

# Cambodian Communication Review 2010

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Department of Media & Communication  
Cambodia Communication Institute  
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**Disclaimer**

*Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors or the cited sources, and hence are neither representative of nor endorsed by the Department of Media and Communication and its supporting partners.*



## PREFACE

General discussions of Cambodian media tend to either take up or allude to the history and/or conditions of the press in the country. This is understandable due to the explicit and critical role of the press in the struggles, contentions and transitions inherent to its political upheavals in the last half of the twentieth century and its current democracy project starting in the 1990s. The last two decades of market liberalization reforms and international/regional integration process have brought about an intriguing diversity of media issues peculiar to Cambodia and its people prior to the 1990s, including new aspects of media and information control, new cultural discourses, and impacts and regulations of new information and communication technologies, to name just a few broad ones. Unfortunately, most scholarly and policy research and debates have been concentrated on the economic and political spheres of the country's transformation, which indeed deserve practical and political urgency. It is, however, worth reminding that Cambodia's transformation of such magnitude has gone beyond the economic and political spheres to engage the cultural and social dimensions of the everyday sphere as well. Consequentially, general discussions of Cambodian media so far have naturally been fastened to the political contexts of the country. Although this propensity is, and remains for the coming future, crucial for the knowledge of Cambodia and its media, it may hinder our perspective of and ability to understand the scope and nature of media in general and Cambodian media in particular. We are, therefore, obliged to take on this intellectual and political challenge to expand the horizon of knowledge of Cambodian media.

This publication of the *Cambodian Communication Review* (CCR), by the Department of Media and Communication (DMC), is an embarkation on this challenge. It is intended to offer a snapshot of Cambodian media scene and reports from academic research on media and communication in Cambodia, thereby promoting the attention and awareness of as well as discussion on media- and communication-related issues against the backdrop of the county's current transformation. The range of issues taken up by our contributors will include, but not limited to, issues of the press, media audience, and new media matters. The hope also remains to include in the future contributions from media practitioners and researchers beyond the Department in the form of commentaries or critical reviews.

This *Cambodian Communication Review 2010*, the first of our annual series, is the result of a combined 18-month endeavor by the DMC and its contributors. We include in this 2010 volume (1) a snapshot of the recent Cambodian media scene by ways of contextual and substantive indicators, and (2) four research studies by our faculty and students in their senior year.

The media snapshot section assembles the currently scattered information related to Cambodian media. It is hoped that these indicators can be of benefit to those interested in Cambodian media in two manners. First, it serves basically as a starting point for those new to the scene by providing these indicators. Second, it helps to maintain an overall updated picture of Cambodian media, which can over a period of time initiate insights and open for more inquiries. We, therefore, hope to demonstrate the changes in these indicators in the next volumes.

The four articles are empirical studies resulting from research projects by our faculty and students, and these studies supply us with captivating findings on media use and users in ways unprecedented in a Cambodian context:

- (1) The first article, initiated by first author Saray, looks into the use behaviors and motivations among Cambodian Facebook users by using an online survey, making it a fascinating project in both originality and methodological choice. With Facebook and the Internet's user-generated-content functionality in general having taken over a good share of public discourse, this study is indeed a timely intellectual endeavor.
- (2) The second article, by Chea, is the most adventurous in both the topic and methodology. Blogging is immensely popular in public discussion and for media sensationalism. The bottom line is that blogging may indeed be an empowering tool, yet the public and media sensationalism about the 'new' and 'celebrated' social practices may be overblown, especially in popular discussions of 'citizen journalism' and digital empowerment. In fact, the real impact of the Internet can only be apprehended at a level of everyday practice, and the author of this article has done just that by addressing the central question "How does blogging empower women?" It was an exhilarating yet extremely demanding project for the author to combine online survey, textual analysis, and in-depth interviews together with a strong theoretical framework of community formation. The significance of Chea's study is further multiplied by the focus of her research on young women, whose voice has unjustly been marginalized in the gender- and age-hierarchical Cambodia. An earlier draft of this article was presented at the regionally prominent 19<sup>th</sup> Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC) Conference on 21-23 June 2010, in Singapore.
- (3) The third article, by Yinn, moves away from the 'new' media and returns to the 'old', yet never appearing to lose its significance, print medium. It is a common knowledge that sensationalism is rampant in Cambodian newspapers and magazines, even to a level that some would speculate it as normative and well receptive by the readers. Nonetheless, no one has made a systematic and empirical attempt to tell us how this rampant sensationalism – violent, sexual and emotive – is received by their readers. Only now has Yinn done so by surveying market vendors in Phnom Penh, a primary audience of Cambodian print media, with rather statistically challenging yet insightful analyses.
- (4) The last article is an initial report on some of the findings from a research project by Peou and Chea on the oft-discussed issue of public access venues for the Internet. Internet cafés, deemed important for an infrastructurally-challenged society like Cambodia, have been well studied, of course outside Cambodia. Therefore, this is probably up to now the first – at least publicly available – empirically-based study on their patrons in Cambodia. Though the findings may have been expected from the experience of other countries, a certain degree of significance and relevance remains for understanding the issue in a normally-speculated Cambodian context.

These studies deserve praise not only for their captivating results, but also for their intensive labor. The first three studies – on Facebook, blogging, and news sensationalism – were conducted over an intensive period of ten months, each by the (main) author as his/her research project for the graduation requirement of a four-year degree at the DMC. They were afterward improved and re-written over a period of several months (amidst their author's other professional and personal commitments), one with further collaboration with secondary authors, into an article format for this volume. The last article, which reported preliminary results on the Internet use by patrons at Internet shops and Wi-Fi cafés, came from a 10-month study implemented at the Department of Media and Communication.

It must be admitted, though, that this is *not* a peer-reviewed publication. The articles here are a collection of studies by researchers and students new both to the field and research at large, yet striving for scholarly worth – as subjective as it can be – has indeed been our main aspiration. This volume has gone through 6 months of writing, editing and proofreading in the making. It should also be noted that the presentation of the results employs a lot of graphical illustrations, and the length of each article is kept at a minimum. This is in keeping with our primary target readers: students and practitioners with interest and commitment to the media and communication, or related, fields. We hope the graphical illustrations and such a short length of each article provide a convenient reading experience. All others with all levels of interest, or simply with curiosity in our works, are also welcome. Our main endeavor is, as mentioned from the very beginning of this preface, to open up the possibility of understanding the media and communication-related issues in Cambodia beyond the routine discussions of the (political) press. In addition, students and learners, specifically, are encouraged to take on the challenge of building knowledge – one of the most precious human inventions, not natural givens – which has been led by example by the student contributors in this volume.

Humble in scope yet ambitious in vision, the *Cambodian Communication Review 2010* has tried to make the best use of DMC's resources and the capacity of its faculty and students. No work can deny room for improvement and further challenge, and we keenly look forward to constructive criticisms and comments – or even any blooper found.

Peou, Chivoïn  
December 2010





## Cambodian Media Snapshot 2010

This section provides a number of indicators for grasping an overall picture of the state of media in Cambodia by assembling the currently scattered information related to Cambodian media. Existing data are both limited in quantity and challenging in currency and accuracy. What is offered here is a brief snapshot by way of presenting existing indicators from a number of sources. These indicators are collated from different points in time, and they are every now and again at odds. Therefore, the sources are acknowledged here for every indicator, so that the readers can further access the sources and evaluate their currency and accuracy. We first present a set of contextual indicators for Cambodia, from demographic to economic and socio-political, so as to allow the readers to draw a contextual sketch of the country to which the subsequent media indicators are related. Following the media-related contextual country indicators, we present accessible indicators, in order, for Cambodian newspaper, magazine, radio, television, cinema and audio-visual production, the Internet, and the telephone.

### 1. CONTEXTUAL COUNTRY INDICATORS

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
<b>Demographic</b>		
Total population, 2008	13,395,682	Population Census 2008
Urban population, 2008	2,614,027 (19.5%)	Population Census 2008
Phnom Penh population, 2008	1,327,615 (9.9%)	Population Census 2008
Population growth rate, 2008	1.54%	Population Census 2008
Youth (15-19) population, 2008	31.53%	Population Census 2008
Urban youth (15-19) population, 2008	39.33%	Population Census 2008
Life expectancy at birth, 2008 estimate (M : F)	60.5 : 64.3	Population Census 2008
Number of households (average size), 2008	2,841,897 (4.7)	Population Census 2008
Number of urban households, 2008	506,579	Population Census 2008
Adult literacy rate (countrywide), 2008	77.6%	Population Census 2008
Adult literacy rate (urban), 2008	90.4%	Population Census 2008
Adult English literacy rate, 2008	3.25%	Population Census 2008
Tertiary enrollment, 2008, % gross (M : F)	7% (9% : 5%)	UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2010)
<b>Economic &amp; Socio-Political</b>		
GDP per capita, 2008	US\$ 739	National Institute of Statistics
Human Development Index (HDI) 2010 ranking	124 of 169	UNDP Human Development Report
Ease of Doing Business ranking 2011	147	World Bank (2010)
Higher educational institutions (countrywide), 2009	84	Ministry of Education, Youth & Sport (2010)
Higher educational institutions (Phnom Penh), 2009	39	Ministry of Education, Youth & Sport (2010)
People living on less than US\$2/day (PPP, 2005 price), 2007	57.83%	World Bank (2010)
People living below national poverty line, 2007	30.14%	World Bank (2010)
Income share held by highest 20%, 2007	52.0%	World Bank (2010)
Income share held by lowest 20%, 2007	6.5%	World Bank (2010)
ICT goods exports (% of total goods exports), 2004	0.1%	UN Comtrade
ICT goods imports (% of total goods imports), 2004	2.1%	UN Comtrade
Global Competitiveness Index 2009-2010	110 of 133	World Economic Forum
Legatum Prosperity Index 2009 ranking	93 of 104	The Legatum Institute
Bartelsmann Transformation Index 2010 ranking	100 of 128	Bartelsmann Foundation
Network Readiness Index 2009 ranking	117 of 134	World Economic Forum
Freedom of the Press 2009 ranking	132 of 195	Freedom House
Press Freedom Index 2009 ranking	126 of 175	Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

## 2. NEWSPAPER

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
Registered Khmer-language newspapers in Phnom Penh, 2010	226 <sup>a</sup>	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Registered non-Khmer-language newspapers in Phnom Penh, 2010	33 <sup>a</sup>	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Foreign-language newspapers, 2010	5	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Local press-related associations, 2010	17 <sup>b</sup>	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Foreign press service representatives, 2010	11	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)

<sup>a</sup>The number of regularly printed and circulated newspapers is extremely smaller, and 'registered newspapers' are of various forms, including dailies, weeklies and monthlies, and of various qualities including tabloids and classifieds sheets. The number here includes commercial and non-commercial papers.

<sup>b</sup>The number of functional associations has not been verified.

## 3. MAGAZINE

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
Registered Khmer-language magazines in Phnom Penh, 2010	150 <sup>c</sup>	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Registered non-Khmer-language magazines in Phnom Penh, 2010	26	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)

<sup>c</sup>The number of regularly circulated magazines is smaller, and 'registered magazines' have very different circulation sizes and periodicities. The number here includes commercial and non-commercial magazines. The number of regularly published commercial Khmer-language magazines is just over 20.

## 4. RADIO

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
Radio stations countrywide, 2010	74 (36 in P.P.) <sup>d</sup>	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Relay stations (in 12 provinces), 2010	25	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
FM frequencies countrywide, 2010	73	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
AM frequencies countrywide, 2010	2	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Foreign services in Khmer language, 2010	5 (ABC, CRI, RFA, RFI, & VOA)	N/A
International broadcasters (in foreign languages) received in Cambodia, 2010	4 (ABC, BBC, CRI, RFI)	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Commercial radio frequencies countrywide, 2010	52 (25 in P.P.)	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Percentage of households owning at least a radio set, 2008	40.81%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning at least a radio set, 2008	50.35%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of rural households owning at least a radio set, 2008	38.72%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of households owning two radio sets or more, 2008	1.48%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning two radio sets or more, 2008	3.78%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of rural households owning two radio sets or more, 2008	0.97%	Population Census 2008

<sup>d</sup>Radio stations located outside Phnom Penh are in twelve provinces: Battambang, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Cham, Kampong Thom, Kampot, Kratie, Pailin, Pursat, Rattanakiri, Sihanoukville, Svay Rieng, and Takeo

## 5. TELEVISION

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
Local broadcast channels in Phnom Penh <sup>e</sup> , 2010	9	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Relay stations by foreign broadcasters in Phnom Penh, 2010	2	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Commercial broadcasters, 2010	8	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
State broadcaster, 2010	1	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Relay stations by local broadcasters in provinces, 2010	43	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Cable TV providers <sup>f</sup> , 2010	2	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Number of channels by cable TV providers, 2010	65-68	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Direct-to-home satellite TV provider, 2010	1	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Percentage of households owning at least a TV set, 2008	58.41%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning at least a TV set, 2008	80.81%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of rural households owning at least a TV set, 2008	53.5%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of households owning two TV sets or more, 2008	3.18%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning two TV sets or more, 2008	11.93%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of rural households owning two TV sets or more, 2008	1.26%	Population Census 2008

<sup>e</sup>Relay stations exist in some provinces while the signals from Phnom Penh are received in many provinces.

<sup>f</sup>Most internationally popular channels, such as BBC, CNN, National Geographic, MTV, HBO and the like, are available through these cable services. The cable TV providers also have their own entertainment channels, including 24-hour DVD movies and Khmer-dubbed dramas and music.

## 6. CINEMA & AUDIO-VISUAL PRODUCTION

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
Production companies <sup>g</sup> registered, 2010	120	Department of Film & Cultural Dissemination (2010)
Number of films and TV dramas licensed, 2009	27 to 28 <sup>h</sup>	Department of Film & Cultural Dissemination (2010)
Number of films and TV dramas licensed, by Sept. 2010	38 <sup>h</sup>	Department of Film & Cultural Dissemination (2010)
Number of karaoke video volumes licensed, 2009	127 to 136	Department of Film & Cultural Dissemination (2010)
Number of karaoke video volumes licensed, by Sept. 2010	112	Department of Film & Cultural Dissemination (2010)
Commercial cinema houses in Phnom Penh, 2010	2 <sup>i</sup>	N/A
Cinema houses in provinces, 2010	9	[According to an in-charge official at the Dept. of Film & Cult. (2010)]

<sup>g</sup>A production company may produce any type of audio-visual products including, but not limited, films, karaoke videos, or music.

<sup>h</sup>TV dramas produced by TV stations do not require licensing from the Department of Film and Cultural Dissemination, thus excluded here.

<sup>i</sup>An in-charge official at the Department of Film and Cultural Dissemination claimed up to four commercial cinema houses, but we deemed two of them inappropriate as 'commercial cinema houses'.

**7. INTERNET**

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
Internet users in Cambodia, by June 2010	113,380	www.internetworldstats.com (accessed Sept. 2010)
Internet users in Cambodia, 2009	78,000 <sup>j</sup>	ITU (2010)
Internet users per 100 inhabitants, 2009	0.53 <sup>j</sup>	ITU (2010)
Internet subscriptions in Cambodia, 2009	18,000	ITU (2010)
Internet subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, 2009	0.12	ITU (2010)
Broadband subscriptions in Cambodia, 2009	30,000	ITU (2010)
Broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, 2009	0.20	ITU (2010)
Internet Service Providers (ISP) licensed, by 2009	34 <sup>k</sup>	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (2010)
Total domain names, by Oct. 11, 2010	2,145	webhosting.info (accessed Oct. 2010)
Ranking for domain names, by Oct. 11, 2010	129	webhosting.info (accessed Oct. 2010)
Total .kh domain names, 2009	1080	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (2010)
Number of Internet cafés, 2009	229 (118 in P.P.)	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (2010)
Number of Internet cafés, 2010 estimate	320 (120 in P.P.)	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (2010)
Personal computer per 100 people, 2008	0.4	WB – ICT At-a-Glance (2010)
Percentage of households owning a personal computer, 2008	3.65%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning a personal computer, 2008	15.76%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of rural households owning a personal computer, 2008	1.00%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning two personal computers or more, 2008	2.60%	Population Census 2008

<sup>j</sup>The number of Internet users and the Internet penetration rate in 2009 were much higher according to the 'estimates' by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (about 291,000 users and 2.08%, respectively).

<sup>k</sup>Most provide services only in Phnom Penh or/and other urban areas, and a few offer mobile Internet.

**8. TELEPHONE**

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
Fixed telephone lines, 2009 <sup>l</sup>	54,200	ITU (2010)
	100,887	MPTC (2009)
Fixed telephone lines per 100 inhabitants, 2009 <sup>l</sup>	0.37	ITU (2010)
	2.08	MPTC (2009)
Mobile subscriptions, 2009 <sup>l</sup>	5,593,000	ITU (2010)
	6,346,721	MPTC (2009)
Mobile subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, 2009 <sup>l</sup>	37.78	ITU (2010)
	45.33	MPTC (2009)
Ratio of mobile subscriptions to fixed lines, 2009	103.2:1	ITU (2010)
Mobile operators, 2009	9	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (2010)
Mobile sets in use, by March 2010	7,115,246	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (2010)
Desk phone sets in use, by March 2010	108,882	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (2010)
Mobile phones per 100 persons, 2005	6.09	NIS – Statistical Year Book 2006

Mobile phones per 100 persons aged 15 and over, 2005	10.10	NIS – Statistical Year Book 2006
Percentage of households owning a telephone, 2008	1.13%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning telephone, 2008	3.44%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of rural households owning a telephone, 2008	0.62%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of households owning at least a mobile phone, 2008	37.35%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning at least a mobile phone, 2008	76.16%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of rural households owning at least a mobile phone, 2008	28.84%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of households owning two mobile phones or more, 2008	11.30%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning two mobile phones or more, 2008	40.90%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of rural households owning two mobile phones or more, 2008	4.81%	Population Census 2008

<sup>1</sup>*There are discrepancies between figures by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and those by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MPTC), and the figures from both sources are given accordingly.*

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## Fun, Friendship and Socialization: Facebook by Cambodian Users

SARAY Samadee  
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### ABSTRACT

An online survey of 468 Cambodian Facebook users was conducted to examine their use behaviors and use motivations. The study found that Facebook has increasingly become integrated into Cambodian Internet users' daily experience as more than half of the users surveyed used Facebook at least once a day and another one-third used it several times a week. An exploratory factor analysis produced three types of use motivations among Cambodian Facebook users: fun seeking, socializing and friendship maintaining. Their use motivations varied according to gender and current residing location, with more males than females and more of those living in Cambodia than those overseas seeking fun and socializing on Facebook. The study concluded that Facebook has become integrated into its users' daily life experience, though with varying motivations, and that the usage impacts should be further investigated in relation to education, employment and social relations.

**Key words:** *Social networking sites (SNS), Facebook, Cambodia, uses and gratifications, Internet*

### INTRODUCTION

Searching for information and e-mailing have been the main uses for the Internet since its diffusion into the public domain in the early 1990s. However, the emergence of 'social networking sites' (SNS), and the phenomenal advent of Facebook for public use in 2006 in particular, has popularized a new function of the Internet, which is to make "friends" and create so-called "networks."

In 2004, Facebook, in its origin, was created to be only a means of connection among students at Harvard University with a harvard.edu email address. Facebook began to spread to other universities soon afterward, but still users were required to have a university email address. In 2005, Facebook was expanded to allow high school students, and a year later in 2006 professionals, business people and eventually everyone of age 13 and older with a valid email address to join, thus turning itself arguably to be the world's most popular social networking site with its total number of users passing 500 million in July 2010. The United States, Indonesia, the United Kingdom, Turkey and France were at the time of this report the top five countries with the highest numbers of Facebook users, according to the company's website.

As of July 2010, among all the Facebook users worldwide, about 85,000 were registered as from Cambodia (Facebakers.com, accessed July 2010). However, the registration statistic is for certain much higher than the number of real users, mainly due to the fact that multiple

registrations are possible and many registrations are by organizations and groups. The Internet World Stats estimated the number of Cambodian Facebook *users* at 13,380 as of August 2010. Though insignificant compared to the total 500 million users, the number has an intriguing significance with regards to the total number of Internet users in Cambodia (approximately 78,000 users, according to the International Telecommunication Union's 2009 figure). Despite a small discrepancy in these figures and their estimation procedures, one can make a confident claim that the majority of Cambodian Internet users have a Facebook account, regardless of their (in-)activity on the site.

