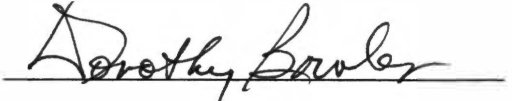


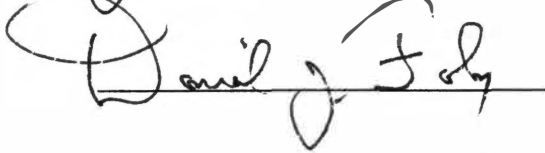
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Jeffrey M. Garstka entitled "College Student Use of Media for Sports News and Information." I have examined the final paper copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Communications.



Dr. Dorothy Bowles, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
Recommend its acceptance:

Acceptance for the Council:



Vice Provost and Dean of
Graduate Studies

**COLLEGE STUDENT USE OF MEDIA
FOR SPORTS NEWS AND INFORMATION**

**A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**Jeffrey M. Garstka
May 2002**

Dedication

Thesis
2002
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This thesis is dedicated to my parents for always supporting me, believing in me and teaching me what is right and good; to the rest of my family and friends for their support and direction; and to Claire for her unconditional love and support as my girlfriend and best friend. Thank you all for always being there.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all those who helped me achieve my scholastic goals. I thank Dr. Bowles for her direction and honesty. I thank Dr. Crook for giving me a great opportunity outside of the classroom, and for serving in my committee. I thank Professor Foley for serving in my committee. I thank all my teachers from kindergarten through graduate school for doing what you do – I have learned something from each of you.

I thank Bonnie Hufford for being patient and for being a great supervisor and friend. Without her help this would not have been possible. To everyone else who gave me suggestions and support along the way: Thank you.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine how college students who say they are sports fans use the media for their newsgathering habits. Data were collected from 158 respondents at the University of Tennessee and compiled to draw conclusions regarding their media use for gathering sports news and information.

The study was based on the uses and gratifications approach to mass communication studies. Uses and gratifications is a theory that attempts to explain why people use certain media in fulfilling their everyday needs. The basic premise is that people are goal oriented in their media use and will use each medium in a different way in fulfilling different needs.

The study found significant differences in the way students gather sports news and information and how they used each medium. An overwhelming 95.6 percent of respondents said they used television for gathering sports news and information. Respondents also indicated that they used newspapers and the World Wide Web a great deal in gathering sports news and information. Magazines were the least-used medium, as only 27.2 percent of respondents said they used magazines for gathering sports news and information.

Males indicated that they used the media more than females for gathering sports news and information. However, females tended to be more social in their newsgathering habits.

This study was a new application of the uses and gratifications approach. No other studies have dealt with audience gratifications and media use for sports news and information, but this thesis shows that there is room for more research in this area.

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
Introduction.....	1
1. Literature Review	6
2. Theory in Action	14
3. Method.....	22
4. Results.....	26
5. Discussion	59
Conclusion	68
References.....	71
Appendix.....	74
Vita	79

List of Tables

Table	Page
1. Sources for sports and non-sports information	29
2. Comparison of media use per week for sports and non-sports information	32
3. Sources for sports and Super Bowl information	38
4. Comparison of media use per week for general sports and Super Bowl information	40
5. Crosstabulation of media use for sports news by gender	42
6. Crosstabulation of media use per week by gender	44
7. T-Test for gender differences in why students use the media for sports news	48
8. Comparison of solitary and social media	50
9. T-Test comparison of respondents who do or do not use friends for sports news	51
10. ANOVA comparison of frequency of television use and 15 Likert-scale statements	53
11. Differences in means for gambling statements	55
12. T-Test on gender and athlete/non-athlete for gambling statements	56
13. ANOVA test for classification in school and television use per week for gambling statements	57

Introduction

Most mass communication theories attempt to explain how the communication process works. They focus on receivers, senders, messages and other factors involved in the communication process. These theories are used in solving the puzzles created by communication in the form of “how to.” Few theories exist that attempt to unravel the mysteries of why people use the mass media. One theory, the uses and gratifications approach to mass communication studies, is dedicated to explaining the “why.”

People use all forms of media — newspapers, magazines, television, telephones, radio, and most recently, computers and the Internet. They use the media in order to fulfill the wants and needs of everyday life. Uses and gratifications research is used in describing the way people use media and their motivations for doing so. People generally use media for personal gratifications but may also use certain media to fulfill a social need as well. Mass media studies, particularly those that employ the uses and gratifications approach, are often influenced by sociology (Wright in Hanson & Maxcy, 1996). Using certain media can easily fulfill social needs. It is not unusual for a group of people to get together to watch a particular television show or to see the latest summer movie. The result is that it gives people something to talk about. Communication is essential to society and participation in the communication process establishes a person as a functioning member of society (Wright in Hanson & Maxcy, 1996, p. 63).

Sporting events are unique in that they can bring people together in a social setting whether they are viewed live or through the media. Not everyone in American society would agree that sports are an important institution in their everyday lives, but

avid sports fans would argue that sports do play a functional role in developing a social setting. For instance, during football season fans gather to watch the big college and professional games every weekend. Bars, restaurants, apartments and houses are packed with fans each week that huddle around the television or radio sets to cheer for their favorite team or to simply take in all the action unbiased. Regardless of where they watch (or listen to) the game, sporting events provide people with an opportunity to interact and communicate in a social setting. This is not to suggest that individuals do not or should not watch the games alone. In fact, even those who sit in front of their television sets by themselves to watch the games will most likely join in a conversation at the office Monday morning to talk about the result of the big game. Although these two settings are different, they both show that sports can be an integral part of our social life.

