted to capitalize on the correlations in rank, gender, and other variables related to a particular media.

This investigation seeks to determine what predicts military personnel’s use of a wide array of military and commercial communication forms. Unfortunately, there is no hard evidence to aid in these predictions. Small-scale Air Force newspaper surveys consistently indicate troops would read electronic versions of the base newspaper if it were emailed to their inbox instead of on newsstands (U.S. Air Force, 2005), but offer no predictive indicators. While measures of gratifications sought are helpful in understanding the audience’s motivation to use internal media types, correlations between rank, gender, and gratification dimensions to all forms of media

(both internal and external) will surely benefit public affairs practitioners in understanding what media troops pay attention to and seek during personal time. As the base newspaper is the primary internal communication form used by Public Affairs practitioners, understanding what predictors would correlate to its usage is a powerful tool in helping to target messages, manpower, and focus. We therefore pose the following research questions:

RQ3: How does use compare across military and civilian media?

RQ4: What demographics or dimensions of uses and gratifications predict attitude toward the base newspaper?

Like radio, then television, today the Internet has become the “new normal” for Americans to get news and information. In fact, “those who don’t go online constitute an ever-shrinking minority” (Rainie & Horrigan, 2005, p. 59). For military leaders, the uses and gratifications approach to analyzing how and why troops choose one information source over another is a call to action. The uses and gratifications model views the audience as the arbiter of what media will thrive and puts the Public Affairs practitioner on notice to “cater more richly to the multiplicity of requirements and roles” (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973, p. 521) media plays in gratifying the need to connect and gather information for a young Airman, Soldier, Sailor, or Marine.

Methods

The purpose of this study was to measure the level of exposure and use of various forms of internal active duty military information as opposed to other modes of civilian communication.

Participants

Participants were active military personnel from all branches and bases (N=332). Service participation breaks down as follows: Air Force: 261, Navy: 63, Army: 5, and Marine Corps: 3. Officer: 13.3 percent, E-5 and above: 56.6 percent, and E-4 and below: 30.1 percent. Male: 259, and female: 73.

Procedure

Public Affairs professionals from each branch of service received information promoting the study. The news release encouraged active duty military personnel to take part in the study in order to determine the value of base newspapers. This was a random sample in that it provided everyone with an equal opportunity to participate if they wanted to. Participants in this study were directed to a web site where the questionnaire was posted. Only active duty military personnel could log on to the site and fill out the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was posted on SurveyMonkey.com. Survey Monkey is an unaffiliated, civilian website service based in Portland, OR, that provides templates for designing surveys. This subscription-based service is used by a variety of business and education professionals. This research project used Survey Monkey to collect, sort and export data from respondents. It was deemed appropriate to only place the questionnaire online because it is a standard practice for the military branches to frequently distribute questionnaires via official websites such as Navy Knowledge Online. The questionnaire took about 10 minutes for respondents to complete.

Gratifications

Uses and gratifications was assessed for base newspapers, base internal websites, commander's access television channel, and the prospect of an online base newspaper using the Palmgreen, Wenner, Rayborn (1980) scale of uses and gratifications. The measure has five

dimensions which are assessed using seven-point Likert-type scales with a zero option (does not/does apply to me). The five dimensions were: general information seeking, consisting of the items: I use [communication form] to keep up with current news and issues, I use [communication form] to learn about military policies and procedures, and I use [communication form] because you can trust the information that they give you; decision utility, consisting of: I use [communication form] to find out what kind of job our government officials are doing, I use [communication form] to help me learn things relevant to my job, and I use [communication form] to find out about my co-workers; entertainment, consisting of: I use [communication form] because it is often entertaining, I use [communication form] because they are often dramatic, and I use [communication form] because they are exciting; interpersonal utility, consisting of: I use [communication form] so I can support my own viewpoints to other people, I use [communication form] so I can pass the information on to other people, and I use [communication form] to give me interesting things to talk about; and parasocial interaction, consisting of: I use [communication form] because the writers give a human quality to the news, I use [communication form] to compare my own ideas to what the persons in the newspaper are saying, and I use [communication form] because the sources in the newspaper are like other people I know. Alpha reliabilities of the measures were: general information seeking, $\alpha=.81-.94$; decision utility, $\alpha=.76-.93$; entertainment, $\alpha=.81-.95$; interpersonal utility, $\alpha=.78-.94$; and parasocial interaction, $\alpha=.87-.96$.