It can also be postulated that the number of Cambodian Facebook users will be on constant rise along with the growing number of the country's Internet users as well as the increasingly integrated functions of the Internet – entertainment, information seeking and socializing – among young users (Peou, 2010). An attempt to understand how and why Facebook is used among Cambodian users, i.e. their Facebook activities and motivations, should therefore be a priority for researchers in the field of media and communication as well as policy and other stakeholders in education and ICT industry, and hence the aim of this study.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Media Uses and Gratifications Perspective (U&G)**

The perspective of media uses and gratifications emerged in the 1940s when researchers, witnessing the growing powerful role of media in public communication and opinions, began to question why people were attracted to media content such as that of radio and newspaper (McQuail, 1983). Unlike a mechanistic perspective which assumes media have direct and uncomplicated influence on behaviors and attitude change of audience members, who are supposed to be passive and reactive (see Bryant & Oliver, 2009), uses and gratifications perspective considers audience members as active users or consumers of a medium or media content, i.e. advocating for the determination of agency. That is, individuals make their own choices, influenced by mediating factors – social, cultural and psychological – in consuming media to fulfill their needs or goals. In other words, the focus in this perspective is not what effects the media have on people, but what people choose to do with the media, and therefore media consumption is one among a wide range of activities one chooses to do to satisfy certain needs (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974). From this perspective, Katz and his colleagues suggest communication researchers study the people and their media use for three objectives: "(a) to explain how people use media to gratify their needs, (b) to understand motives for media behaviors, and (c) to identify functions or consequences that follow from needs, motives, and behaviors" (see Bryant & Oliver, 2009, p. 166-167).

With the resurgent popularity of the uses and gratifications perspective about three decades ago, studies on motivations of people in consuming a particular medium or media content have been conducted by many. For instance, Rubin's (1981) study on television viewing motivations among 626 respondents, ranging from 4 to 89 years old, found a set of nine goals associated with television consumption: passing time, companionship, arousal,

content, relaxation, information, escape, entertainment, and social interaction. Also these goals or viewing motivations were influenced by a range of factors including age, viewing levels, viewing behavior and attitudes, and program preferences. For instance, there were negative relationships between (1) age and (2) escapist viewing, passing-time viewing, arousal viewing, and social viewing, while positive associations were detected between (1) the level of television viewing and (2) passing-time viewing, companionship viewing, viewing for entertainment, arousal viewing, viewing for specific content, informational viewing, escapist viewing, and viewing for relaxation. Also, a higher level of attachment to television was associated with a higher likelihood of viewing television for all types of viewing goals, except viewing to increase social interaction (Rubin, 1981). What his study suggests is that media consumers were active agents in forming beliefs about a particular medium, identifying their needs and taking action to meet those needs.

This theoretical perspective was applied in Tewksburry and Althaus's (2000) study on the utilization of the World Wide Web among students at a U.S. university, and they confirmed that such gratifications as entertainment, surveillance and passing time, which were typical of traditional media consumption, were applicable in understanding the reasons behind the use of the Internet. Nonetheless, their study was conducted at the time when the Internet was used in a context different from the present Web 2.0 environment, in which the Internet is saturated with the interactive and user-generative capability. Indeed the functionality of the Internet has diversified to the extent that accepting the Internet as one medium, and consequently the traditional media gratifications attached to it, is far from sufficient. Indeed, the Internet at present is both a technology and a space, and a many-to-many communication mode as opposed to the one-to-many mode of traditional media. In other words, the Internet should be considered as a platform of many different media and communication modes. Thus, understanding motivations of specific uses or functions of the Internet – rather the Internet per se, and by differentiated groups of users, deserves prioritization if the knowledge of the Internet is to be kept up with its proliferation, and the attempt to explore the use motivations of Facebook among its Cambodian users in this article is one example.

### **Motivations behind the Use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs)**

The growing popularity of social networking sites (SNSs) in the last several years, after their humble emergence in the late 1990s, has renewed research interest in uses and gratifications in order to understand the motivations behind the use of these sites. Many research studies have been conducted on uses and gratifications of SNSs among adolescents and young adults, who tend to be early adopters of new technologies. For instance, Urista, Dong and Day (2008) conducted an exploratory study employing focus group discussions to understand how undergraduate students from a university in the U.S. used social networking sites to fulfill their needs and wants. The results revealed that these young adults used social networking sites, mainly MySpace and Facebook, because the sites provided them with (1) an efficient way to communicate with their friends, (2) convenient communication with their friends and family, (3) information about people in whom they are interested, (4) popularity (as they attempted to add more friends and received many

comments from other members), and (5) relationship formation and reinforcement (Urista et al., 2008).

Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) explored the reasons among college students from a U.S. university of having and not having MySpace and Facebook accounts, the two most popular “friend-networking” sites (p. 170) at the time among high school and college students in the U.S. Their survey revealed that the main reasons for the surveyed students to have either a MySpace or Facebook account included: “to keep in touch with old friends,” “to keep in touch with current friends,” “to post or look at pictures,” “to make new friends,” and “to locate old friends,” while the least popular motives included: “to post social functions,” “to feel connected,” “to share information about yourself,” and “for academic and dating purposes” (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008, p. 171). The two most popular responses for not having an account on MySpace or Facebook were “I just have no desire to have an account” and “I am too busy” (p.171). In addition, the authors also found that gender significantly affected the frequency of using the two sites, with males more likely than females to log into their account frequently, to change appearance of their web pages frequently, and to have more friends linked to their accounts, while females more likely than males to set their web pages to ‘private’ (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008).

Baltraretu and Balaban (2010) examined the underlying motivations of young students who used social networking sites frequently, who did not use the sites frequently, and who did not use the sites at all, through a series of focus group discussions. Participants in the first group discussion, who accessed their SNS profiles at least twice a week, agreed that online social networks did help them strengthen their friendship, whereas in the second focus group the participants, who did not use the sites frequently (i.e. less than once a week), felt that using SNSs was a waste of time for them and the bonds formed by SNSs were superficial, and that they could only maintain, but not strengthen, friendship on those sites. Those who chose not to use the sites at all claimed that the relationships on SNSs were ‘fake’, and it was a superficial way of communication that could not sustain a real relationship (Baltraretu & Balaban, 2010).

Based on these and other examples, one may conclude that Internet users are active agents in seeking gratifications from it and, more importantly, from its different functions, or in other words using the Internet or its different functions in different ways to satisfy their different needs. With an attempt to understand, partially indeed, the Facebook phenomenon in Cambodia on the one hand, and to offer a comparative comprehension of the use and functions of SNSs on the other, this study explores the use behaviors and motivations of Cambodian users of Facebook, aiming to answer the following questions:

1. Who are Cambodian Facebook users and what are their use behaviors?
2. What are their motivations behind using Facebook?
3. How do their use motivations differ by gender and current residing location?

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Data Collection

A total number of 468 respondents participated in the survey after one of the researchers distributed the link of the online questionnaire to approximately 1,500 Facebook users connected to the researcher's Facebook account, with a response rate of 32%. The approximate 1,500-user network, out of which the sample was drawn, was created in September 2009 and afterward expanded through a snowballing process, first from a personal network and later to include users from a diverse range of ties to the researcher. At the time of the data collection, this network consisted of the lead author's friends, former and current classmates, relatives, acquaintances, professionals at both private and public sectors and at NGOs connected through one way or another, and 'only-online' acquaintances. The data were collected within a period of three weeks in March 2010 using the SurveyMonkey online survey application. The questionnaire was comprised of three main parts: respondents' demographic data, their Facebook use behavior, and a number of scale statements for factor analyzing their motivations for Facebook use.

### Measure

*Use motivation* of Facebook was measured by the respondents' responses to 12 scale statements on the reasons why they used Facebook. The statements were created based on the typology of SNS users established by a study of the UK's Office of Communication (Ofcom, 2008), which categorized SNS users into five types: alpha socialisers, attention seekers, followers, faithfuls and functionals. An exploratory factor analysis of the 12 statements produced three discernible use motivations of Facebook among Cambodian users: fun seeking, socializing and friendship maintaining (three statement items were omitted to increase the overall internal reliability, *see Table 1*):

1. Fun seeking: looking for fun and enjoyment on Facebook;
2. Socializing: getting to know more people on Facebook; and
3. Friendship maintaining: keeping track of one's own friends and/or maintaining communication, however (in-)frequent, with existing friends or acquaintances.

### Sample

The total sample of 468 Cambodian Facebook users was comprised of 72.2% males and 27.6% females (one respondent did not identify gender), with four distinct age groups: 17 or younger (1.9%), between 18 and 24 (44.9%), between 25 and 29 (39.3%), and 30 or older (10.9%). Of all the respondents, 73.1% were residing in Cambodia and 26.1% overseas at the time of data collection, for either permanent residency or studying, including the United States, Japan, Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, New Zealand and a few others in Asia. About one-third of the Cambodian Facebook users participating in the survey were employees at private firms, just a bit less than one-third undergraduate students, and the rest NGO workers, graduate students, civil servants, self-employed and high school students. (*See Table 2*)

**Table 1:** Rotated factor loadings and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the three constructs of Facebook use motivation

Items	Factor 1: Fun seeking	Factor 2: Socializing	Factor 3: Friendship maintaining
<b>Factor 1: Fun seeking (<math>\alpha=.74</math>)</b>			
I enjoy fulfilling my needs on Facebook.	.836		
I enjoy doing hobbies on Facebook.	.811		
I enjoy pursuing interest on Facebook.	.755		
I enjoy flirting on Facebook.	.535		
<b>Factor 2: Socializing (<math>\alpha=.55</math>)</b>			
I enjoy meeting new people on Facebook.		.814	
I find Facebook a good way to socialize.		.740	
<b>Factor 3: Friendship maintaining (<math>\alpha=.65</math>)</b>			
I enjoy finding my old friends on Facebook.			.753
I keep logging in Facebook because most of my friends are there.			.745
I enjoy keeping up with friends on Facebook.			.654
<i>Total variance explained 64.32%, with overall Cronbach <math>\alpha=.76</math></i>			

**Table 2:** Sample Characteristics

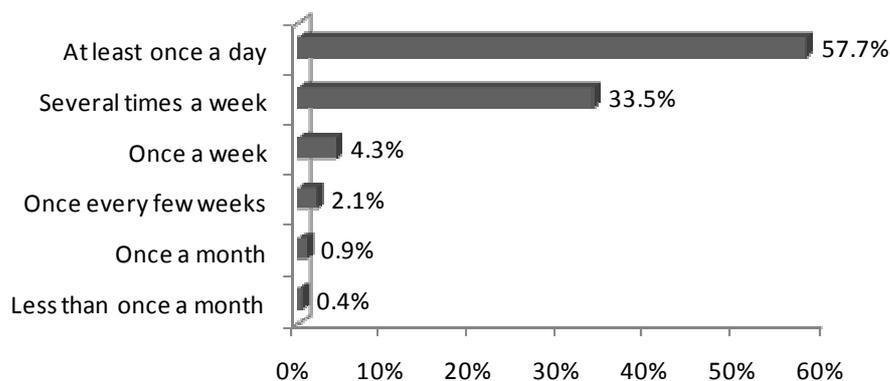
Demographics (N=468)	Respondents	Percent
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	338	72.2%
Female	129	27.6%
Undisclosed	1	0.2%
<i>Age</i>		
≤ 17	9	1.9%
18-24	210	44.9%
25-29	184	39.3%
≥30	51	10.9%
Undisclosed	14	3.0%
<i>Current residency</i>		
Cambodia	342	73.1%
Overseas	122	26.1%
Undisclosed	4	0.8%
<i>Occupation</i>		
Employee at private firm	143	30.6%
Undergraduate student	127	27.1%
NGO worker	59	12.6%
Graduate student	56	12.0%
Civil servant	23	4.9%
Self-employed	23	4.9%
High school student	12	2.6%
Others	23	4.9%
Undisclosed	2	0.4%

## FINDINGS

### RQ1: Cambodian Facebook Users and Their Use Behavior<sup>1</sup>

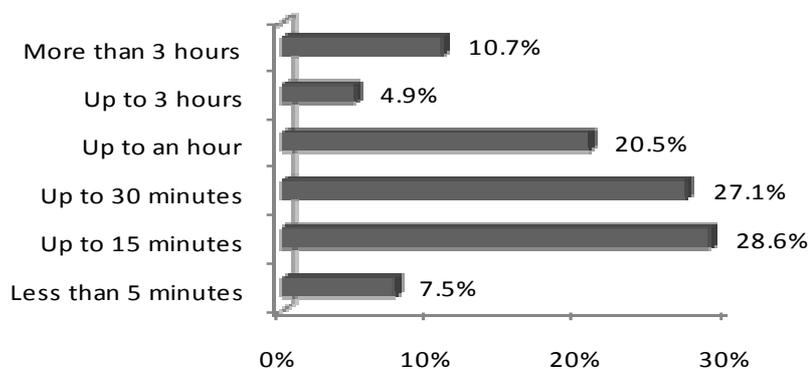
Although the exact roles of Facebook in Cambodian users' everyday life are not known, it is suggested from the data that Facebook usage is a staple, daily activity for the majority of Cambodian Facebook users surveyed, with more than half of them using the site – regardless of usage duration – at least once a day, and another one-third using the site several times a week. Only few of the respondents went on Facebook once a week or fewer. (See Figure 1)

**Figure 1: Frequency of Facebook Use**



While usage frequency is informative, the time spent on each Facebook log-in can give further insight. From the data, although Cambodian Facebook users varied considerably in terms of each log-in time span, using Facebook appeared to be a rather time-consuming activity. More than one-third of those surveyed (a combined 36%) used the site up to an hour or longer for each log-in period. The most common time spans per log-in among the respondents were up to 30 minutes and up to 15 minutes (27.1% and 28.6% respectively). Only a tiny group was very light users in terms of time span per log-in occasion, 7.5% using it for less than 5 minutes. (See Figure 2)

**Figure 2: Time Spent on Facebook Each Log-in**

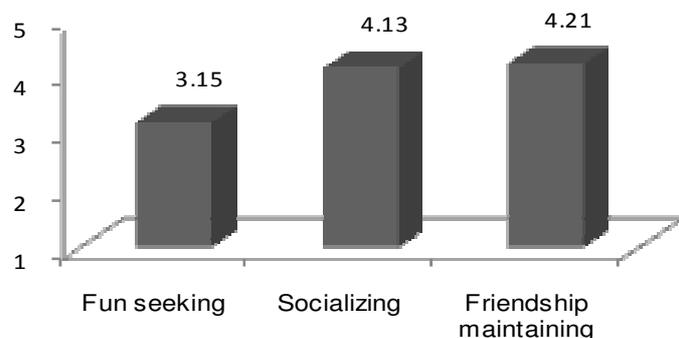


<sup>1</sup> The results here are restricted to only those Facebook users participating in the online survey. They cannot be generalized to all Cambodian Facebook users due to its non-random sampling procedure and response rate of 32%, a common limitation of online survey.

## RQ2: Use Motivations among Cambodian Facebook Users

An exploratory factor analysis (see Table 1 in Research Method section above) produced three constructs of Facebook use motivations: *fun seeking* (looking for fun and enjoyment on Facebook), *socializing* (getting to know more people on Facebook), and *friendship maintaining* (keeping track of one's own friends and/or maintaining communication, however (in-)frequent, with existing friends or acquaintances). Of all the three use motivations, friendship maintaining was the most common among the respondents (with a mean score of 4.21 on a 1-to-5-point Likert scale). Utilizing Facebook to socialize, i.e. to meet or get connected to more people, came a close second (with a mean score of 4.13). Getting fun from the site was the least common among the Cambodian users surveyed (with a mean score of 3.15). (See Figure 3)

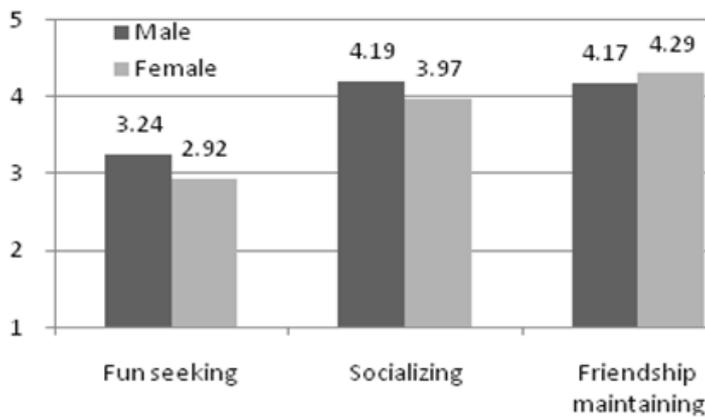
**Figure 3: Facebook Use Motivations**  
(Mean scores are on 1-to-5- point Likert scale)



## RQ3: Facebook Use Motivations by Gender and Location

Socio-economic conditions have always been central to gaps in media use and technological adoption, ranging from traditional media consumption to diffusion of new technological device. Keeping up with this 'divide' discourse and yet constrained by the limited data available at hands, this study tries to explore whether or not the use motivations of Facebook among our respondents differed by gender and their current residing location. The analyses suggested the following 'divide' indications. Firstly, male users used Facebook for fun seeking and socializing more than their female counterparts ( $t=3.15$ ,  $p<.01$  for fun seeking;  $t=2.22$ ,  $p<.05$  for socializing, see Figure 4). The difference in using the site to maintain friendship between males and females was too slight to be of any significance. Secondly, the same differential pattern also applied when the users' motivations were compared between those residing in Cambodia and those overseas. Cambodian Facebook users living in Cambodia tended to utilize Facebook for fun seeking and socializing more than those living abroad ( $t=2.17$ ,  $p<.05$  for fun seeking;  $t=2.42$ ,  $p<.05$  for socializing, see Figure 5). Again, the use of Facebook among our respondents to maintain existing friendship or network appeared to be at similar levels between those in Cambodia and those overseas.

**Figure 4: Use Motivations by Gender**  
(Mean scores are on 1-to-5-point Likert scale)

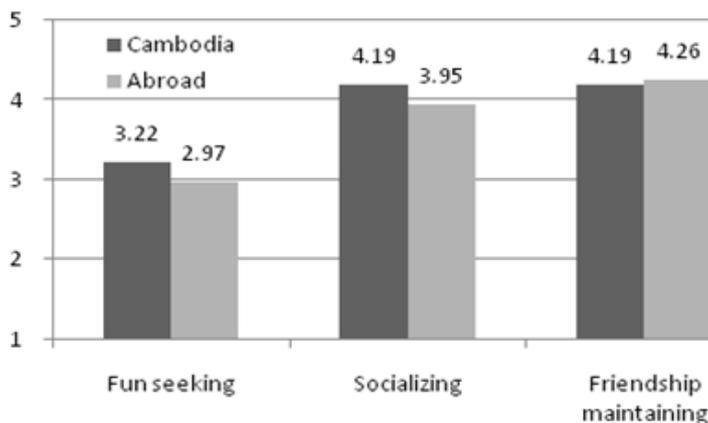


Motivation	Sex		Mean <sup>a</sup>	S.D.	t	Sig.
	Male	Female				
Fun Seeking	Male	3.24	0.97	3.15	.002 <sup>b</sup>	
	Female	2.92	0.89			
Socializing	Male	4.19	0.81	2.22	.027 <sup>c</sup>	
	Female	3.97	0.92			
Friendship Maintaining	Male	4.17	0.76	-1.3	.194	
	Female	4.29	0.81			

<sup>a</sup> All mean values are on 1-to-5-point Likert scale

<sup>b</sup> Significant at  $p < .01$ . <sup>c</sup> Significant at  $p < .05$

**Figure 5: Use Motivation by Current Residing Location**  
(Mean scores are on 1-to-5-point Likert scale)



Motivation	Current Residency		Mean <sup>a</sup>	S.D.	t	Sig.
	Cambodia	Abroad				
Fun Seeking	Cambodia	3.22	0.93	2.17	.031 <sup>b</sup>	
	Abroad	2.97	1.00			
Socializing	Cambodia	4.19	0.81	2.42	.016 <sup>b</sup>	
	Abroad	3.95	0.92			
Friendship Maintaining	Cambodia	4.19	0.77	-0.8	.422	
	Abroad	4.26	0.80			

<sup>a</sup> All mean values are on 1-to-5-point Likert scale

<sup>b</sup> Significant at  $p < .05$

## DISCUSSION

A study on the Internet as a technology encounters a challenge in drawing decisive conclusions due to its rapid growth in reach and functions. From the Internet's formative years in the 1970s and 1980s to its introduction into public use in the 1990s and to the moment of this writing, the Internet's growth has not ground to a halt in terms of the number of users, how it is used and for what it is used. This relentless evolution has led to enormously diverse theorizations and opinions, with the Internet being projected contradictorily as both a development tool and oppression mechanism, both a public sphere and an arena for hate speech, both a community and an addictive technology (Sarikakis & Thussu, 2006). But what may be indisputable is the Internet has become an integral part of political, economic, and cultural transformations both at a global level (Castells, 2001, 2010) and on local grounds (see Servaes, 2007). While confirming the transformative role played by the Internet, this study, though with its typical limitation online data collection, has offered two particular insights into a popular functionality of Internet in the first decade of the new millennium, i.e. the so-called 'social networking'.

What is most noticeable, first of all, is the growing integration of Facebook into its users' daily lives. It is evident from the data here that Facebook has become a daily activity for the majority and almost-daily activity for most respondents. Keeping in mind that the number of Facebook users<sup>2</sup> and that of Internet users keep increasing both worldwide and in Cambodia, and that applications on Facebook are plenty with more being produced and released relentlessly, this integrating trend has no end in sight, not least among Cambodian users. This growing integration of Facebook into its users' life experience is consistent with the results of a recent survey on Internet use among Cambodian students conducted by the Department of Media and Communication of the Royal University of Phnom Penh (likely the only publicly available one to date), which reckon that the Internet has indeed become an integral experience of those students, who utilize the technology for not only information seeking, but also entertainment and socialization (Peou, 2010). Also, this trend is not exceptional to Cambodia, for Facebook permits its users to utilize it for a diversity of goals, ranging from tracking down old friends to keeping up with current acquaintances, from expressing feelings to talking to friends, and from playing games to meeting new people (Baltaretu & Balaban, 2010; Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Subrahmanyam et al., 2008; Urista et al., 2008). The confirmation of such trend leads to a number of problematic issues for researchers and policy makers. First, what may be the effects of the increased use per se of Facebook and other social networking sites, especially as it has become so popular that a number of Cambodian social networking sites have been trying to gain ground for starting up as well? Second and more specifically, in-keeping with the uses and gratifications perspective, what are the consequences on specific human needs when those needs are gratified by or sought through these functions of the Internet? Laying bare these 'effects' requires a long-term commitment and has to acknowledge the associated variables of gender, education, age, and even the institutional and psychological state of adoption. Subjecting such understanding to the demographic findings of the Cambodian Facebook users here – the fact that almost all users were either students or employees, we believe there are three areas of inquiry that require immediate investigation in terms of the effects of social networking sites in Cambodian context: education, professional work, and social relationships. A number of initial questions include: How does the use of social networking sites change their performance and experience of education, employment and social relationships? In which way are social networking sites, if at all can they be, used to enhance the performance and experience of education, employment and social relationships? To what extent, should there be restrictions and/or strategic support for the utilization of social networking sites in education, employment and social relationships?

Along the 'divide' line of debate, we also detect gaps between different groups of Cambodian Facebook users, particularly in their motivations for using the site. The adoption and utilization of a medium or application is always uneven, and here we find males more than females and those living in Cambodia more than those overseas tended to use

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<sup>2</sup> It is indeed estimated that the number of Facebook users is soon to reach 750 million, and Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg believes the number will almost surely reach one billion (according to a BBC's report 'Facebook hits 500m user milestone' on 21 July 2010, retrieved 29 July 2010 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-10713199>)

Facebook to seek fun and socialize. Indeed, it reinforces the uses and gratifications perspective of what users of a medium, content or application do with it to satisfy their needs. Rather testifying such differences for the sake of repeating the existence of such divides (indeed studies after studies have long decisively proved such divides and researchers, like Wallace (1999), have categorically considered the Internet to be a male-dominated space), we propose to implicate these divides in a number of possible inquiries into social networking sites, the Internet, and new technologies at large in Cambodian context: In which ways are 'social networking' and the Internet in general opening up a range of possibilities for appropriation by different users for different ends? How do such differential appropriations translate into changing political and cultural contentions of such domain as gender and socio-economic class? In which way are the user-generated-content functions of the Internet, like the SNS, revolutionizing the free-market logic by creating new producers-cum-consumers and hence creating new kinds of social exclusion? These questions indeed would require the conceptual grounds and methodological tools beyond a survey of facts and trends we used here, in order to get under the surface of these facts and trends. These areas of inquiry in relation to the integration and divide insights discussed above remain open to investigation in a general context and are still untouched in a cultural-specific context like Cambodia, and they are important in *understanding the Internet in everyday life*, as opposed to the futuristic and sensational accounts of early writings on the Internet (Wellman & Haythornthwaite, 2002).

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## Empowering Cambodian Women Psychologically Through Blogging<sup>1</sup>

CHEA Lyda

### ABSTRACT

Following the argument that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have potential roles to empower users, I argue that blogging is empowering, particularly in psychological terms by promoting a sense of agency and of community. In this paper, I explored the way Cambodian female bloggers had been psychologically empowered by their blogging experience employing three methods: in-depth interviews with Cambodian female bloggers, textual analysis of their blogs and an online survey with Cambodian bloggers. First, a sense of agency – feeling in charge of themselves and confident in asserting their voices – is generated by blogging through the creation of a sense of prominence, competence, confidence, assertiveness and control over life functioning among these female bloggers. Second, a sense of community – feeling belonged to a group and thus making their voices heard – is generated when they are able to form a community of people with similar interests and purposes. Blogging motivations and the blogosphere of Cambodian women were also analyzed.

**Key words:** *women's empowerment, sense of agency, sense of community, female bloggers, Cambodia*

### INTRODUCTION

The unceasing development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and their new applications has given many new opportunities for users to enhance their quality of lives and meanwhile to promote information gathering and sharing, which is vital for well-informed citizens. Given evenly distributed access, ICTs have been argued to be, among others, an empowerment tool for women, either individually or collectively (Huyer & Sikoska, 2003), and the Internet does have that potential. The Internet, however, has been thought of as a 'male-dominated' space (Wallace, 1999), which is even more problematic in the developing world like Cambodia, where the Internet was just introduced towards the end of the 1990s and remains a luxury today (less than one per cent of the Cambodian population used the Internet by 2009, according to the estimate by the International Telecommunication Union).

One of the functionalities of the Internet that have attracted interest in how the Internet can contribute to empowerment is blogging, which has been in existence for about a decade now. In Cambodia, blogging came to existence in the early 2000s but remains limited to very few users at present. There has been no official figure on the number of Cambodian bloggers, although a news report by Lodish (2007) gave the number at around 250 by 2007. (The current number of Cambodian bloggers is unknown or may even be lower due to the

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 19<sup>th</sup> Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC) Conference on 21-23 June 2010, in Singapore.

fact that such a technological function may have had an enthusiastic early uptake yet not sustained usage over a long period.) Among these bloggers, only a few are female Cambodians vying for the virtual space dominated by men. Whether these pioneering female Cambodians can make a change by challenging the stereotypical and traditionally hierarchical prescription of Cambodian society remains to be seen and can only be observed retrospectively. Nevertheless, what can be examined at this point in time, which is the central question of this article, is “How do these female bloggers find blogging empowering themselves psychologically?”

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In order to make sense of how blogging can promote psychological empowerment among Cambodian female bloggers, it is worth reviewing existing understandings of why people blog and how empowerment can be conceptualized, especially from women’s perspective.

### **Blogging Motivations**

As a relatively new form of computer-mediated communication or self-publication, blogging has gained popularity among Internet users in the last decade as it allows them to generate their own content and ‘publish’ in their personalized web pages. Many studies have been conducted to understand motivations in creating personal home pages. Previously discovered motivations include passing time, seeking entertainment, getting information, expressing oneself or deeply-felt emotions, articulating ideas, documenting one’s own life and experiences, achieving professional advancement, communicating with friends and family; and forming and maintaining a community (Herring et al., 2004; Papacharissi, 2002). Apart from the self-motivations just listed, the fact that there are viewers or readers out there can also motivate bloggers to continue blogging; as Somolu (2007) argues, “If a blogger is not able to build a community of readers, she may think that no one finds any value in what she has to say and so may stop blogging” (p. 486). To realize that there are people reading his or her blog allows the blogger to gain momentum (Nardi, Schiano & Gumbrecht, 2004) and feel satisfied when he or she gains acceptance from readers (Haferkamp & Krämer, 2008).

Existing studies appear to suggest that different motivations also apply to different types of blogs, and one interesting type of blogs relevant to this study is personal blogs. Blogging about one’s own personal life is also common and has attracted a number of studies on the motivations to do so. For example, Jung, Vorderer and Song (2007) study the reasons why bloggers post personal contents, why people read personal blogs, and the consequences of blogging about one’s own real life. They cite Goffman’s two psychological factors: ‘impression management’ and ‘voyeuristic surveillance’, which motivate people to actively engage in posting, reading, and watching personal stories and photos on blogs. The concept of ‘impression management’ refers to one’s ability to manage the image of something or someone, which makes sense to other people so that he or she can maintain an interpersonal relationship with them (Goffman, 1959 cited by Jung et al., 2007). The idea of ‘impression management’ is later applied to the virtual space as ‘online impression management’ or ‘online self-representation’ (Medienwiss, Haferkamp & Krämer, 2007, p. 2),

which is argued to be much more controllable than offline impression management due to the ease with which one can modify the information about him- or herself online (see Jung et al., 2007). The concept of 'voyeuristic surveillance', as defined by Burgoon and Walther (1990, cited in Jung et al., 2007), is "harmless yet guilty pleasure of peeking into others' apparently real and unguarded lives by anyone with television and the Internet" (p. 5). Online voyeuristic surveillance is different from its offline version in terms of privacy issue. There is no privacy violated if one is sneaking a look over the personal information posted on blogs, for the personal content is intentionally posted on the blog for which anonymous visitors are expected. When posting and reading content on personal blogs come into play, a consequence is the perceived social support, and indeed positive perceived social support increases a sense of belonging and psychological well-being while at the same time decreasing real-life loneliness (Jung et al., 2007).

In this study, I will first examine blogging motivations by Cambodian women. In addition, by locating the subjects or actors in the study to the local context of Cambodia as a society with deeply entrenched gender expectations and prescription, I will focus on how blogging may empower the Cambodian female bloggers interviewed. Therefore, before presenting the results of the study, I will now turn to a brief review of the concept of empowerment in relation to women.

### **Women's Empowerment: Definitions**

The concept of empowerment has received a lot of attention from numerous scholars of divergent fields, making its definitions vary according to the context they are used. For this study, a conceptualization of empowerment directly relevant to women is needed. One way to conceptualize women's empowerment is to understand what empowerment means to them. In Choudhury's (2009) study on Bangladeshi women's perspective on their home-based Internet use, the meanings of empowerment include: (1) economic independence; (2) education and knowledge; and (3) free expression of oneself, independence, and equal rights. According to Shields (1995), empowerment from women's perspective and experiences means three things: (1) the emergence of an internal sense of self, (2) their ability to take action over this internal sense of self, and (3) the connectedness within themselves and among people. Kabeer (1999) argues that empowerment is a "process by which those who have been denied ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability" (p. 435). To her, this 'ability to exercise choices' or power pertains to three interrelated components: 'resources', 'agency', and 'achievement' (Kabeer, 1999). Drawing from empowerment scholarship from many scholars, Stavrositu and Sundar (2008), studying psychological empowerment derived from blogging, conceptualizes empowerment in terms of three concepts: (1) mastery and control over aspects of one's life, (2) perceived ability to effect change, and (3) connectedness. Another conceptualization of empowerment in relation to women is provided by Nasser (2004), who studies the meanings of the concept by female public leaders in Palestine. For Nasser (2004), empowerment can be defined as:

the ability to gain and process knowledge in order to make sound decisions and the ability to act and participate fully in society, leading oneself and others into the right path, having a special type of strength, believing in oneself, and most importantly, fulfilling societal needs. (p. 11)

These definitions allow us to understand that empowerment has to come from the actors themselves, and it involves both the sense and the action by the actors and the recognition of such action from a community or a group of people. In other words, the actors, or women in this case, have to first perceive the ability to take action and do take action. In addition, there needs to be a sense of recognition of such action from others in order for empowerment to materialize. In this sense, it appears that women's empowerment involves (1) a sense of agency and (2) a sense of community. In what to follow, I will therefore focus on this aspect of empowerment, i.e. psychological empowerment, of blogging among Cambodian female bloggers, by answering two main research questions:

1. What motivate Cambodian female bloggers to blog and continue blogging?
2. What are the instances of psychological empowerment which derives from blogging by Cambodian women?

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study is exploratory in its approach. First, I conducted an online survey with 71 Cambodian bloggers (including both male and female bloggers). Second, I performed a textual analysis of 15 weblogs by Cambodian female bloggers. Finally, in-depth interviews were conducted with the 15 Cambodian female bloggers.

First, I began with an online survey with 71 Cambodian bloggers, using an online survey provider. This online survey was conducted in order to empirically deduce factors that motivated the bloggers to blog. Due to the small number of Cambodian female bloggers and the demand of a big number of cases to conduct factor analysis to deduce such motivations, the decision was to include all Cambodian bloggers. The survey was conducted within a period of two weeks in March 2010 by posting the invitation to participate in the survey on a total of 100 blog sites understood to be created by Cambodian bloggers. The online questionnaire included two main sections: demographics, and the experiences of blogging and motivations to blog.

The second stage of the study was a textual analysis of a total of 15 blogs by Cambodian female bloggers. The textual analysis of these blogs was aimed at understanding the typologies and characteristics, including self-expression tendencies, contents and designs, of their blogs. Such understanding helped to better frame the discussions with the female bloggers during the in-depth interviews later.

Finally, 15 female bloggers were interviewed. An effort was first made at compiling a comprehensive list of Cambodian female bloggers from the blog rolls of a number of prominent bloggers. As a result, a total of 30 female bloggers were initially contacted through emails and phones for those posting such information on their blogs, and through comment posting on their blogs for those who did not provide other means of contact on their blogs. Twelve female bloggers living in Cambodia were interviewed face-to-face in Phnom Penh, while the other three were interviewed through emails and Skype. The interviews were based on an interview guide focusing on their blogging history and behaviors, their blog contents, and the benefits they obtained, or perceived to have

obtained, from blogging. All the interviews were conducted in March 2010. Each interview took approximately one hour and a half, and all interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed for analysis.

## THE SURVEY SECTION & FINDINGS (1)

### Measure

*Motivation* of blogging was measured by the respondents' responses to 13 statements adapted from Leung's (2009) motivation scale on gratifications of user-generated content on the Internet (three original statements from Leung's [2009] were omitted due to their contextual irrelevance to Cambodia). An exploratory factor analysis of the 13 statements produced three motivations of blogging among Cambodian bloggers: instrumental needs, non-instrumental needs, and identity needs (three statement items were omitted to increase the overall internal reliability). (See Table 1)

1. Instrumental needs ( $\alpha=.78$ ): Blogging allows the bloggers to develop cognitively and professionally.
2. Non-instrumental needs ( $\alpha=.74$ ): Blogging is a tool for users to pass time or is a trivial activity.
3. Identity needs ( $\alpha=.76$ ): Blogs provide a space to express to others who the bloggers like to be or what they like to be seen as.

**Table 1:** Rotated factor loadings and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the constructs of blogging motivations

Items	Factor 1: Instrumental Needs	Factor 2: Non- instrumental Needs	Factor 3: Identity Needs
<b>Factor 1: Instrumental Needs (<math>\alpha=.78</math>)</b>			
Through blogging, I can broaden my knowledge.	.849		
Bloggng allows me to refine my thinking.	.805		
I blog to share views, thoughts and experience with others.	.696		
Bloggng helps me gain respect and support from other people.	.529		
<b>Factor 2: Non-instrumental Needs (<math>\alpha=.74</math>)</b>			
Bloggng allows me to express my feeling so that other people know me.		.769	
It is trendy to blog.		.737	
I blog because I want to let time fly.		.699	
I blog because I want to let my friends know my recent situation.		.639	
<b>Factor 3: Identity Needs (<math>\alpha=.76</math>)</b>			
Through blogging, I can establish my personal identity.			.848
I want to promote or publicize my skills through blog.			.822

Total variance explained: 66%

### Online Survey Respondents

Among the 71 bloggers surveyed, men accounted for 62% and women 36.6% (one respondent did not identify gender). It is not uncommon in Cambodia and elsewhere that men have outnumbered women in using the Internet. The respondents' age was divided into three groups: teens, twenties, and thirties and beyond. The majority of them (73.2%) were in their twenties, 20 to 29 years old; 14.1% in their teens, 19 years old and below; and

8.4% in their thirties and beyond, 30 years old and older. The educational levels of the surveyed bloggers ranged from high school to graduate or postgraduate. While half of the respondents (50.7%) held or were pursuing graduate or postgraduate qualification, 38% had undergraduate qualification, and the rest (9.9%) finished high school. This is consistent with many findings that the Internet users, and hence presumably applicable to bloggers, tend to be young and well-educated. Of all the bloggers surveyed, 64.8% were living in Cambodia and 35.2% abroad either for studying or permanent settlement at the time of this survey. When asked to identify their occupation, 28.2% of the respondents reported themselves to be students at bachelor's level. 21.1% of them were employees at a private firm, 14.1% civil servants, and 12.7% NGO workers. 14.1% were graduate students, 8.5% high school students, and the rest (1.4%) self-employed. (See Table 2)

**Table 2: Sample Characteristics**

(N = 71)	Respondents	Percentage
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	44	62%
Female	26	36.6%
Undisclosed	1	1.4%
<u>Age</u>		
≤ 19	10	14.1%
20-29	52	73.2%
≥ 30	6	8.5%
Undisclosed	3	4.2%
<u>Educational Attainment</u>		
Graduate/postgraduate	36	50.7%
Undergraduate or below	27	38%
High school	7	9.9%
Others	1	1.4%
<u>Location</u>		
Cambodia	46	64.8%
Abroad	25	35.2%
<u>Occupation</u>		
Undergraduate student	20	28.2%
Employee at private firm	15	21.1%
Civil servant	10	14.1%
NGO worker	9	12.7%
Graduate student	9	12.7%
High school student	6	8.5%
Self-employed	1	1.4%
Others	1	1.4%

### The Cambodian Female Blogosphere

Before taking a close look at what motivates Cambodian women to blog, a prior understanding of Cambodian female blogosphere and who the female bloggers are is important. Since such information does not exist, I will now present a sketch of the Cambodian female blogosphere from the online survey conducted. Out of the total 71 bloggers participating in the online survey, 26 of them (or 36.6%) were female. Most of these female bloggers (80%) were between 20 to 29 years old, while 15.4% younger than 20 years old. Most noticeable was, however, the high educational level among these female bloggers. Half of them were graduate students, with another 38.5% students at undergraduate level. Only the remaining 11.5% were high school students. 65% of them

were living in Cambodia, and the rest were residing abroad for either living or studying. (See Table 3 for details)

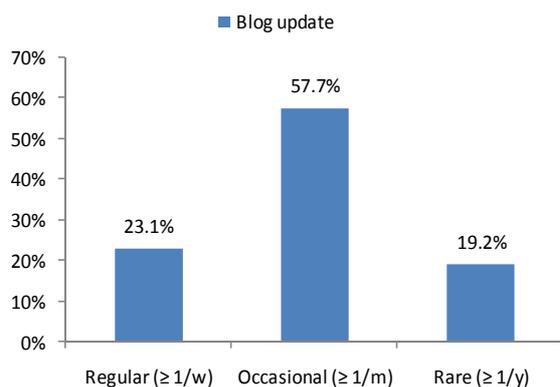
**Table 3: Female Bloggers’ Demographic Information**

Cambodian female bloggers (N = 26)	Respondents	Percentage
<u>Age</u>		
≤ 19	4	15.4%
20-29	21	80.7%
Undisclosed	1	3.8%
<u>Educational Attainment</u>		
Graduate/postgraduate	13	50%
Undergraduate or below	10	38.5%
High school	3	11.5%
<u>Location</u>		
Cambodia	17	65.4%
Abroad	9	34.6%
<u>Occupation</u>		
Undergraduate student	7	27%
Employee at private firm	3	11.5%
Graduate student	5	19.2%
Civil servant	4	15.4%
NGO worker	3	11.5%
High school student	4	15.4%

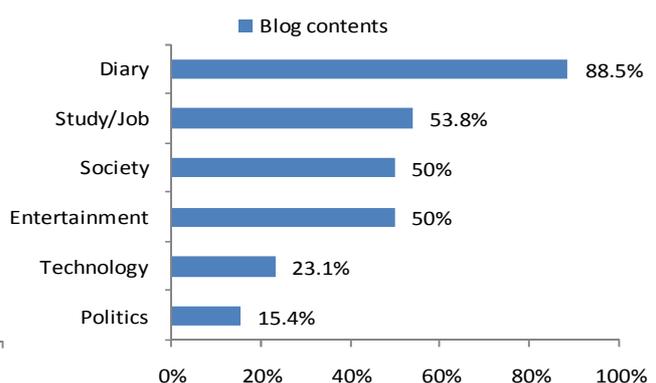
In terms of the frequency of blogging activity, approximately half of the female bloggers updated their blogs on an occasional basis (a few times or once a month), while 23% of them wrote on or updated their blogs on a regular basis (at least once a week or even every day, see Figure 1). At each time of blogging, 65.4% of the bloggers reported spending less than 30 minutes, while 23% and 11.5% spent up to an hour and more than an hour respectively.