Communicator Use

Media use was operationalized as exposure to and attention paid to specific communication media. The investigation employed two ten-point scales to assess people's exposure to and attention paid to given media sources. This approach is recommended by

McLeod & McDonald, (1985) and Chaffee & Schleuder (1986) who maintain that both exposure and attention scales are required in order to compare communication use of news media forms. The measures are specific in their operationalizations of media use. The exposure scale ranges from “rarely use” to “frequently use;” the attention scale ranged from “no attention” to “close attention.” Specific communication forms included: national television news programs (e.g., CBS, ABC, NBC), local television news programs, newspapers, base newspapers, magazines (e.g., Time, Newsweek), online military magazines, print military magazines, radio talk shows (e. g., Rush Limbaugh), radio news programs, television talk shows, television entertainment talk shows (e.g., Letterman), television news magazines (e.g., 60 Minutes, 20/20), prime time television shows (e. g., Commander in Chief or NCIS), the world wide web, base web sites, and conversations with others.

Attitude

Overall attitude about base newspapers was assessed with a global attitude measure adapted from Burgoon, Cohen, Miller, and Montgomery (1978). The measure’s seven-point bipolar adjective scale includes: unacceptable/acceptable, foolish/wise, unfavorable/favorable, negative/positive, bad/good, and wrong/right. The overall attitude was positive ($\alpha=.86$).

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the uses of internal communication forms among active duty military personnel. The experiment also collected data on attention and use of non-military media. Finally, the study examined active duty military personnel’s attitude about base newspapers.

Correlations and Frequencies

Hypothesis 1 predicted that gratifications of online news would be positively correlated to base newspaper use. To examine H1 a correlation matrix was computed. This hypothesis was supported. All correlations were positive in nature and statistically significant at $p < .01$ (refer to table 1).

To analyze hypotheses 2, 3, 4, and research question 1, and 2, uses and gratifications mean scores were examined across five dimensions (entertainment, decisional utility, interpersonal utility, general information seeking, and parasocial interaction), for each of four military communication forms (base newspapers, online newspapers, internet websites, and commander's access channels).

Hypothesis 2a predicted base newspapers and online base newspapers would score high on the entertainment gratification. Hypothesis 2a was not supported. The overall means were moderate for entertainment gratification for base newspapers ($M=3.10$), and low for the entertainment gratification for online base newspapers ($M=2.43$). Hypothesis 2b predicted that internal websites and the commander's access channel would not satisfy an entertainment gratification. Hypothesis 2b was supported. People did not use the internal base website ($M=2.17$) or the commander's access channel ($M=1.53$) to satisfy an entertainment gratification.

Hypothesis 3a predicted online base newspapers would have high decisional utility. Hypothesis 3a was not supported. Online base newspapers scored moderately in terms of decisional utility ($M=2.84$). Hypothesis 3b predicted base newspapers, the commander's access channel, and internal base websites would have limited decisional utility. Hypothesis 3b was partially supported. The commander's access channel scored low in decisional utility ($M=1.65$),

whereas base newspapers ($M=3.21$) and internal base website ($M=2.66$) rated moderately in decisional utility.

Hypothesis 4a predicted that the printed base newspaper, online base newspaper, and the commander's access channel would carry moderate interpersonal utility gratifications.

Hypothesis 4a was partially supported. The printed base newspaper ($M=3.27$) and the online base newspaper ($M=2.81$) both manifested a moderate of interpersonal utility gratification. However, the commander's access channel ($M=1.68$) scored low in interpersonal utility gratification.

Hypothesis 4b predicted the internal base website would have little interpersonal utility gratification. The results indicated that internal base websites ($M=2.55$) rated moderate in interpersonal utility gratification.

Research Question 1 probed which of the five gratification dimensions the commander's access channel and internal base website satisfy. The results revealed that the commander's access channel provided limited gratification of any kind. Gratifications scores were: to gain information ($M=1.87$), to satisfy interpersonal utility ($M=1.68$), decisional utility ($M=1.65$), parasocial interaction ($M=1.64$), and entertainment ($M=1.53$). By contrast the internal base website satisfied some gratifications more than others. Gratification scores were: gain information ($M=3.06$), decisional utility ($M=2.66$), interpersonal utility ($M=2.55$), parasocial interaction ($M=2.44$), and entertainment ($M=2.17$).