Content-wise, blogs created by the female bloggers were mainly in English (80%), and the rest in Khmer. There were three main types of contents posted on their blogs: personal, non-personal and entertainment contents. Around 90% of the female bloggers posted their daily, weekly or monthly activities on their blogs, about 54% posted issues related to their study or job, half posted entertainment contents (music, video), also half posted society-related contents, and 15.4% posted news or information about politics (national and international). These Cambodian female bloggers were therefore more likely to post personal contents than non-personal ones. (See Figure 2)

**Figure 1: Frequency of Blog Update**



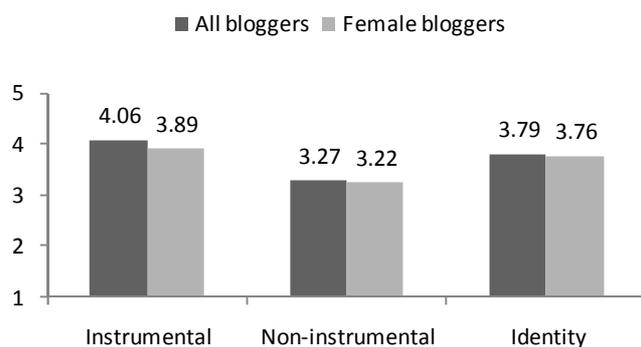
**Figure 2: Blog Content by Female Bloggers**



## Motivations among Cambodian Bloggers and Female Bloggers

As explained earlier, an exploratory factor analysis of blogging motivations among the surveyed Cambodian bloggers produced three types of motivation: instrumental needs, non-instrumental needs, and identity needs (see *Table 1* on page 25). Two dominant motivations among the bloggers were the ‘instrumental needs’ and ‘identity needs’ with mean scores of 4.06 and 3.79 respectively (on 1-to-5-point Likert scale). The bloggers motivated by the ‘instrumental needs’ found blogging allowing them to develop cognitively and professionally. For example, from thinking of topics to post to analyzing situation and receiving comments, the bloggers could broaden their knowledge and refine their thinking. If the topic was well-explained and argued, they could, in return, gain respect and support from their readers. Those motivated by ‘identity needs’ found blogging providing them a space to express to others who they liked to be or what they liked to be seen as. For instance, from posting daily activities or giving critical reflection on a particular issue, the bloggers could, to some extent, establish their desired identity on blogs. The non-instrumental needs, i.e. blogging as a tool to pass time or to conduct a trivial activity, was the least common type among the surveyed bloggers. The existence and prevalence of the three types of motivation to blog were also true of the female blogger sub-sample. (See *Figure 3 below*)

**Figure 3:** Motivations among All Bloggers and the Female Bloggers Surveyed (Mean scores are on 1-to-5-point Likert scale)



## THE TEXTUAL ANALYSIS & QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS (2)

### Cambodian Female Bloggers and Their Blogs

There are two types of blogs differentiated by content and designs in the Cambodian female blogosphere. In terms of content, there are two types of blogs among Cambodian female bloggers: ‘personal’ and “journalistic gatekeeper”<sup>2</sup>. The most common type of blogs among Cambodian female bloggers is the ‘personal’ or ‘journaling’ blogs, which are about the bloggers’ personal stories, experiences and other information related to these bloggers and other people intimate to them. However, they tend to restrain themselves from posting “too personal” topics (for instance family-related issues, love or relationship, and depressed feelings) which they consider to be providing little or no ‘benefits’ to their readers. These female bloggers believe that blogging should be of ‘benefit’ to themselves but also to their

<sup>2</sup> The term was used by Stavrositu and Sundar (2008).

readers. For instance, through sharing personal experiences, the female bloggers can indirectly give readers a ‘lesson learned’ and some idea of how to cope with similar problems if they come across one in the future. This implies three propositions. First, by having something to share, though it is their personal story, the female bloggers can at least inform their presence to the world—the blogosphere in this context. Second, by sharing personal stories or experiences, they can be a good source of solution that people having similar problems can go to. Third, since they believe they have information of ‘benefit’ to others, they stake a claim for authority – that is, demanding others to read and respect their position, which is a strategic demand in power relation.

The other type of blog in terms of content is the ‘journalistic gatekeeper’ blogs, though by only two female bloggers in this study. These two female bloggers are a theoretical case to challenge the notion that women only keep personal blogs. What defines their blog type? They *write* their own articles (not copying from other sources) about socio-political issues in Cambodia, including current situations of human rights and women. These ‘journalistic gatekeeper’ bloggers aim at providing information and knowledge about the society to the audience, rather than personal stories. Thus, personal stories, and even most personal information, are absent from their blogs.

The complexity of their blog designs: ‘basic, intermediate and advanced’<sup>3</sup>, also helps to differentiate the two types of blogs above. In the personal or journaling blogs, the female bloggers design their web pages to appear either intermediate (non-default background, presence of photos, links and videos) or advanced (custom background, presence of photos, links, videos, and special effects like animation). They post photos and embed their favorite music and/or videos. A few of them fill their blogs with special effects (flashing and/or running texts). It appears that these female bloggers possess certain technological competence and are eager to re-create their appearance with a new sense of self-control through such competence with new technology.

The bloggers running the ‘journalistic gatekeeper’ blogs, on the other hand, keep their blogs as simple as possible by using white-background pages, and black and easy-to-read font types. Photos, videos or other special effects are rarely, if not never, found in this type of blogs. There are only ‘important links’ to local media’s web sites, related news and prominent article titles posted on the right hand side of the pages. This design of basic complexity may be due to the aim to keep their blogs plain and appear credible as in a ‘journalistic’ sense, which is hoped to gain credibility from their readers.

### **Psychological Empowerment of Blogging for Female Bloggers**

Women’s empowerment can be conceptualized in three different dimensions—political, economic and psychological (Malhotra, Schuler & Boender, 2002), and the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in their empowerment has also been proposed. Hafkin and Taggart (2001), for instance, propose that ICTs can politically empower women in developing countries by giving them a voice to these women who are

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<sup>3</sup> The three levels of complexity are proposed by Mazur and Kozarian (2010) in their study on self-presentation and interaction in blogs of adolescents and young adults.

so frequently “isolated, invisible and without a voice” (p. 373). The Internet and such function as blogging can also be empowering (Stavrositu & Sundar, 2008). Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, the aim of this study is to explore only the psychological aspect of women’s empowerment generated by their blogging experiences.

In the section below, I will analyze the psychologically empowering experiences of blogging by Cambodian female bloggers in detail by drawing on two main concepts: ‘sense of agency’ (SOA) and ‘sense of community’ (SOC).

1. By drawing on Stavrositu and Sundar (2008) and Sundar (2006), I will analyze the *sense of agency (SOA)* of blogging experience in terms of the following instances:
  - 1.1. Sense of prominence
  - 1.2. Sense of competence, confidence and assertiveness
  - 1.3. Ability to influence one’s life functioning
2. Based on the theoretical framework of community formation by McMillan and Chavis (1986), I will analyze the *sense of community (SOC)* of blogging experience in terms of the following instances:
  - 2.1. Membership
  - 2.2. Integration and fulfillment of needs
  - 2.3. Influence
  - 2.4. Shared emotional connection

### **1. Sense of Agency (SOA) from Blogging by Cambodian Female bloggers**

Blogs enable users to personalize the web contents about themselves. In Sundar’s (2006) words, they allow the establishment of the notion of “self as source” (p. 9). This ‘self as source’ leads bloggers to have ‘a sense of agency’, which is defined as the “degree to which the self feels that he/she is relevant factor ... to assert one’s influence over the nature and course of the interaction” (p. 8). Bloggers can, in return, produce voices for themselves, which is key to empowerment. The sense of agency, feeling of being in charge of oneself and confident in asserting one’s own voices, resulting from blogging experiences by Cambodian women can be delineated in three aspects: a sense of prominence; a sense of competence, confidence and assertiveness; and the ability to influence one’s own life functioning.

#### **1.1. SENSE OF PROMINENCE:**

A sense of prominence, in other words a sense of being known, is achieved by four conditions when one blogs: (1) the number of times one’s blog is visited, (2) the number of times one’s blog is linked to other sites, (3) the number of comments received, and (4) the degree of attention to the blog from other media. When creating blogs, a blogger has to visit other blogs in an attempt to present herself as a newcomer to the blogosphere. In return, her blog will then be visited by other bloggers. One female blogger in this study shared her experience that if new bloggers wanted to have many readers, they had to read

and comment on many other blogs so that others knew they were newcomers. “It requires effort, time and patience” (*Blogger 3*).

After visiting other blogs, through “permalinks”, a blogger can allow others to link to her blog, and also to keep track of each other’s contents. In terms of the number of site links, the personal blogs receive more links if compared to the journalistic gatekeeper blogs because the owners of the personal blogs read the blogs of other people in an attempt to get to know different types of topics posted and meanwhile try to make their own blogs unique from others’. Since the owners of the personal blogs post their personal stories or experiences, readers or other bloggers can easily associate and share their experiences towards the issues. Therefore, in terms of comments, the personal blogs receive more comments than do the journalistic gatekeeper blogs. This is because people reading posts in the latter type mainly want to get information, not necessarily to comment. Nevertheless, the journalistic gatekeeper blogs tend to receive more attention from local media because the owners write articles and give critical reflection on socio-political issues of the country, i.e. topics that interest the media; hence, they are more popularly known. The interactions described here are integral to creating a feeling of being known by others, i.e. a sense of prominence.

## 1.2. SENSE OF COMPETENCE, CONFIDENCE & ASSERTIVENESS:

From thinking of topics to writing and posting on their blogs, the female bloggers make use of, and improve, their intellectual, social and technical competence. They, therefore, continually develop high confidence in and assertiveness on what they express. The intellectual competence is enhanced when the female bloggers are engaged in thinking, searching, analyzing and reflecting on a certain issue either personal or non-personal. One of the female bloggers interviewed described the process of her writing that when writing about an event, she preferred giving factual information about the event first and later gave her comments that were supported by ‘logical reasons’. Every piece of information, to her, had to be ‘logical’ as she wanted to train herself to be a reasonable person. “I don’t know how to be a logical person exactly but at least I know in order to be one, I need to learn to give reasons and to have lots of general knowledge” (*Blogger 7*). Along with intellectual competence, a blogger can also develop social competence – the ability to be friends with many people. One female blogger believed she was very satisfied when she could make many friends in the blogosphere, and she called these blog-friends “brothers” and “sisters”. “They are all good people. They are outstanding” (*Blogger 3*). Another type of competence is technical competence, for instance IT skills. When uploading articles, photos, or videos the female bloggers have to learn to handle them properly without facing unwanted or unnecessary complications. One of the interviewed female bloggers described her challenge in building technical competence in this way: “I cannot design my blog using whatever color or theme I like unless I understand the code number well. It is a little bit hard, but as long as it is what I like I can struggle to do it” (*Blogger 9*).

It is generally true in most cases that when one person practices doing something, sooner or later one can master the activity with high level of confidence. Similarly for blogging, before publishing their writings, bloggers revise them to make sure they are both grammatically and conceptually understandable. With enough thinking, searching, revising and analyzing,

they learn to present their arguments confidently, which in return contributes to a sense of agency.

With a high level of confidence, the female bloggers can assert their opinions or desires freely among readers. Examples of free expressions vary. For example, one female blogger discussed the unpunctuality in Cambodia, ranging from that of her lecturers and classmates to the political correctness of being late at wedding ceremony. She found this experience gratifying: “This was all what I could do for such an issue. Though it was not very effective, at least I have found a blogger friend who totally agreed with me about the issue and we kept discussing further” (*Blogger 1*). By sharing articles in her blog and creating a discussion among many people, another female blogger said, “I want to show that women no longer keep quiet. Though I don’t make my voice heard all the times, at least sometimes it is heard. People will not say there is no blogger who is a Cambodian woman” (*Blogger 2*). In addition, *Blogger 2*, the owner of a journalistic gatekeeper blog, asserted on the benefits of blogging related to freedom of expression that, “Through blog, I can say whatever I want. It is a platform of expressing and sharing ideas and experiences to contribute to social change.”

### 1.3. ABILITY TO INFLUENCE LIFE FUNCTIONING:

The sense of agency, i.e. feeling in control of oneself and of making an impact, can also be understood by the ability to influence one’s own life functioning process generated from blogging. Here, I would like to argue that by asserting their voices or opinions over certain issues, the female bloggers believe they are able to influence their life functioning. Indeed, *one of the most important reasons for blogging is self-expression, and making self-expression reflects one’s attempt to take control of her own life, thereby potentially effecting change in her ability over life functioning*. In other words, blogging can be “a direct manifestation of the willingness to influence one’s functioning and life circumstance” (Stavrositu & Sundar, 2008, p. 2). Through repeatedly writing and reading about self-related issues, the female bloggers running the personal blogs develop a deep sense of self-understanding:

From one post to another, blogging helps me understand myself better. For example, when I read my first posts months ago, I realized I was so young and immature. At that time, I didn’t like going to school and found no benefits of going to school. I had no reasons of why I was doing things, but now I know who I am and what I want exactly. Now I see myself change a lot. (*Blogger 7*)

Another female blogger claimed: “First, I didn’t know how I should deal with problematic issues, but after I expressed them [on my blog], I seemed to be able to think of a proper solution to the issues” (*Blogger 6*). This also applies to those who critically write articles about politics and the society, i.e. the female bloggers who own the journalistic gatekeeper blogs, since writing for their blogs enables them to make a life choice, that is, to make sense of the current situation of the country and play a role in its development.

### OUTCOMES – PERCEPTION OF CONTROL, CHANGE AND MOBILITY:

The sense of agency derived from blogging contributes to psychological empowerment. This sense of agency can also be understood in more detail if we look at the perception of

control, change and mobility expressed by the female bloggers interviewed. First of all, blogs give these female bloggers complete control of their self-expression, in a way that challenges the expected silence or conformity in the larger social milieu. One female blogger asserted that, “My blog is about me. I don’t need to make it look good as long as it tells true story of me; it is all that matters” (*Blogger 6*).

Blogs, as a platform to exercise voices, also allow bloggers to develop the ability to perceive, and potentially effect change. These female bloggers realize they are the agents of change, a resistance to patriarchal perception which considers women’s voice as both less valuable and less desirable. One female blogger said she was to change the deeply-rooted perception, which views Cambodian women are voiceless, by sharing her critical point of view on social issues amidst hundreds of male bloggers. Another female blogger pointed out her conscious blogging politics that: “In case I did not write anything, people would not know there were female bloggers. It is not merely my benefits after all. It’s all Cambodian female bloggers’ benefit” (*Blogger 2*). By producing voices and making their voices heard, the female bloggers already break the cultural barriers restraining them from expression, by taking advantage of the Internet, which is usually considered a ‘male-dominated’ space (Wallace, 1999). Being able to voice their concerns, the female bloggers have moved toward a solution. One blogger directly voiced her challenge to tradition in her own words:

Every person has rights to express themselves but since we have long been traumatized by forced silent, we don’t realize we have rights to express ourselves. Likewise, Cambodian women, in this stereotypical culture, have long been trained to be silent, respecting the rule *Chbab Srey* [the traditional didactic codes for Khmer women]. They are not allowed to go out at night, for example.

Blogging, I propose, has allowed these women to challenge the traditional order that has silenced them.

## **2. Sense of Community (SOC) from Blogging by Cambodian Female bloggers**

Web-based technologies offering both synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication have been argued by many researchers to enable community building. Blogging, which promotes interpersonal communication between content creators and readers, can therefore permit the establishment of small communities among Cambodian female bloggers. My argument here is based on McMillan and Chavis’ (1986) concept of the sense of community (SOC), which is constituted by four elements: (1) membership, (2) integration and fulfillment of needs, (3) influence, and (4) shared emotional connection. I would now like to subject these four elements to the blogging experiences of the 15 Cambodian female bloggers interviewed.

### **CREATION OF SMALL COMMUNITIES AMONG FEMALE BLOGGERS:**

The first force of community establishment, in this study, is the integration and fulfillment of needs of female bloggers who share common values. In other words, common needs can help to bond individuals into a group. The female bloggers, through their personal space, fulfill their desires to express themselves, through posting either their personal stories or

critical reflection of a certain issue of their interests. In the personal blogs, the female bloggers post their daily activities and personal experiences in order to fulfill their needs of self-expression, one of the main motivations keeping them to blog. In the journalistic gatekeeper blogs, on the other hand, the bloggers express themselves through stating their critical and analytical point of view on social and political issues that interest them. Through these self-expressions, either on personal or on socio-political matters, these bloggers find commonalities in each other's needs. *These commonalities are an impetus for bonding these women together.* One of them made a clear example of what may have seemed trivial at first: "Not until I expressed how crazy I loved reading books had I realized there were people who were so crazy of reading books as me" (*Blogger 6*).

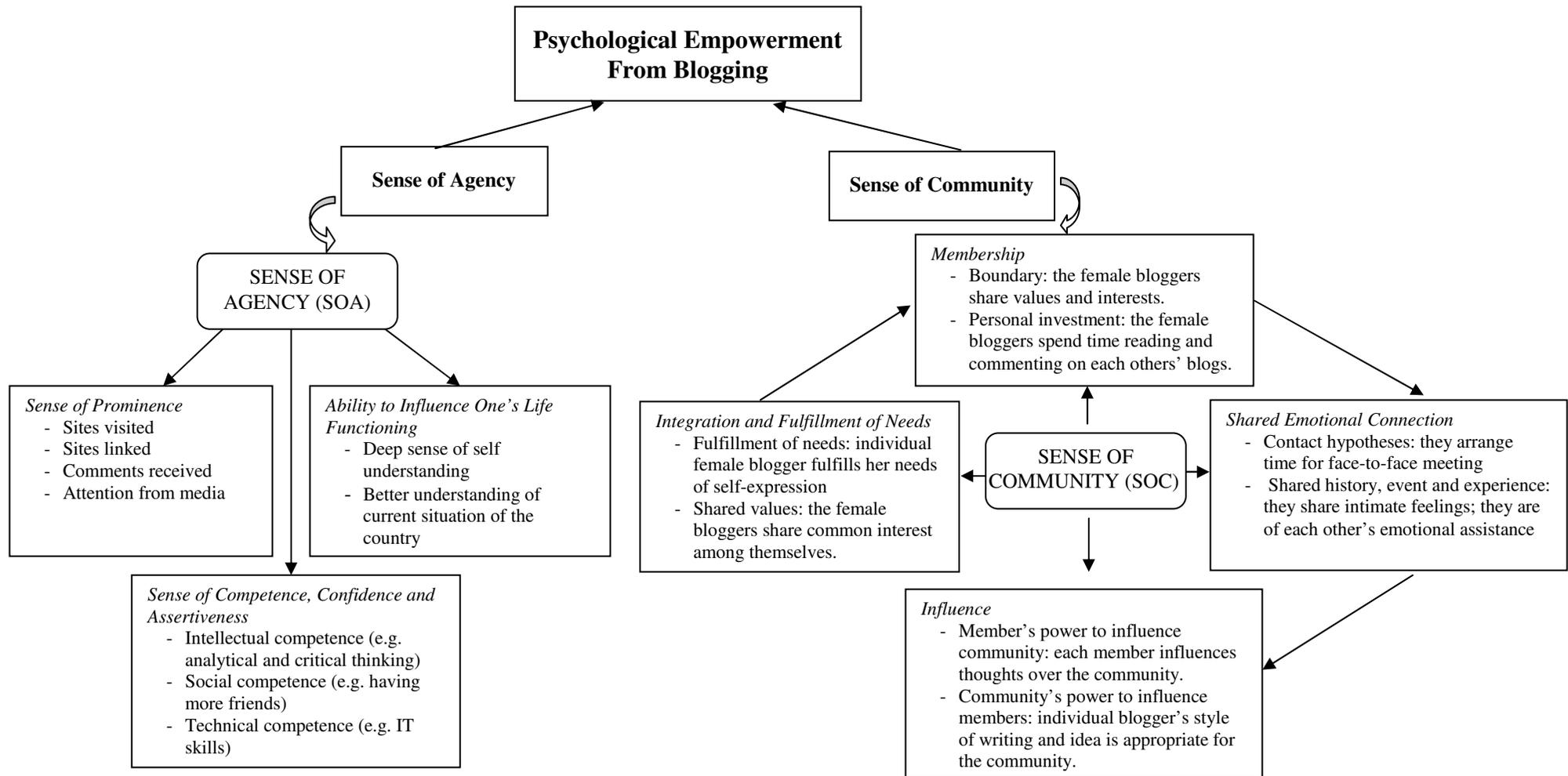
Commonalities, for example reading books, help not only to bond them together, but also to draw a boundary for them, which is established to identify who belongs and who does not belong to this group. How does this boundary come into existence among these bloggers? In order to maintain a meaningful and valuable membership, each member invests her personal time to keep updated with other members by spending time reading and commenting on each other's blog. They are not obliged to, but willing and committed to doing so. As *Blogger 10* said when she was not able to finish reading her friends' blog post, she saved it to read at home. Such investment in the group creates a social boundary and a sense of membership within this boundary.

"Contact hypotheses" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 13) assume that the more people interact, the more likely they become close to one another. Increasing contacts among the female bloggers interviewed have over time led to more intimate bonding, and such allows for the sharing of emotional connection – another element of the sense of community. Indeed, three female bloggers in this study even arranged for free time to meet face to face. One of them expressed her surprise when planning time to meet the other two female bloggers and said, "It was very exciting as if I could meet the author of the book I liked reading the most" (*Blogger 6*). Soon they start to develop intimate emotional connection with one another. One member of this group said, "The relationship between us is far closer than that between me and my best friends at high school, with whom I spent most of the time hanging out" (*Blogger 10*). It is also possible that they become each other's emotional assistant when one member faces difficulty.

The last force of community creation is influence, a bidirectional force of a member toward the group and the group toward a member (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Allowing one member to influence the group helps show that she is valuable to the group, and thus she is committed to strengthening their community. One blogger expressed her contentment when the other female bloggers regarded her as their role model, and such influence factor further bonds their sense of community, as she put it: "I no longer post my depressed feelings on blogs because it can make other bloggers, when reading, feel sad too. It is not beneficial at all" (*Blogger 6*).

The sense of agency (SOA) and sense of community (SOC), which constitute psychological empowerment and which are generated by blogging experiences among the Cambodian female bloggers in this study, are summarized in *Figure 4* below:

Figure 4: Psychological Empowerment through Blogging among Female Bloggers



## CONCLUSION

Empowering women, who are at the disadvantaged end of the gender equation, is high on the development agenda of a government and non-governmental organizations. However, using ICTs, particularly blogging, as an empowering tool has to some extent been underrated. In this sense, this study has confirmed and disclosed the suspected potential of blogging in empowering women, mainly in psychological terms.

While empowerment is still an ambiguous concept encompassing many aspects, 'psychological empowerment' I have examined carries a more specific meaning, one made up of dual components: sense of agency (feeling of control over oneself), and sense of community (feeling of being part of a group). Based on these two components, I have shown that Cambodian female bloggers, through their use of an ICT application, have achieved considerable psychological empowerment. On the one hand, while most female bloggers are practicing their freedom of expression through blog posts in the virtual sphere, some even go further by considering themselves as an agent of change, consciously trying to influence and challenge the dominant patriarchal perceptual domain. On the other hand, these female bloggers are integrating themselves into networks or groups. Although, these groups are of varying intensity and bonding, they are supporting communities in broad terms.

However, the psychological empowerment of blogging among the female bloggers I have explicated here should not be accepted with over-enthusiasm. This positive evidence is indeed humbled by various challenges: mainly providing women with access and skill to use such technology. While embracing the positive outcome of blogging, we should be aware that many blogs were created in the past, only to be left inactive due to such reasons as lack of extrinsic motivations, technical and intellectual challenges, or simply impermissible schedule. This shows that for an individual, or a female blogger in this case, to start and continue blogging, huge commitment and investment must be made. One can only hope that given the country's current developments in education and ICTs, skills and technologies will become less discriminating.

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## Sex, Violence and Sensationalism in Cambodian Press: Perceptions and Reading Motivations

YINN Sirivaddhana

### ABSTRACT

This study reports on the consumption habits of sensational ‘social’ stories<sup>1</sup> in local newspapers and magazines among market vendors in Phnom Penh, and analyzes their perceptions toward these stories as well as their motivations in reading them. The analyses were conducted on 204 vendors from three different markets/shopping centers who were interviewed for a cross-sectional survey. These vendors were among the main readership groups of sensational social stories. However, while social stories were their staple informational diet, they felt these stories were emotively exploitative, i.e. causing anger, sympathy or even fear, and that they played up a lot of violent elements including images and language use. While these vendors did not disbelieve these reported stories, they did not give high credibility to these stories either. Finally, it appeared that these market vendors had little choice but to rely on these sensational ‘social’ stories for information either as ‘knowledge’ or ‘practical use’.

**Keywords:** *Sensational news, sensationalism, print media, Cambodian press, uses and gratifications, audience perceptions*

### INTRODUCTION

Although Cambodian press dated back to 1936 with the publication of the first Khmer-language newspaper *Nagarvatta*, the country’s current media landscape owes much to the arrival of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in 1991 and its establishment of media guides in 1992 for the country to ensure a ‘free’ press for the democratic transition in the early 1990s. The first few years of the 1990s saw a rapid proliferation in the number of Cambodian press, including newspapers and magazines. A Cambodian journalist and media commentator described Cambodian journalists between 1993 and 1995 as if “birds freed for the first time, flying in the dark, knocking into trees and wall” (Loo, 2006, para. 7). This speaks much about the quality and problems of the Cambodian press then.

Today, after almost two decades, Cambodia’s media landscape has transformed dramatically. Nevertheless, its print media are entrenched with a myriad of problems – external and internal, political and financial, ethical and professional. As of 2010, more than 200 Khmer-language newspapers and more than 100 Khmer-language magazines have been registered at the Ministry of Information, yet only a few dozens of them are publishing regularly. While the print press is characterized by a wide range of political, financial and

<sup>1</sup> “Social news/story” is a category used by local newspapers and magazines and includes news on crimes, accidents, family affairs or scandals and other human interest stories. Any social news is almost always sensational to varying degrees.

professional issues, some obvious ones are readily observable. One issue is with its audience. From a first glance, adult literacy rate is rather high, nearly 80 per cent, but approximately half of the population does not complete primary education (according to the Population Census 2008). This low primary education completion rate means that the qualitative nature of official 'literacy' definition is questionable. In other words, half of the Cambodian population, who has not completed primary education, may not exhibit 'functional' literacy skills. Besides this, acquiring a habit of reading is not common for many Cambodians, while significant poverty and the large rural population (80%) make news reading a marginal reality. The second obvious issue is the political climate of Cambodian press. Local media agencies either are politically aligned to one party or another or abstain from 'politics', translating into various forms of both bias and censorship (cf. LICADHO, 2008, 2009; also reflected by Cambodia's poor rankings in the Freedom of the Press Ranking and Press Freedom Index). Another issue is the poor subscription system, which may partly render limited brand loyalty among the readers and hence limiting choices of news production.

Therefore, in order to compete in the battle for readership and advertising dollars, producing sensational 'social stories' is a smart and convenient move, for the so-called 'social' news is distanced from 'politics' and fits rather well with ordinary people and their everyday lives by magnetizing their interests through sensationalism. In this paper, my focus is on the readers' motivations in reading and perceptions towards these so-called 'social news/stories'. In other words, my overall objective is to study (1) why people read these sensational 'social' stories in local Khmer-language newspapers and magazines and (2) how they feel about these stories and the 'social news'. For the rest of the article, I will present first some relevant concepts to media sensationalism and then the study and its findings on the motivations for reading and perceptions toward sensational 'social' news among market vendors in Phnom Penh.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Sensationalism in Media**

Many attempts to define "sensationalism" have been made by generations of scholars. Grabe, Zhou and Barnett (2001), for example, cite a number of definitions given to this word from various scholars and existing literature. These definitions of sensationalism range from "perception by means of the senses" to "an intention to produce a startling or thrilling impression or to excite and please vulgar tastes" (Grabe et al., 2001, p. 637). Other definitions emphasize "emotional reactions" and "effects on the human sensory system" by asserting that "sensationalism stimulates unwholesome emotional responses," "arouses emotion and empathy," and "amuses, titillates and entertains" (Grabe et al., 2001, p. 637). More closely pertaining to the research presented here, Nordin's study (1979) on the entertaining press in the United States city of Boston stresses two aspects of sensationalism: "the subject matter or treatment of such subject matter" and "the effect such subject matter has on an audience" (p. 297). Like Grabe and colleagues as well as other researchers, Nordin understands sensationalism to have an 'emotion arousing' ingredient.

So what are some examples of sensational stories or sensationalism in media? “Celebrities, crime, sex, disasters, scandal, accidents, and public fears” are popularly categorized as ‘sensational’ (Grabe et al., 2001, p. 637). However, Hofstetter and Dozier (cited in Grabe et al., 2001) also include broader categories of sensational news: any stories about “crime, violence, disasters, accidents, fires, or vignettes about individuals and groups which are not linked to political concerns” (p. 638). Other examples are also counted by other researchers as ‘sensational news’. For instance, Uribe and Gunter (2007) cite Ryu’s categorization that includes as sensational stories those about sport, crime, the royal family, entertainment or showbiz, and human interests. Nice (2007), in her study about teenage magazines, finds sensationalism inherent in magazines that practice ‘tabloidization’ in general, stressing the increasing use of “soft news, scandal and sensationalism, and photographs and other visual materials” (p. 120).

Based on the above conceptualizations and examples, my study includes two categories of news in Cambodian Khmer-language newspapers and magazines as ‘sensational social news/stories’:

1. The first category is ‘crime/accident’: stories about misdemeanors or criminal offenses, including murder/killing, rape, traffic accident, and robbery/theft.
2. The second category is ‘human interest’: stories about family affair or scandal, generally involving oddities of behaviors and unethical relationships of a group of people or an individual. (Scandals about celebrities are not included since these are generically categorized by Cambodian newspapers and magazines as ‘arts’ and ‘culture’.)

Sensational practices have a long history in journalism, particularly with the birth of the Penny Press in 1830s or the ‘yellow journalism’ in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in the United States (Grabe et al., 2001), or even before that according to Nordin (1979), referring to the Boston press in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the United States. The motivations behind sensational practices of the media include making profit, fulfilling audience’s preference for entertainment, and helping to shape the social morality by showing what is wrong to bring what is right (Grabe et al., 2001; Nice, 2007; Slattery, Doremus & Marcus, 2001). On the other hand, some point to the external conditions of the press that give rise to media sensationalism. For instance, Uribe and Gunter (2007) cite Blumler’s and Kavanagh’s argument that “the growing presence of commercial media outlets, increasing media deregulation and the emergence of an anti-elitist populism” (p. 208) have contributed to the development of sensational or tabloid news.

### **Why People Consume Sensationalism and with What Effects**

To hypothesize why people consume sensational news, the ‘uses and gratifications’ perspective is helpful. The uses and gratifications theory views media consumers as active participants of the media, who seek out contents that satisfy or fulfill their needs. It simply means that media users make a content choice based on what they expect to receive from that content against the effort they spend (Baran & Davis, 2006; Straubhaar & LaRose, 2004).

First of all, some examples of ‘uses and gratifications’ studies on media consumption are given here to allow for a better understanding of the perspective. Media consumers seek to use media contents according to various underlying motivations. Huang’s study (2009) on news consumption among youth suggests that youth want to get control of what is happening around them, to judge the truth, and to use news as a base in conversations. Flavián and Gurrea (2009) study users’ motivations to consume online press and identify five motivation factors: “knowledge of current news, search for specific information, search for updated news, leisure-entertainment, and habit” (p. 166).

There have been endless debates about the effects of sensational news on the consumers and the society. These arguments and counter-arguments are centered around whether it destroys social order or helps bring about good behavior and morality; whether it replaces other significant stories or it is significant itself; whether it degrades the press standard or it is a part of democracy through serving non-elite people; and whether it inflames human preference for pain and gossip or it serves the public needs for other types of news (Grabe et al., 2001; Nice, 2007; Nordin, 1979).

In Cambodian press, sensationalism is commonplace, and it apparently enjoys rather high readership levels, compared to other news categories in local newspapers and magazines. A media consumption index in 2009 by Indochina Research Ltd. confirmed these high readership levels of sensational ‘social stories’ (including homicide/crime and local news). This sensationalism commonality of the press and its consumption popularity may readily lead to a convenient reasoning: the press provides what its readers want.

This reasoning is short-sighted at best and professionally reckless at worst. We urgently need empirical evidence as to why the readers read these sensational stories and how they perceive these sensational practices. Therefore, this study aims to answer the following research questions, by limiting its scope to market vendors (a sizeable group of readers of sensational press) in Phnom Penh:

1. What are the market vendors’ consumption habits of sensational news in local newspapers and magazines?
2. How do they perceive journalists’ sensational practices in sensational news production?
3. How do their perceptions differ by gender, age groups and length of reading experience?
4. What motivates them to read these sensational contents?

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Data Collection

Three markets/shopping centers (Sovanna Mall, Pencil Supercenter, and Olympic Market) were selected for the study. While Sovanna Mall represents a trendy shopping mall and Olympic Market represents a local market, Pencil Supercenter is practically in between.

The data were collected for three weeks between February and March 2010. In total, 204 respondents participated in the survey, and each was interviewed using a standardized questionnaire. Practically, all vendors in the three locations were approached, but only a few agreed to be interviewed (at a rate of two or three out of ten approached). This low participation rate was unavoidable due to a number of factors including unwillingness and time constraint (it should be noted that permission had to be sought from the managements of these three places). However, the total of 204 completed interviews was considerably satisfying for analysis. The interviewers were senior undergraduates from the Department of Media and Communication and were briefed thoroughly on the questionnaire, which consisted of three main areas: respondent's reading habits, scale statements for measuring their perceptions and an open question on motivations, and demographic information.

### Measure

The *length of the reading experience* was used to categorize three groups of readers:

1. *New readers*: have read local papers and magazines for less than three years.
2. *Mature readers*: have read local papers and magazines from three to six years.
3. *Old-time readers*: have read local papers and magazines for more than six years.

The vendors' *perceptions* were measured by 14 Likert-scale statements asking the respondents to rate their agreement. These statements focused on the obvious elements of sensationalism in the local press: sex, violence and other emotive playing-up, as well as on the credibility of sensational stories the respondents had read. The 14 statements were later deduced by factor analysis into four perception constructs (in other words, four different aspects the vendors perceived of sensational stories): (see Table 1)

1. '*Sexual overload*': feeling that the stories play up sex or sexual connotations.
2. '*Violent overload*': feeling the stories play up violence or violent elements.
3. '*Emotive exploitation*': feeling that the stories have changed their mood after reading, such as causing anger, producing sympathy, inducing fear, etc.<sup>2</sup>
4. '*Credibility*': believing that the stories are factual.

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<sup>2</sup> The first three 'perception constructs' are not mutually exclusive, but inter-related. Three statement items were omitted to increase the overall reliability.

**Table 1:** Rotated factor loadings and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the perceptions towards sensational practices

Items	F1:	F2:	F3:	F4:
<b>Factor 1: Sexual overload (<math>\alpha=.92</math>)</b>				
I think the stories are sexually immoral.	.931			
I think the stories use a lot of sexual terms.	.913			
I think the stories use a lot of sexual images.	.904			
<b>Factor 2: Violent overload (<math>\alpha=.86</math>)</b>				
I think the stories are overall violent.		.897		
I think the pictures are usually too graphic.		.838		
I think the stories use a lot of violent terms.		.797		
<b>Factor 3: Emotive exploitation (<math>\alpha=.56</math>)</b>				
I feel scared after reading social news stories.			.791	
I feel sympathetic towards the victim(s) after reading social news stories.			.755	
I feel furious after reading social news stories.			.660	
<b>Factor 4: Credibility (<math>\alpha=.63</math>)</b>				
I think the journalists exaggerate the given information.				.865
I believe in what the journalists are reporting.				.833

Total variance explained 75.64%, with overall Cronbach's  $\alpha = .79$

**Reading motivations** behind sensational social news were constructed based on the respondents' answers to an open question of why they read 'social news'. That is, the respondents' answers were thematically grouped into similar categories after the data were collected. These post-coding categories of motivations in reading sensational social stories are:

1. '*Cognition*': the desire to be informed or updated through social news, i.e. to learn about what is happening in the society outside their everyday market world.
2. '*Practicality*': the application of the information learned from social news into daily lives, i.e. to take a reported situation as a lesson learnt and as important for their lives, for example precaution against crimes.
3. '*Affection*': the pleasure of reading social news.<sup>3</sup>

## Sample

All 204 respondents interviewed were included for analysis, and there were 74.5% females and 25.5% males. The respondents were categorized into three age groups: 15-21 (34.3%), 22-35 (55.4%) and over 35 (10.3%). 73% of the respondents were single, 25.5% married and the remaining 1.5% in 'others' status (either divorced, widow, widower or separate). A large majority of the respondents (80%) had 'body-beautification' business including selling clothes, footwear, bags, cosmetics and jewelry. (Although it is not known how many per cent of the vendors in these three places sell body-beautification products, it is obvious that they make up a good majority of vendors in Cambodian markets.) Slightly less than 20% of the respondents sold souvenirs, entertainment products, food, household wares and other devices. (See *Table 2*)

<sup>3</sup> These three motivations are not mutually exclusive. Some responses were coded into more than one motivation due to the open nature of the question.