Research Question 2 examined how military personnel use internal communication forms to meet the dimension of parasocial interaction. Internal communication forms used to meet this dimension are ranked as follows: base newspaper ($M=3.13$), online newspaper ($M=2.51$), internal website ($M=2.25$), commander's access channel ($M=1.64$).

Research Question 3 sought to explain what communication forms active duty military personnel are utilizing. Specifically, Research Question 3 examined how uses compare across military and civilian media. To examine this question, descriptive statistics were used to examine the pattern of means. Civilian and internal communication media forms rank as follows: television news use ($M=7.48$; $s.d.=1.59$); internal base website ($M=7.13$; $s.d.=2.81$); local television news ($M=6.85$; $s.d.=2.46$); base newspaper ($M=5.88$; $s.d.=2.59$); online civilian newspaper ($M=5.47$; $s.d.=2.63$); print military magazine ($M=5.29$; $s.d.=2.55$); online military magazine ($M=5.23$; $s.d.=2.79$); primetime television ($M=5.14$; $s.d.=2.96$); television talk shows ($M=4.64$; $s.d.=3.12$); civilian web pages ($M=4.52$; $s.d.=3.13$); online base newspaper ($M=4.36$; $s.d.=3.06$); television entertainment ($M=4.25$; $s.d.=2.89$); television magazine shows ($M=4.14$; $s.d.=2.86$); radio news ($M=3.88$; $s.d.=3.07$); radio talk shows ($M=3.74$; $s.d.=2.76$); print civilian magazines ($M=2.97$; $s.d.=2.47$). See Table 2.

Regression Analyses

Research Question 4 examined what demographics or dimensions of uses and gratifications predict attitude toward the base newspaper. A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to prove this question. The results are summarized in Table 3. The first predictor block consisted of demographics (age, gender, and rank). The second block of variables included the five dimensions of uses and gratifications (entertainment, decisional utility, interpersonal utility, general information seeking, and parasocial interaction). Age of personnel ($\beta=-.20$, $p<.05$) and the uses and gratifications dimension of decisional utility ($\beta=-.40$, $p<.10$) were the only significant predictors of attitude about the base newspaper. The results indicate that older active duty personnel have more negative attitudes about the base paper, and that military people do not use the base paper for decisional utility.

Discussion

Though there are cultural differences among the branches of service, the purpose of internal communications remains standard for all branches. Internal communications are the commander's means of informing and receiving feedback from those under their command. Therefore, commanders need to understand how service members use internal communications to better serve their needs through more effective targeting of messages in their internal communication efforts. This study examined the uses of internal communication forms among active duty military personnel as measured dimensions through the lens of uses and gratifications theory. The experiment also collected data on attention and use of non-military media. Finally, we studied attitudes of military personnel about base newspapers.

Our first prediction was information seeking gratifications for possible online base newspaper use would be positively related to information seeking gratifications for printed base newspapers. The hypothesis was supported. We also questioned what level of gratification participants would report for the commander's access channel and internal websites and found these two communication forms provided extremely limited gratification, regardless which of the five dimensions was measured.

We next measured the entertainment dimension predicting base newspapers, whether in print or online form, would provide high entertainment gratification, and internal websites and the commander's access channel would provide no entertainment gratification. Base newspapers in either form provided only moderate entertainment gratification as demonstrated by the means of 3.10 and 2.43, respectively, on a 7-point Likert scale. The latter prediction, however, was supported as demonstrated by means of 2.17 and 1.53, respectively, for entertainment

gratification. Essentially, we found active military personnel do not use any of the internal communication forms for entertainment.

We did not find support for our prediction online base newspapers provide high decisional utility as demonstrated by a mean score of 2.84. We found only partial support for our prediction base newspapers, the commander's access channel, and internal base websites would have limited decisional utility. In essence, none of the four measured forms of internal communications provided more than moderate decisional utility as demonstrated by the high mean of 3.21 on a scale of 1-7 for base newspapers.

We next measured interpersonal utility gratification as it pertained to the printed base newspaper, online base newspaper, the commander's access channel, and the base internal website predicting all but the internal website would provide moderate gratification. Our prediction was partially supported in that interpersonal utility was moderately gratified by the base newspaper in both printed and online form. However, the base internal website did provide moderate interpersonal utility.

We also questioned to what extent parasocial interaction would be gratified for each internal communications form. Means, by form of communication, ranged from 1.64 to 3.13 on a 1-7 scale. This clearly demonstrates the need for parasocial interaction was only very modestly gratified by any internal communication form, although the newspaper, in both forms, provided the highest gratification among them.