**Table 2: Sample characteristics**

(N=204)	Respondents	Per cent
<u>Sex</u>		
Female	152	74.5%
Male	52	25.5%
<u>Age groups</u>		
15-21	70	34.3%
22-35	113	55.4%
> 35	21	10.3%
<u>Status</u>		
Single	149	73%
Married	52	25.5%
Others	3	1.5%
<u>Business</u>		
Body-beautification	164	80.4%
Souvenirs	10	4.9%
Entertainment records	5	2.5%
Fabric	2	1%
Wares & Devices	3	1.5%
Others	20	9.8%
<u>Reading experience</u>		
<u>Newspaper (N=150)</u>		
New (<3 years)	45	30%
Mature (3-6 years)	65	43.3%
Old-time (>6 years)	40	26.7%
<u>Magazine (N=199)</u>		
New (<3 years)	55	27.6%
Mature (3-6 years)	98	49.2%
Old-time (>6 years)	46	23.1%

## FINDINGS

### RQ1: Market Vendors' Consumption Habits of Sensational Stories

The data suggested that consuming sensational news in the print media was more or less a routine for the majority of the vendors themselves. For newspapers, almost half of them read sensational social stories (especially traffic accidents and crimes) at least once a week, and only less than one-third had not read them in the last six months. The consumption of sensational social stories in magazines was even higher among these vendors, with the majority consuming them at least once a week, and only less than one in ten of them had not read them in the last six months. This is understandable as the majority of the respondents (and of market vendors in general) were females, who generally would prefer magazines to newspapers. (See *Tables 3 & 4*)

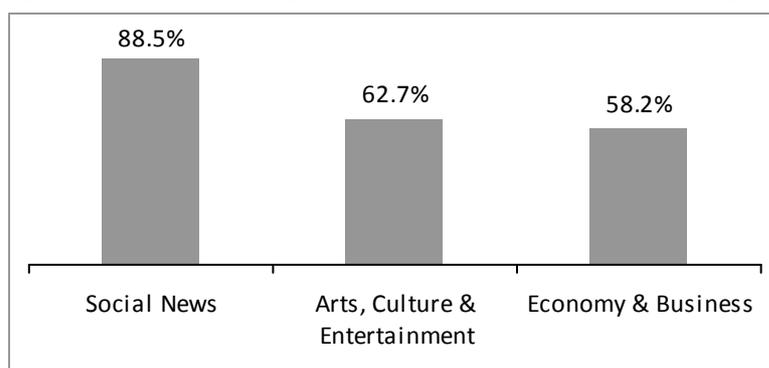
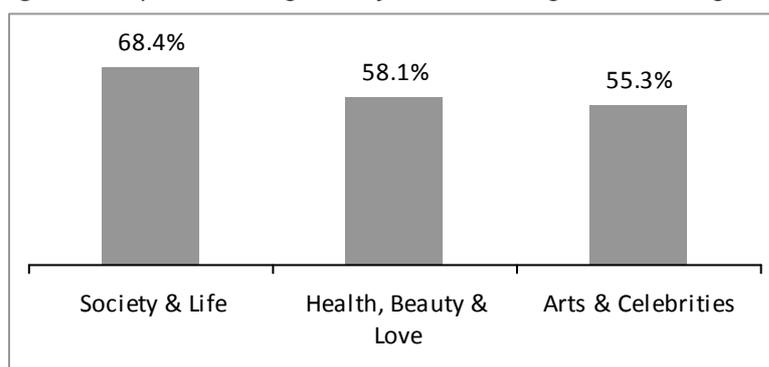
**Table 3: Respondents' reading habits of social contents in newspapers (in the last 6 months)**

Content Types	Regular (≥1/week)	Occasional (<1/week)	Never
Traffic accident	48%	25%	27%
Robbing/theft	48%	24%	27.9%
Rape	46.1%	24.5%	27.9%
Murder/killing	45.1%	27%	27.9%
Family affair/scandal	39.2%	25%	35.8%

**Table 4:** Respondents' reading habits of social contents in magazines (in the last 6 months)

Content Types	Regular (≥1/week)	Occasional (<1/week)	Never
Family affair/scandal	70.6%	19.6%	9.8%
Murder/killing	69.2%	26%	4.9%
Rape	68.2%	26%	5.9%
Robbery/stealing	64.7%	27.5%	7.8%
Traffic accident	64.7%	26.4%	8.8%

In order to get a better idea of the importance of sensational news among these vendors, we need to turn to the comparison between the consumption of sensational social news and that of other types of news categories in newspapers and magazines. Therefore, the respondents were also asked to name the top three types of stories they liked reading the most, by selecting from a list of news categories from newspapers and magazines. The results confirmed that 'social news' was indeed the most popular type of stories among these vendors in both newspapers and magazines. (See *Figures 1 & 2*)

**Figure 1:** Top three categories of stories in newspapers among market vendors**Figure 2:** Top three categories of stories in magazines among market vendors

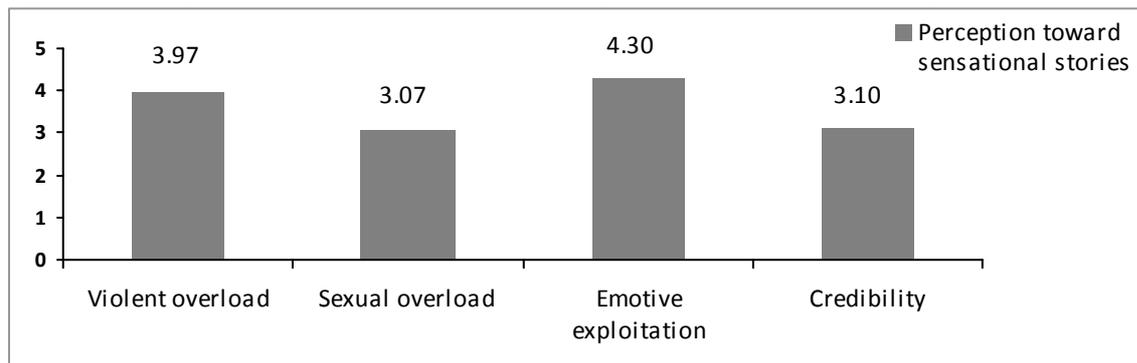
## RQ2: Market Vendors' Perceptions towards Sensational Stories

The factor analysis (see *Table 1* on page 44) produced four constructs of perceptions towards sensational news production: (1) 'sexual overload' (feeling that the stories play up sex or sexual connotations); (2) 'violent overload' (feeling the stories play up violence or

violent elements); (3) 'emotive exploitation' (feeling that the stories have changed their mood after reading, such as causing anger, producing sympathy, inducing fear, etc.); and (4) 'credibility' (believing that the stories are factual). The data suggested a number of insights (see *Figure 3* for visual illustration):

- First, these vendors reported a high level of emotive reactions after reading sensational 'social' stories (as represented by the 'emotive exploitation' score of 4.3).
- Second, these vendors also felt that the reported stories contain a rather high level of violence, or in other words, the reporters played up a lot of violent elements including graphic materials, violent terms and malicious tone (as represented by the 'violent overload' score of 3.97).
- Third, these vendors apparently did not think there were concerning sexual elements, mainly pictures and language use, in the sensational stories they read (as represented by an almost neutral score of 3.07 for the 'sexual overload' construct).
- Finally, these vendors accorded very little credibility to these stories. It seemed that many would question strong factuality in the reported stories, or these vendors were unable to judge if the stories were factual beyond few basic points in the stories (as represented by a 'credibility' score of 3.10).

**Figure 3:** Perceptions towards sensational stories (Mean values are on 1-to-5-point Likert scale\*)



*\*Note on scale interpretation:*

1. For the first three constructs, a score below 3 means a respondent does not feel any sensational elements employed by the reporters; in contrast, a score above 3 means a respondent feels sensational elements are played up by the reporters.

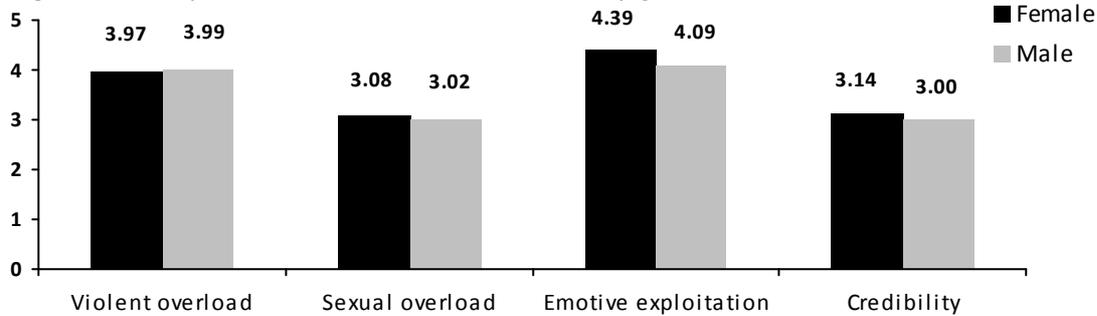
2. For the 'Credibility' construct, a score below 3 means a respondent believes the stories are fictional; in contrast, a score above 3 means a respondent believes the stories are factual.

### **RQ3: Vendors' Perceptions towards Sensational Stories by Gender, Age Groups and Length of Reading Experience**

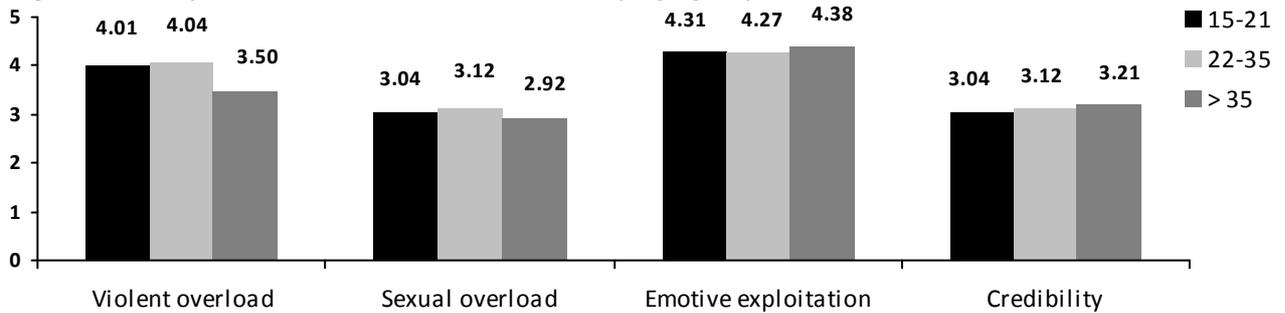
The above four perceptions towards sensational stories and their patterns did not vary much when compared across different groups of vendors in terms of gender, age group and reading experience. *Figures 4 through 7* illustrate the comparisons graphically. There were only a few slight differences to be noted. First, the female readers were slightly more likely to think sensational stories were factual and reported a little higher level of emotive

experience of reading those stories (Figure 4). Second, the oldest group of readers (36-year-olds and above) tended to have a slightly higher belief in the factuality of those stories and, interestingly, felt less of the violent elements played up in those stories (Figure 5). Slight differences were also noticeable among those of varying magazine reading experiences. It seemed that the longer one had read magazines, the less he or she felt of the sexual and violent elements in sensational social stories (Figure 7).

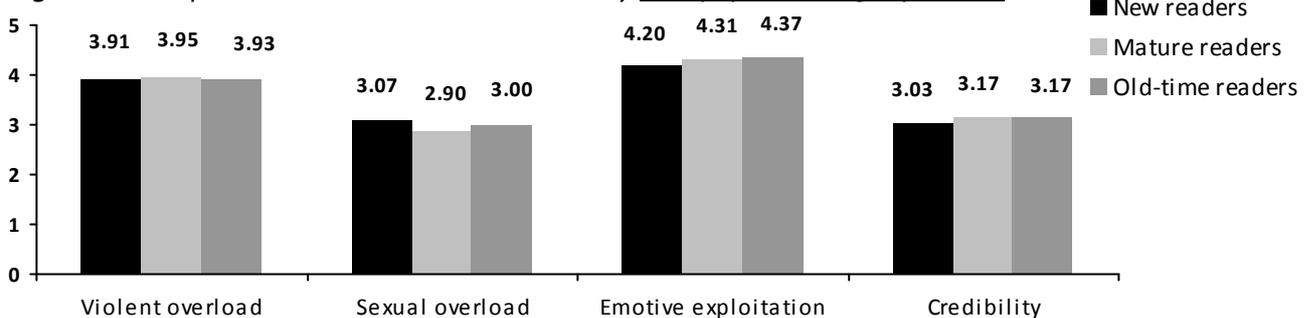
**Figure 4: Perceptions towards sensational stories by gender**



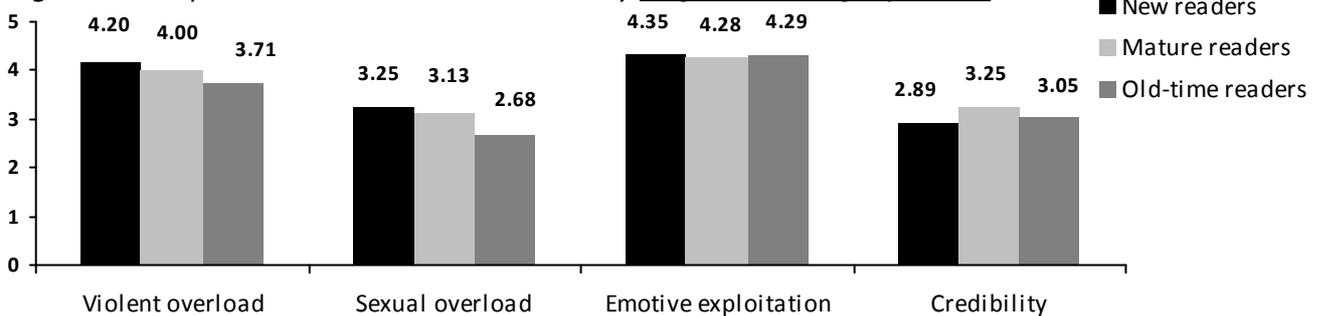
**Figure 5: Perceptions towards sensational stories by age groups**



**Figure 6: Perceptions towards sensational stories by newspaper reading experience**



**Figure 7: Perceptions towards sensational stories by magazine reading experience**

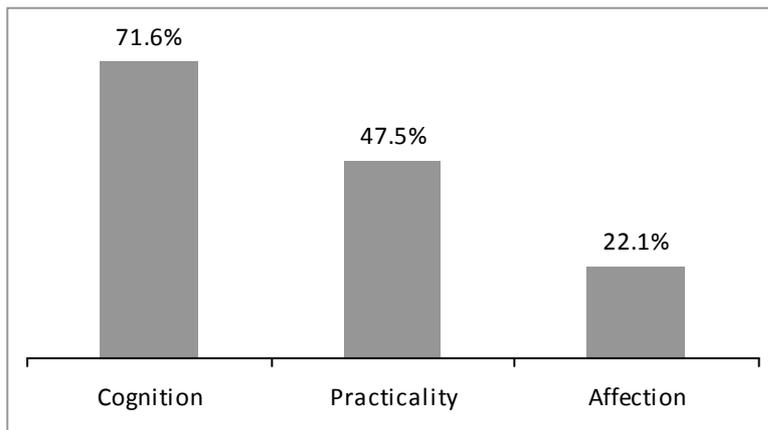


#### RQ4: Motivations in Consuming Sensational Social Contents

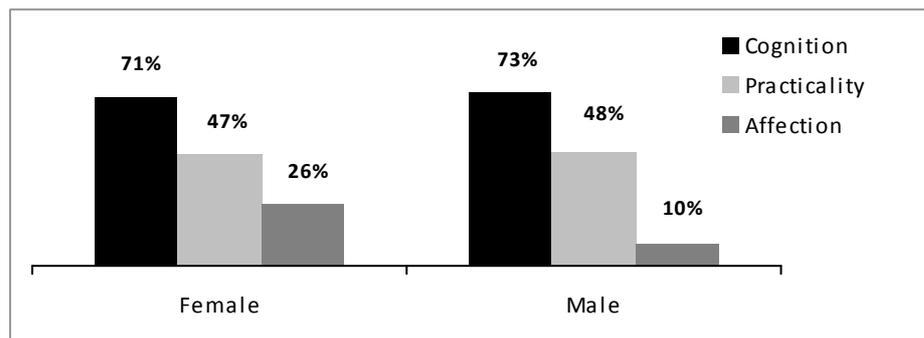
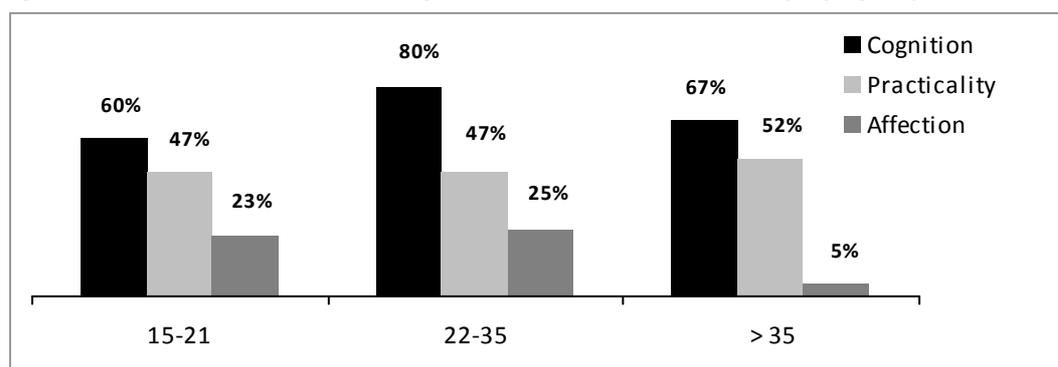
The responses to an open question of why one reads sensational social contents in newspapers and magazines were grouped into three categories of motivations: **(1) cognition**, the desire to be informed or updated through social news, i.e. to learn about what is happening in the society outside their everyday market world; **(2) practicality**, the application of the information learned from social news into daily lives, i.e. to take a reported situation as a lesson learnt and as important for their lives, for example precaution against crimes; and **(3) affection**, the pleasure of reading social news.

The majority of the respondents (71.6%) reported that the main reason, or one of the main reasons, why they read sensational news was it brought them updated information about the society and real life. In other words, they apparently believed ‘news’, sensational or otherwise, provided ‘knowledge’. Almost half of the vendors (47.5%) also believed that social news had practical usefulness, that is, it gave them information that could be of pragmatic use in their everyday lives, such as information on crimes. The least motivation reported was ‘affection’: merely over 20 per cent of them just enjoyed reading these kinds of stories. (See *Figure 8*)

**Figure 8:** Motivations in consuming sensational social contents



It would also be interesting to see if these motivations and their patterns varied across different groups of readers. Overall, the three reading motivations were reported with the same frequency pattern across different groups of gender and age. However, it is interesting to note that female vendors were far more likely than male vendors to report ‘liking to reading social stories’ as a reason for reading them (26% versus 10%, see *Figure 9*). In addition, the older readers tended to rely on social stories from newspapers and magazines as source of ‘knowledge’ more than the younger readers did (as reflected by the ‘cognition’ motivation reported, see *Figure 10*), and the younger groups tended to read such contents out of the fond of such contents far more than the oldest group did (see *Figure 10*).

**Figure 9: Motivations in consuming sensational social contents by gender****Figure 10: Motivations in consuming sensational social contents by age groups**

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The empirical findings presented above have brought to light a number of points worth discussing further. First of all, sensational social stories are staple news diet for these market vendors, and such has implications for both these readers and the reporters and editors of local print media. Superficially, a common claim by news producers that they give what the readers want may appear valid, for social news is the most popular type of stories read (see *Tables 1 & 2* and *Figures 1 & 2*). In addition, a majority of these vendors read these stories for ‘knowledge’ of their society (cognition motivation, see *Figures 8, 9 & 10*), while almost half did find some ‘practical’ information out of this type of social stories (practicality motivation, see *Figures 8, 9 & 10*).

Nevertheless, to repeat my earlier emphasis, this is short-sighted at best, and professional reckless at worst. Further evidence presented in this study makes clear the need for local newspapers and magazines to think hard regarding their sensational practice. If we examine the evidence carefully enough, it is clear that, first of all, only a very small minority read these sensational stories out of their liking for such stories per se (see *Figure 8*). Indeed, the majority read these stories for ‘knowledge’ and ‘practical information’, but where else can they find such knowledge and practical information in their everyday market lives? Besides newspapers and magazines, they may have only other media of radio and television or word of mouth, making newspapers and magazines not only an important source of information but also an indispensable source of passing time in their extremely routine everyday lives. One may reasonably conclude that these vendors have to rely on these sensational stories

due to their very limited options in getting ‘knowledge’ and ‘information’, and are they satisfied with these stories? My argument is they are not for a number of reasons. First, they perceive a very low credibility towards these stories, or at least they are highly reluctant to judge if these stories are factual (see *Figures 3 through 7*). Second, they strongly feel that these stories play up a lot of violent elements (see *Figures 3 through 7*). The only key to improving these short-comings is clear: improvement in professionalism.

For too long, the discussion of ‘challenges’ for and ‘problems’ of Cambodian press has been narrowly concentrated on its ‘political’ role. Instant opinions and arguments about Cambodian press are too readily about the political climate, intimidation and censorship (LICADHO, 2008, 2009), or handy rankings by the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and by the Freedom House. Of course, no one can dispute the crucial importance of the political role of the press in fulfilling and strengthening democracy (Kasoma, 1997; Norris, 2007; Shen & Williamson, 2005). However, what I would like to argue is improvement in professionalism is equally of dire need. Sensational reporting on ‘social stories’ (‘social’ in the sense of news category designated by local newspapers and magazines) can be professionally improved without having to confront the current, sometimes dangerous, political climate. Indeed, starting tackling the high sensationalism in ‘social’ news may become a powerful impetus for further change in Cambodian press. The importance of improving in this area goes beyond journalism. In an ‘emerging democracy’, information on issues beyond ‘formal politics’ is equally important for building a well-informed public for democracy and development in a broad sense.

A short note is also worth making regarding gender and a limitation of the study. It seems that the female respondents have more liking (as motivation) for reading social contents and also report slightly more emotional change (such as anger, sympathy and fear) after reading such contents (see *Figures 4 & 9*). This may be familiar to general expectation. However, empirically we cannot make any conclusion here that women prefer or are more readily affected by sensational social stories in Cambodian newspapers and magazines. This study is conducted on market vendors, who are largely made up of women, and indeed three-fourths of the sample are women. Any empirical conclusion on gender differential regarding motivation in reading and perception toward sensational social news in Cambodian press can only be made with further investigation in other conditions.

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## What's with the Net at Internet Shops and Wi-Fi Cafés? A Preliminary Report<sup>1</sup>

PEOU Chivoïn  
CHEA Lyda

### ABSTRACT

Public Internet access venues such as Internet cafés are necessary for a country with high costs of hardware set-up and connection infrastructure like Cambodia. In this report, we present some findings from a study on the patrons at 28 *access-oriented* Internet shops and *environment-oriented* Wi-Fi cafés in Phnom Penh. Three main conclusions are drawn from these findings: (1) public access venues remain a male-dominated space; (2) while both types of public access points studied are important for Internet access, Internet shops and Wi-Fi cafés differ in terms of the types of patrons and use motivations and online activities by their patrons; and (3) the online activities and Internet use motivations presented here add as another case to empirical evidence worldwide that the Internet has become, and continues to be, more integrated into its users' lives.

**Key words:** *Public access venues, Internet cafés, Cambodia*

### INTRODUCTION

It is impossible today to deny the power of the Internet in greatly transforming social experiences in such an unprecedented pace. The printing press of the fifteenth century (or earlier in China) and the television of the early twentieth century have arguably changed the course of social evolution, but over a far longer span of time than has the Internet. Only approximately after 15 years of the introduction of the Internet into the public domain, the number of its users worldwide has reached more than 1.9 billion, or close to 30 per cent of the human race (as of October 2010, according to the Internet World Stats). No matter what aspects of social experience one looks at, from the macro political and economic processes to the micro level of interpersonal interactions and personal identity, the presence and role of the Internet is felt and still unfolding. Theorists and observers have come to various labels to describe the interconnected world towards the end of the twentieth century, such as the 'network' society (Castells, 2001) and the 'cyber' or 'virtual' community (Rheingold, 2003). Discussions about the Internet today are still lively and polarized by the harms and benefits of the Internet to varying extents. The Facebook phenomenon is one example of such discussion. An earlier example has been on whether the Internet positively or negatively impacted the users' sociability (see for example Cavanagh, 2007; Katz, Rice & Aspden, 2001; Nie, 2001).

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<sup>1</sup> This report presents some of the results from an Internet research project conducted at the Department of Media and Communication (DMC) in 2010, a follow-up on its 18-month Internet for Learning Project funded by a SIRCA grant.

Debates on the Internet such as the above example occur not only in the sphere of interpersonal communication, but also in an enormously diverse range of areas, from health to education, from politics to civic engagement, from development to economics. The emergence of the Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) as an area of study in the last several years is particularly interesting for a developing context like Cambodia. Again, arguments and counter-arguments have been rife about whether the Internet contributes to development (for example, Jaffer, Ng'ambi & Czerniewics, 2007; Servaes, 2007) or is yet another ideological tool or exclusion marker (for example, Albirini, 2008; Fuchs, 2009; Mercer, 2005). These arguments are apparently irreconcilable, but a simple take on the Internet would be: as it connects people, it also creates exclusion.

The contentious nature of the debates on the Internet makes clear the need to know what the Internet is used for and how it is used. Such empirical knowledge of the Internet usage is a prerequisite for better understanding the nature and impact of the Internet. As of now, what we know about the Internet use in Cambodia is extremely little. One thing is clear, though: the Internet is a luxury in this country, and hence a potentially powerful exclusion marker. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) estimated the number of Internet users in Cambodia at about 78,000 (or 0.53% of the population) in 2009. A more updated figure from the Internet World Stats was 113,380 users in Cambodia by June 2010. Of course, the numbers of broadband subscribers and users are lower. A market survey in 2009 estimated that about 10% of the urban households had Internet connection (however, the accuracy of the estimation cannot be verified due to the inaccessibility to the details of the study). With such a low rate of home Internet connection, shared access outside home is important. While many workplaces and higher educational institutions now provide Internet connection for their employees and students, there is a good reason to believe that 'public access venues' are still very important for access and usage in a situation of poor infrastructure like Cambodia. The Internet cafés (locally known as 'Internet shops') have probably provided the most access to Cambodian users. The number of Internet cafés countrywide recorded by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MPTC) was 229 in 2009, and it is estimated by MPTC to increase to 320 in 2010 (120 in Phnom Penh). We are also witnessing a growth in Wi-Fi cafés, thanks to the increasing popularity of laptop use, though there has not been any official figure of the number of such cafés.

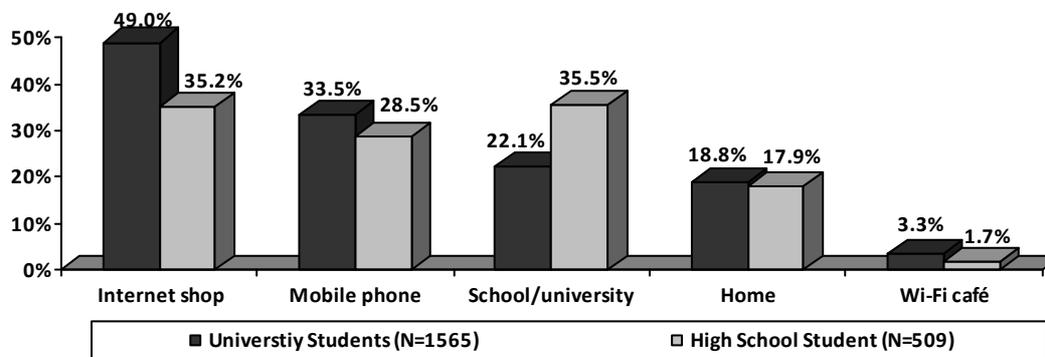
In this context, studying Internet use among patrons at Internet shops and Wi-Fi cafés will offer us the benefit both of getting to understand the actual use of Cambodian users of the Internet and of comprehending the role and significance of these shops and cafés as public access venues.

## **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Surveying the use of the Internet in Phnom Penh or Cambodia may be simple, yet a necessity if we are to better understand the Internet implications beyond speculation and sensationalism. It is a general fact from around the globe that the early adopters and active users of the Internet are younger, more educated and financially better-off than late adopters, intermittent users, and late adopters, less active users or non-users. Thus, one

accessible group that would offer ripe data on their actual Internet usage and attitudes toward their usage in Cambodia in 2008 was students. The Internet for Learning Project at the Department of Media and Communication was initiated in late 2008 to study students' actual usage in Phnom Penh and their attitudes toward the usage. With a SIRCA grant from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and administrative support from the Singapore Internet Research Centre (SiRC) of Nanyang Technological University, a study on Internet use among university and high school students in Phnom Penh was conducted between early 2009 and mid-2010 by the Department of Media and Communication, Royal University of Phnom Penh. Out of this project, a report on Internet integration among Cambodian students was released in mid-2010, while some of the findings are still at this time being worked through for a further publication. In any case, some straightforward results from this project are interesting in relation to the Internet shops as public access venues for the Internet. First, Internet shops remained the most accessed venue for Internet use among the students surveyed in Phnom Penh (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** Access Venues for Regular (at least once a week) Internet Use by Students in Phnom Penh



This has brought about a number of implications, but the main question is: 'How are these different access points inclined to different Internet use motivations?' A series of multiple regression analyses revealed the following:

- (1) Access on mobile phone and at home was mainly for entertainment and socialization uses;
- (2) Access at school or university was almost only for information seeking, yet using the Internet at university or school to seek information was still far below that at Internet shops and at home;
- (3) Access at Internet shops was most used for information seeking; and finally
- (4) Access at Internet shops was more often used for academic purposes than that at home or at school/university.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, the significance of the Internet shops could not be overemphasized here. To follow up on these findings from the study funded by the SIRCA grant, we set off a further study on Internet use at public access venues: Internet shops and Wi-Fi cafés in Phnom Penh, by asking two main questions: (1) 'Who use the Internet at these places?' and (2) 'What do

<sup>2</sup> For more details and explanations on the study and measures, see Peou (2010)

they use the Internet for?' The preliminary report here presents some of the findings from the study, by first providing a brief explanation of the significance of Internet cafés in general.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF INTERNET CAFÉS**

'Internet cafés' or 'cybercafés' are a worldwide phenomenon. The birth of the Internet café is generally attributed to the opening of the *Cyberia* in London in 1994 (Liff & Laegran, 2003; Mutula, 2003), although there is also claim that the beginning was in the United States in the early 1990s (Stewart, 2000). In Cambodia, the phenomenon only arrived towards the end of the 1990s. Worldwide, thousands of Internet cafés are at present operating across the globe, from Asia to Africa, from Europe to America. The cybercafé search engine [www.cybercaptive.com](http://www.cybercaptive.com) recorded 5,170 cybercafés and other public access points operating in 160 countries as of May 2009 (Cambodia included). It is no doubt that such diversity of the locations of these cafés causes their variation in meanings and functions from place to place (Liff & Laegran, 2003). A brief explanation of the meanings and functions of Internet café or cybercafé is thus important for a start.

First, an Internet café does not always denote the sense of a 'café' environment, such as that offered by, for instance, a Starbucks café. For instance, most Internet cafés in China are better described as 'Internet bars' with not-so-'decent' environment (Hong & Huang, 2005), and drinks and snacks, instead of being offered, are sometimes banned. Similar conditions can also be found across Indonesia (Wahid, Furuholt & Kristiansen, 2006), while a blend of both a café environment and access-oriented condition is found in other parts of the world, for instance in Trinidad (Miller & Slater, 1999). In Cambodia, the Internet cafés may be best categorized into two sorts: Internet shop and Wi-Fi café. An Internet shop (literally translated from Khmer) resembles examples described above in China and Indonesia, where the focus is on providing 'access' per se, rather than a 'café' environment with drinks, snacks and cozy atmosphere. A safe estimate of the number of such Internet shops from various sources is around 300 in the country. The second type is the Wi-Fi cafés, which offer a conventional, or sometimes stylish, café environment (what perhaps best understood as resembling a Starbucks café). These Wi-Fi cafés offer wireless Internet connection, requiring the patrons to have their own laptop, along with drink and food, and the main product is not Internet access per se. Patrons at these Wi-Fi cafés do not necessarily come for the Internet access, but rather for a variety of other purposes, including social gathering, casual business discussion, hanging out, and eating. There are at present several dozens of these cafés.

In the context of a developing country, the Internet cafés (or more accurately 'Internet shops' as in Cambodia or 'Internet bars' in China) are crucial in providing access to a large number of users, who would otherwise have no other, or at least as convenient, means of access to the Internet. By 'buying' hours or minutes of access, the users can avoid having to invest in the hardware and set-up cost of the Internet. In this context, the function of these Internet cafés is basically 'access' or 'usage' per se. For instance, in small or mid-size Chinese cities, most users visit an Internet café because of it being the only access point or its low cost (Hong & Huang, 2005). This can be called the **access-oriented** function of the Internet

café. In other contexts where convenient access to the Internet is multiple and access at Internet café is not the 'last resort' (Liff & Laegran, 2003, p. 307), such as in developed countries or well-off areas of developing cities, the Internet cafés can be less access-oriented. Rather, they are **environment-oriented**. Laegran and Stewart (2003), for example, give examples of how the Internet cafés in Norway and Scotland cater their environments to suit three markedly different types of patrons: those seeking a trendy lifestyle of a café atmosphere, those seeking a place to hang out, and the gamers and computer enthusiasts. Similar environment-oriented conditions of Internet cafés are also found in China's largest cities (Hong & Huang, 2003). The Wi-Fi cafés in Phnom Penh are among this sort.

In our study, we included both the *access-oriented* Internet shops and the *environment-oriented* Wi-Fi cafés.

## THE STUDY

### Data Collection

The data of this cross-sectional survey were collected on a weekday and a weekend in April 2010 from 23 Internet shops and 5 Wi-Fi cafés in Phnom Penh, totaling 28 public access venues. These selected venues were not claimed to be representative of the Internet shops and Wi-Fi cafés in the city, for a comprehensive list of Internet shops and Wi-Fi cafés was unavailable for a random selection. However, there was effort in including in the study venues from a considerable range of locations in the city's inner areas by dividing the inner areas of the city into six different areas demarcated by its major streets, from each of which at least three Internet shops and a Wi-Fi café were selected on the basis of accessibility. The 28 Internet shops and Wi-Fi cafés included in the analyses came from five inner districts of Phnom Penh (the other three districts of the city constitute the outer city areas, hence not selected for the study).

The questionnaires were administered by 20 fieldworkers, all third-year students at the Department of Media and Communication, who undertook the fieldwork as part of their course project. 50% of the questionnaires were administered and collected on a weekday, and the fieldworkers administered the other half on the following weekend (however, some venues were replaced due to inaccessibility for the second administration on the weekend). Only Cambodian Internet users were included in the survey. The self-completion questionnaire consisted of three main parts: Internet access and experience; Internet attitudes; and relevant demographic information.

### Measures

*Use motivation* was measured by the respondents' responses to the frequencies of 14 activities on the Internet during the last six months prior to the survey. We adapted these Internet activities from Wiser's (2001) Socio-Affective Regulation (SAR) and Goods-and-Information (GIA) of Internet use and Stafford et al.'s (2004) Process, Content and Social Gratifications of Internet use by both changing the frequency scales and wording (for translation) to fit our context and deleting items that were irrelevant to the Cambodian

context, such as online banking. Three constructs for Internet use motivation among our respondents were deduced from the 14 Internet activities by an exploratory factor analysis: (1) information seeking, (2) socialization, and (3) entertainment. (See *Table 1*, two activities were deleted to increase the internal reliability value of one construct).

*Access level* was the summation of Internet access points and Internet access frequency at those points by the respondents. The respondents were asked whether during the last six months they had accessed the Internet at the following five access points: (1) school/workplace, (2) Internet shop, (3) Wi-Fi cafés, (4) home, and (5) mobile phone. For each access point, they also had to decide the frequency of their access for the last six months: never (=0); less than once a month (=1); once a month (=2); once a week (=3); and more than once a week (=4). The 'access level' of their Internet experience was the arithmetical sum of the access frequencies of the five access points, and therefore represented on a range scale between 0 and 20 points.

**Table 1:** Rotated factor loadings and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the three constructs of use motivation

Items	Factor 1: Information Seeking	Factor 2: Socialization	Factor 3: Entertainment
<b>Factor 1: Information Seeking (<math>\alpha=.749</math>)</b>			
Send/read emails	.521		
Look for information for school/academic work	.681		
Look for information about job/study opportunity	.750		
Look for news	.747		
Look for/check information about products and services	.716		
<b>Factor 2: Socialization (<math>\alpha=.747</math>)</b>			
Chat/instant message		.753	
Maintain a blog/profile on the Internet		.803	
Look for new friends		.684	
Look for romance		.603	
<b>Factor 3: Entertainment (<math>\alpha=.720</math>)</b>			
Download software, film, music or images			.740
View movie clips or other entertainment content			.865
Play games online			.658

Total variance explained 59.04%, with overall Cronbach  $\alpha=.787$

## Sample

A total of 182 respondents were included in the study, 78% of whom were users at Internet shops and the other 22% at Wi-Fi cafés. About three-fourths of the respondents were male and the rest female. These users were mostly young and educationally advantaged, consistent with the widely proven expectation that the active users and early adopters of the Internet are generally younger and educationally and financially better off than non-users and late adopters. More than half of our respondents (59.3%) were between 19 to 25 years old, 16.5% 18 years old or younger, and 24.2% 26 years old or older. About half of them were undergraduate students, 18.7% students at high school level or lower, and 11.5% employees at private company, together making almost four-fifths of all the users. Our sample also appeared to have a fine range of users in terms of their experience of the

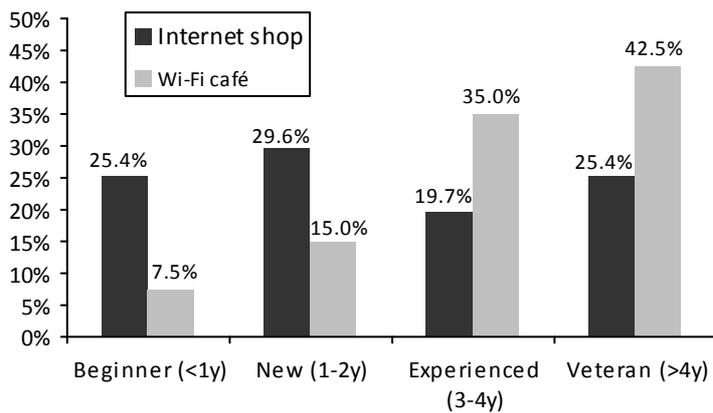
Internet. The four pre-categorized groups of users based on the length of their Internet experience included between 21% and 29% of the respondents. In terms of Internet competence, the respondents had a diverse range of self-assessment of their Internet skills, but the large majority perceived their Internet skills at least as competent. (See Table 2)

**Table 2: Respondents**

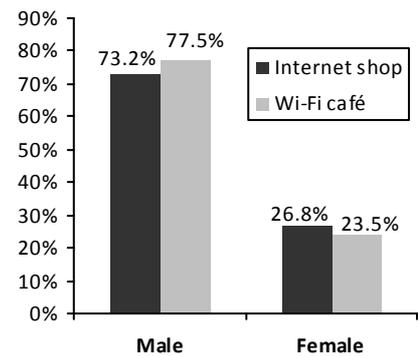
Demographics (N=182)	Frequency	Percent
<u>Place</u>		
Internet shop	142	78%
Wi-Fi café	40	22%
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	135	74.2%
Female	47	25.8%
<u>Age</u>		
≤ 18	30	16.5%
19-25	108	59.3%
≥26	44	24.2%
<u>Occupation</u>		
Undergraduate student	86	47.3%
High school student or lower	34	18.7%
Employee at private company	21	11.5%
Civil servant	10	5.5%
NGO staff	10	5.5%
Self-employed	9	4.9%
Graduate student	4	2.2%
Unemployed	4	2.2%
Others	1	0.5%
<u>Internet Experience</u>		
Beginner (<1 y)	39	21.4%
New (1-2 y)	48	26.4%
Experienced (3-4 y)	42	23.1%
Veteran (>4 y)	53	29.1%
<u>Perceived Internet Skills</u>		
Poor	11	6%
Fairly competent	87	47.8%
Very competent	51	28%
Expert	19	10.4%
Undisclosed	14	7.7%

Two further points are worth noting from the sample. First, there was an apparent distinction between both types of public access venues in the study. On the one hand, the Internet shops better accommodated all types of users: beginner, new, experienced and veteran. In other words, the patrons of Internet shops were made up of those with varying lengths of experience in using the Internet, from less than a year to more than four years. Wi-Fi cafés, on the other hand, were frequented by more experienced users, those who had three years or more of Internet experience (see Figure 2). Second, the two types of access venues – Internet shops and Wi-Fi cafés – were male-dominated (see Figure 3).