In measuring exposure and attention to different forms of communication, we found military personnel were moderately exposed to all forms of communication as demonstrated by mean scores on a 1-10 scale which ranged from 2.97 for radio talk shows to 7.48 for television news. These findings conflict with the much lower scores found in uses and gratifications

measures for military media. This means although military members are being fairly well exposed to communication forms, these forms are not, overall, gratifying their needs.

The overarching purpose of this study was to measure how people use the base newspaper and their attitude toward it. We found age and the uses and gratifications dimension of decisional utility were useful in predicting attitude toward the base newspaper. We also found older military members had more negative attitudes about the base paper and no one used it for decisional utility.

Limitations

Generalizability. Most poignant to an analysis of the generalizability of this study's findings is an evaluation of sampling methods. This study's convenience sample was drawn from across the Department of Defense, but the vast majority of respondents were Air Force. Some might argue this convenience sample, response source, and rate might not allow generalizability to the Defense Department population sought to be generalized to. Less than 10% of the total military population responded, which would have been ideal. We also would like to have seen at least 5% of each service branch's population respond.

Timing. Due to the condensed nature of the course for which this study was conducted, time constraints were presented throughout the study which may have negatively affected response rate. The survey was open for six days. A period of at least a month would have been preferred to allow for follow up and multiple announcements of the project to be disseminated.

Scale. Throughout the data, no response on our 1-7 Likert scale was higher than 4.07. Internal communication forms are not meeting all of the dimensions of uses and gratifications. The lack of mean responses closer to 7 indicates we still do not understand how people are using these communication forms, even though exposure and attention rates are significant.

Future Directions

The finding military members are well exposed to internal communication forms but their needs are not gratified by them points to a need to study the efficacy of internal communication forms. Perhaps a future survey could come straight out and ask whether, how, and why military members use each form of internal communication could shed light on whether these current forms are viable and effective.

Conclusion

A vast amount of time and effort is spent by the military on internal communications, and if it is only to fall on deaf ears, we have lost the way in our efforts to achieve the goals of internal communications. This study demonstrated military members largely ignored current methods of internal communication. Today's internet world makes it crucial to determine the most effective means for commanders to inform their troops. With fewer members in uniform, tighter budgets, the global war on terror, and the inference our enemies are winning the information war, effective communications become even more crucial.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix
Relationship Between Gratification for Print Base Newspaper and Online Base Newspaper

Gratification for print base newspaper

Gratification for online base newspaper	General information	Decisional Utility	Entertainment	Interpersonal Utility	Parasocial interaction
General Information	.24** (N=194)				
Decisional Utility		.35** (N=226)			
Entertainment			.38** (N=223)		
Interpersonal Utility				.30** (N=224)	
Parasocial Interaction					.36** (N=240)

** statistically significant correlation at $p < .01$

Table 2
Pattern of Means Depicted for Civilian and Military Media Use and Attention

Communication Form	Mean	Standard Deviation
Television News	7.48	1.95
Internal Base Websites	7.13	2.81
Local Television News	6.85	2.46
Base Newspaper	5.88	2.59
Online Civilian Newspaper	5.47	2.63
Print Military Magazine	5.29	2.55
Online Military Magazine	5.23	2.79
Prime Time TV	5.14	2.96
Television Talk Shows	4.64	3.12
Civilian Web Pages	4.52	3.13
Online Base Newspaper	4.36	3.06
TV Entertainment	4.25	2.89
TV Magazine Shows	4.14	2.86
Radio News	3.88	3.07
Talk Radio	3.74	2.76
Print Civilian Magazines	2.97	2.47

Note: 1-10 scales measured attention and use added and divided by two. 10-point exposure scale, ranging from “rarely use” to “frequently use,” and 10-point attention scale, ranging from “no attention” to “close attention” (McLeod & McDonald, 1985; Chaffee & Schleuder, 1986).

Table 3
Significant Demographic and Gratifications Predictors of Attitude
Toward Print Base Newspapers

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	Predictor	Beta	Significance
Communication Form:			
Base Newspaper	Age	-.20	.04
	Decisional Utility	-.40	.08

Note: Overall attitude about print base newspapers was assessed using a global attitude measure adapted from Burgoon, Cohen, Miller, and Montgomery (1978). The measure's 7-interval bipolar adjective scale. Multiple item indicators were used to include; unacceptable/acceptable, foolish/wise, unfavorable/favorable, negative/positive, bad/good, and wrong/right.

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