**Figure 2: Types of Users at Internet Shops and Wi-Fi Cafés**



**Figure 3: Sex of Respondents**

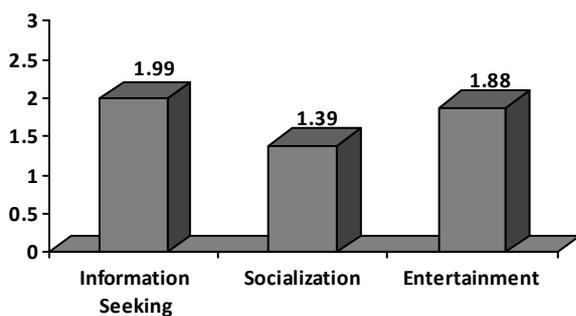


**PRELIMINARY RESULTS**

**Use Motivations and Internet Activities among the Respondents**

The motivation to use the Internet can be examined in a number of ways. However, one empirically based approach is to deduce constructs from a set of different activities that may be overlapping at a broader level. An exploratory factor analysis of the 14 activities on the Internet by the 182 respondents produced three types of use motivations: information seeking, socialization and entertainment (see Table 1 in the Method Section above). Information seeking and entertainment were the most common motivations of using the Internet among the respondents, with a mean score of 1.99 and 1.88 (on a scale between 0 and 4 points) respectively, while socialization is the least common, with a mean score of 1.39 on the same scale. (See Figure 4)

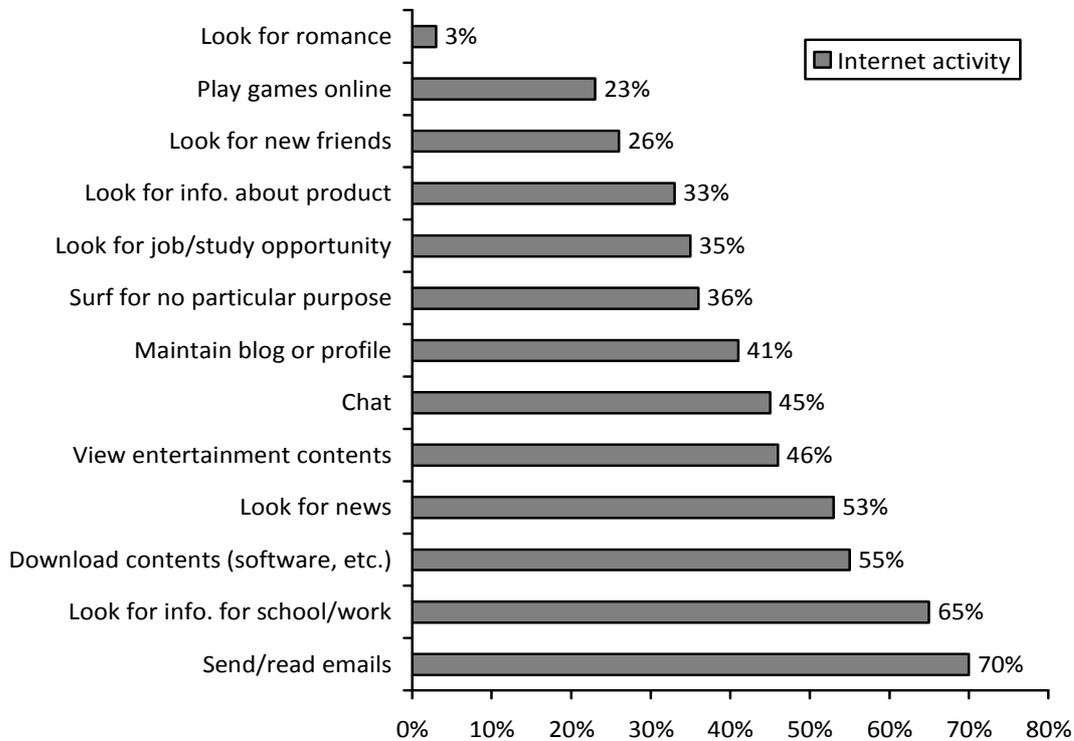
**Figure 4: Use Motivations among the Respondents (Mean scores are on a 0-to-4 point scale)**



To provide a simpler picture of the reasons why the respondents used the Internet, we can also look at the frequency of what they did with the Internet. Figure 5 shows that the most common activity the respondents performed with the Internet was sending and/or reading emails (70%), which is consistent with most studies on Internet use worldwide. Other very popular online activities included looking for information for school- or academic-related work (65%); downloading software, film, music or images (54%); and looking for news (53%). Meanwhile, the least regularly used activity at both places are to look for romance (3%) followed by to play games online (23%) and to look for new friends (26%). However, caution should be made here. First, we did not administer the questionnaires to Internet shops that focus their service on online games. Second, viewing pornography, a sensitive

topic that would readily lead to inaccuracy with a survey method, was not asked in the questionnaire. (See Figure 3)

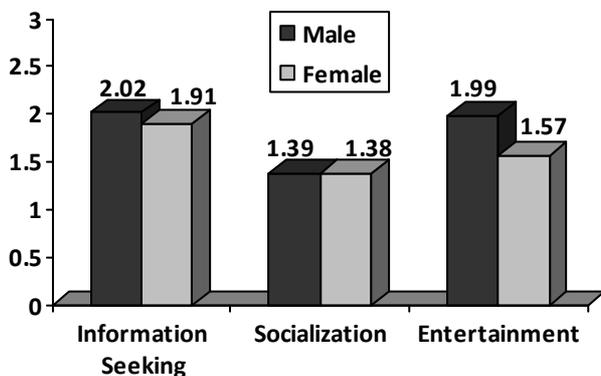
**Figure 5: Internet Activities on a Regular Basis ( $\geq 1$  per week)**



### Use Motivations by Gender, Internet Experience, and Access Level

To gain further insight, we can also explore whether or not the respondents' use motivations differed by gender, their Internet experience and access level. Figure 6 illustrates that the male respondents and their female counterparts utilized the Internet for the three types of motivations at similar levels. (Although it seemed that the male users used the Internet more for entertainment, the difference was statistically insignificant:  $t=.591, p=.051$ ). (See details below)

**Figure 6: Use Motivations by Gender**



Motivation	Sex				
		Mean <sup>a</sup>	S.D.	t	Sig.
Information Seeking	Male	2.02	1.20	0.55	.585 <sup>b</sup>
	Female	1.91	1.02		
Socialization	Male	1.39	1.14	0.07	.947 <sup>b</sup>
	Female	1.38	1.05		
Entertainment	Male	1.99	1.23	1.97	.051 <sup>b</sup>
	Female	1.57	1.27		

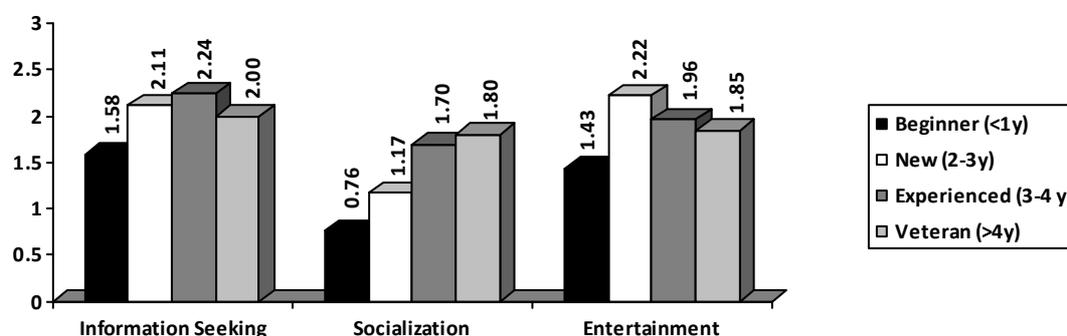
<sup>a</sup> All mean values are on 1-to-5-point Likert scale

<sup>b</sup> There is not any significant difference.

The common belief that the longer one uses the Internet, the more he or she uses it for more purposes is true to only a certain extent (it is important to look at the graphical illustration of *Figure 7* as well as the ANOVA results of *Table 3*). A short summary of the findings here is as follows:

- (1) For the information seeking use of the Internet, there was not any significant difference between the users of different lengths of Internet experience. Although, those with less than one year of Internet experience appeared to least use the Internet for information seeking, the difference was too small to be significant.
- (2) For the socialization use of the Internet, it was to some extent true that the longer one had used the Internet, the more likely he or she used it for socialization purpose. Those with three years or more of Internet experience made use of the Internet for socialization more than those with a year of experience or less.
- (3) The Internet was used for entertainment to slightly different degrees by those with different years of Internet experience. However, the only significant difference was that those with less than a year of experience made use of the Internet for such purpose less than the others. It seemed to suggest that after a short while of adopting the Internet, one would likely make much use of the Internet for entertainment.

**Figure 7: Use Motivations by Types of Users**



**Table 3: Use Motivations by Types of Users**

Internet Experience	Use Motivations		
	Info. Seeking (Mean, S.D.)	Socialization (Mean, S.D.)	Entertainment (Mean, S.D.)
1. Beginner (<1 y)	1.58 (1.11)	.76 (.88)	1.43 (1.21)
2. New (1-2 y)	2.11 (1.17)	1.18 (1.10)	2.22 (1.13)
3. Experienced (3-4 y)	2.24 (1.21)	1.70 (1.13)	1.96 (1.31)
4. Veteran (> 4 y)	2.00 (1.07)	1.80 (1.04)	1.85 (1.27)
<b>ANOVA (F, Sig.)</b>	<b>2.27 (.082)</b>	<b>8.67 (.000)</b>	<b>2.96 (.034)</b>
Scheffe test	N/A	1<3; 1<4; 2<4	1<2

It is also to some extent true that the more one uses the Internet, the more it becomes integrated into one's daily life in terms of information seeking, socialization and entertainment. *Table 4* shows either weak or moderate positive correlation between access

level (or how much one used the Internet) by the respondents and the levels of Internet use for information seeking, socialization, and entertainment. To simplify this, we use *Figure 8* to illustrate the relationships between how much one used the Internet and how much the Internet was used for the three purposes. Although the graph is simplified, it can help to prove the point here.

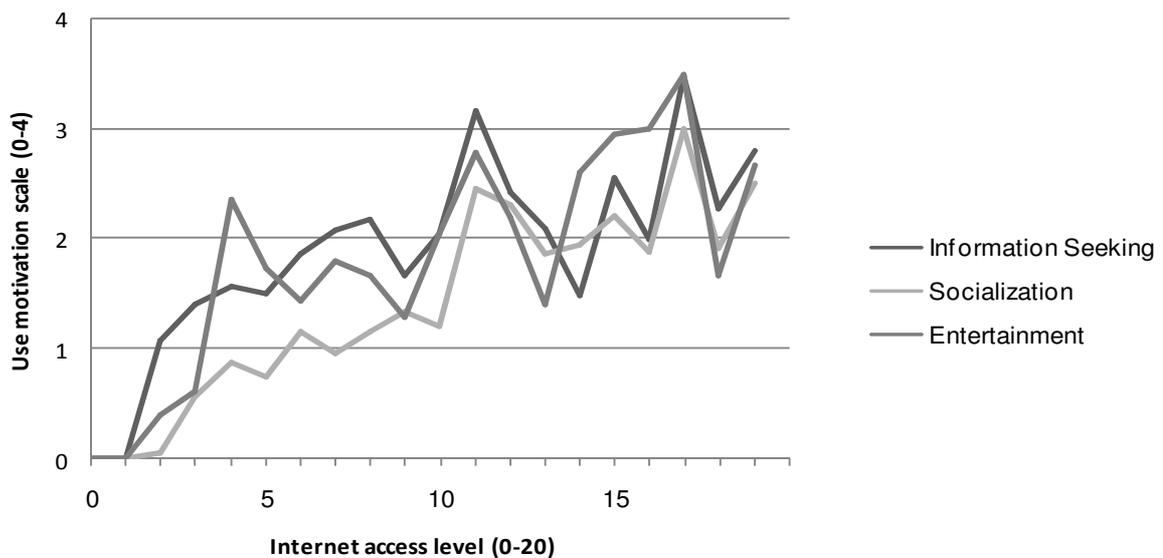
**Table 4: Use Motivations by Access Level**

	Mean <sup>a</sup>	S.D.	Correlation Coefficients <sup>b</sup>			
			Access Level	Info. Seeking	Socialization	Entertainment
Access Level	8.58	4.11	1.00			
Info. Seeking	2.00	1.15	.293	1.00		
Socialization	1.39	1.11	.530	.230	1.00	
Entertainment	1.88	1.25	.300	.232	.438	1.00

<sup>a</sup>Mean value for Access Level is on a 0-to-20-point scale, and mean values for Info. Seeking, Socialization and Entertainment are on a 0-to-4-point scale.

<sup>b</sup>All correlations are significant at  $p < .01$

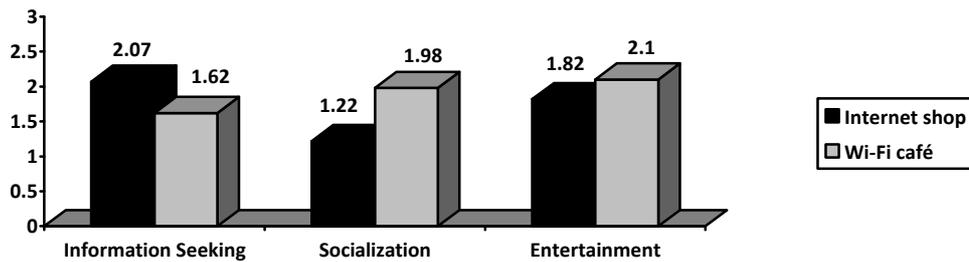
**Figure 8: Use Motivations by Access Level**



**Use Motivations and Internet Activities at Internet Shops and Wi-Fi Cafés**

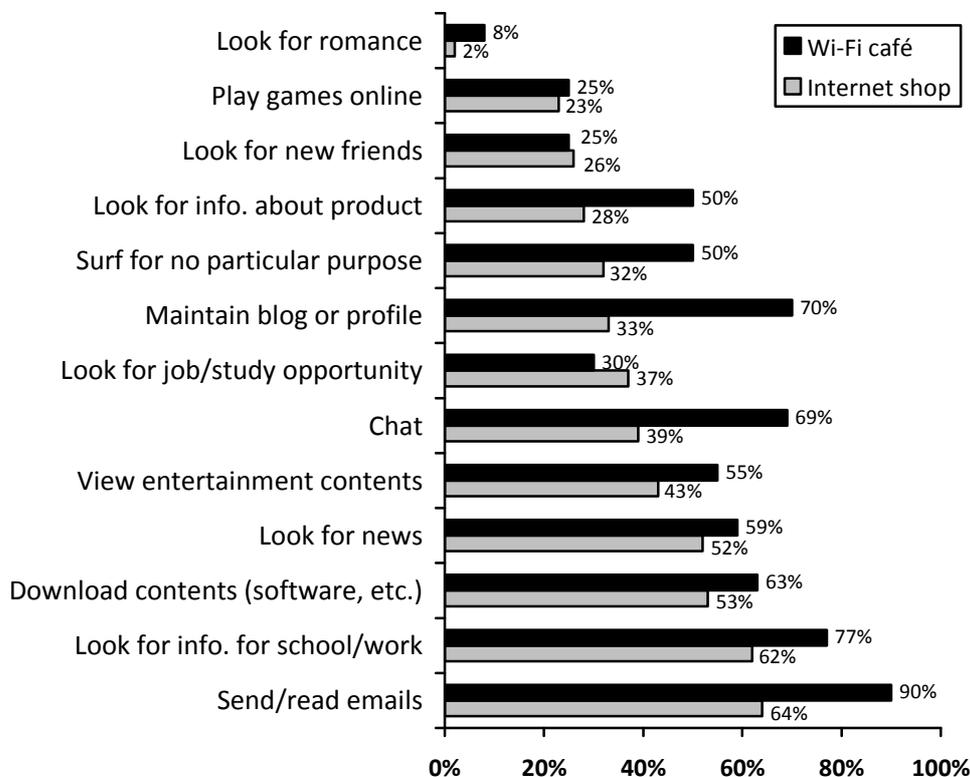
The study also seeks to see if use motivations of the Internet and online activities differed between Internet shops and Wi-Fi cafés. First in terms of use motivations, there were slight differences as we expected, and the socialization use motivation at Wi-Fi cafés appeared to be much higher than that at Internet shops (*see Figure 9*). Nevertheless, due to the design of the questionnaire, we could not compare these differences statistically.

**Figure 9: Use Motivations at Internet Shops and Wi-Fi Cafés**



Finally, looking at the regular (i.e. once or more per week) online activities of the respondents at the Internet shops and the Wi-Fi cafés we surveyed gave a simpler picture. There were some noticeable differences here (see Figure 10 below). Four activities were much more popular at Wi-Fi cafés than at Internet shops: (1) using the Internet to maintain a blog or a profile on the web; (2) chatting online; (3) looking for information about products; and (4) surfing for no particular purposes. The fact that almost all the online activities appeared to be more regular at Wi-Fi cafés than at Internet shops was probably due to two reasons. First, those using the Internet at these Wi-Fi cafés tended to be more frequent patrons. Second, they understandably used the Internet at these cafés for longer each time since it was at no charge and ‘using the Internet’ per se was not necessarily the only activity or purpose at these cafés.

**Figure 10: Regular Online Activities by Places**



## CONCLUSIONS

From these preliminary results, we can make three main conclusions that further discussion on Internet cafés in Cambodia can refer to. First and foremost, public Internet access venues are still a male-dominated space. At both the Internet cafés and Wi-Fi cafés surveyed, the number of male patrons was about three times as high as that of the female patrons (see *Figure 3*). While this gender differential is not unexpected in a context like Cambodia, it reminds us that Internet access for girls and women is still more restricted compared to that for boys and men. This gender divide remains a challenge for development initiatives in the field of Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D), and hence gender emphasis must always be a prioritized and well-defined element in development initiatives.

Second, there are two marked differences between Internet shops and Wi-Fi cafés. Firstly, Internet shops are a crucial access point for patrons. We already know that Internet shops are critical as an access point because they are the most accessed venues compared to others, as shown by a previous study – see the Background Section earlier or Peou (2010). As well do we know that Internet shops exempt the users from the hardware and set-up cost, and they are an access-oriented platform. What the preliminary findings here further suggest is that they are critical as an access point also because they accommodate a diverse range of patrons, from beginners (those with less than a year of Internet experience) to veterans (those with more than four years of Internet experience). This is not the case with Wi-Fi cafés, which are frequented by mainly the more experienced users (not only just because of the hardware cost of owning a laptop on the patrons) – most of the users at the surveyed Wi-Fi cafés had three or more years of Internet experience (see *Figure 2*). Secondly, the Internet use at Internet shops seems to be more information-seeking-oriented, whereas the opposite seems to be characteristic of Wi-Fi cafés. This is partly suggested by the use motivation differentials (see *Figure 9*, though this could not be statistically tested), as well as by the much more popularity at the surveyed Wi-Fi cafés of such online activities as ‘chatting online’, ‘surfing for no particular purpose’, and ‘maintaining a blog or a profile on the web’ (see *Figure 10*). The fact remains that as long as the Internet functions to provide information, Internet shops remain necessary in Cambodia.

Third, the preliminary results here partially point to the growing importance of the Internet among its users’ everyday life, i.e. more integration of the Internet into the users’ lives. We admit that there is no causal effect proven from the above findings (which is impossible anyhow for research in this context) between online activities or use motivations and Internet experience or access points. Nonetheless, there clearly is a positive relationship – though at varying degrees – between using the Internet to fulfill certain needs and how long one has used the Internet, as well as how much the Internet has been accessed (see *Figures 7 & 8* and *Tables 3 & 4*). This is consistent with many studies on the Internet from various parts of the world and as such may be unsurprising, yet what remains critical, or even contentious, is how such integration of the Internet into the users’ daily life has manifested over time. Efforts to find empirical evidence of such manifestations need to continue in Cambodia, and even at a more advanced level in terms of design and scope.

It is also worth borne in mind that the Internet café phenomenon has aroused more contentious debates, rather than just discussions on Internet access and usage per se. Contentious issues on the Internet café phenomenon include the corrupt influence on local cultural values due to pornography (Hong & Huang, 2005) and Internet café addiction (Wu & Cheng, 2007). In the ICT4D area, there have also been arguments for the promotion of public Internet kiosks in general to tackle the digital exclusion of the access-disadvantaged (see Servaes, 2007), while the casual environment of an Internet café has also been argued to be helpful to learning – academically or skill-wise (Furuholt & Kristiansen, 2007; Cilesiz, 2009). Empirical investigation into these issues in Cambodia is needed and remains critical to the field of ICT4D at large.

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