The media play an immense role in the sports world. Games are broadcast on the radio, television and even the Web. Newspapers and television shows analyze the pre-game and post-game situations of each contest. Without the media, the popularity and therefore the social characteristics of sporting events might not be as great. Mass communication has increased the number of people who follow sports (Wright in Hanson & Maxcy, 1996). How many people 25 years ago would have dreamed that there would be such a thing as a 24-hour cable sports network? Let alone the fact that ESPN alone has four networks: ESPN, ESPN2, ESPN Classic and ESPN News to go along with its magazine and popular Web site. When set in a non-sports context, the media provide several different functions for people including information, escape and entertainment. However, when applied to sports, the main function of the media can be viewed as entertainment. Even when the media are giving “important” information regarding the

upcoming football game, this “news” can still be regarded as entertainment as opposed to vital news information in the purest sense. Information about a sporting event is not only significant to those directly involved in the event such as the athletes or the team owner, but also to those individuals and our society who witness the event (Wright in Hanson & Maxcy, 1996).

The Super Bowl, one could argue, has a bigger impact on our society than any other sporting event. Millions of people tune in to the game and rarely do they do it alone. Our nation is so preoccupied with the Super Bowl each year that it has almost become a holiday. Very few sporting events draw as much attention as the Super Bowl. Super Bowl parties have become a ritual, and often people who have no interest in the game itself are in attendance. The Super Bowl is much more than a sporting event; it is a social event. Merron (2001) claims that the average attendance at a Super Bowl party is 17 and only five percent of those watching the game do so alone. Regardless of where people watch the game, statistics show that people are infatuated with the Super Bowl. The 2001 game between the Baltimore Ravens and New York Giants had the lowest television rating since 1990; however, CBS estimates that 131.2 million people watched at least part of the game, making it the No. 52-rated program of all time (Ginn, 2001). Even when the Super Bowl has comparatively low ratings to other Super Bowls, it still draws an enormous number of viewers.

Sports fans are not the only ones who are preoccupied with the Super Bowl. The media also have a heavy interest in the game each year. Media organizations, particularly newspapers and their respective Web sites, all across the country join the Super Bowl frenzy in the days leading up to the game, making it more than just another football game

(Salgado, 1994; Williams, 2000). Much of the hype surrounding the Super Bowl is presented as news, but in reality it is entertainment. In the weeks leading up to Super Bowl XXXIV between the Tennessee Titans and St. Louis Rams, the pre-game coverage took on a new meaning for the newspapers representing the two cities, neither of which had ever participated in the Super Bowl. *The Tennessean* and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* presented much of their coverage on their respective Web sites, Tennessean.com and Postnet.com, in the spirit of competition and entertainment (Williams, 2000). Both sites featured pre-game analysis, photographs, user polls and even online forums for fan discussion (Williams, 2000). This type of media coverage allowed people to talk about the Super Bowl, therefore making it an integral part of social communication.

Some people read the newspaper to gain insight on current events while others choose to get their information from the television or the World Wide Web. Even within a given medium, people have different reasons for using it. For instance, people use the Web to search for information and also for entertainment.

Although it is relatively undeveloped in comparison to other mass communication theories such as agenda setting, uses and gratifications is nonetheless an important approach to studying the media in a society. In today's society Americans are surrounded by different forms of mass media from newspapers to magazines to the Web to high-density television. Regardless of which media people choose to use in their everyday lives, each choice is made for a reason. Some people watch television for entertainment while others turn the TV on just to have background noise.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how college-age sports fans fulfill their sports needs through the media. The thesis will begin with a literature review of the uses

and gratifications approach to mass communication studies, citing specific examples of previous audience gratifications studies. The current study will use a survey of students at the University of Tennessee to obtain information regarding the gratifications of their media use.

Previous uses and gratifications studies have tried to make a connection between a person's media use and his or her social and psychological patterns (see for example Katz et al., 1973; Elliot & Quattlebaum, 1979; Finn, 1997). The current study will attempt to draw some conclusions regarding the respondents' indication of their media use for sports information and the social and psychological gratifications they receive.

1. Literature Review

The uses and gratifications approach to mass communications studies has been used for about 60 years, beginning with scholars like Cantril, Lazarsfeld, Herzog, Suchman, and Wolfe and Fisk (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Early studies included such things as quiz programs, soap operas, development of children's interest in comics, and functions of newspaper reading (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). These media scholars all went about their research using similar methods in that they all focused on qualitative, open-ended question surveys, and not until the 1970s did researchers begin to make the connection between the gratifications of media use and the sociological and psychological needs of people (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974).

Functionalism

Mass communication studies, particularly uses and gratifications research, has its roots deeply planted in sociology, which treats mass communication as a social phenomenon (Holz & Wright, 1979; Wright in Hanson & Maxcy, 1996). Gratifications research is essentially a branch of the functionalism paradigm (Elliot & Quattlebaum, 1979; Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch; Wright in Hanson & Maxcy, 1996). Before studying uses and gratifications, one must first investigate and understand the idea of functionalism, as many uses and gratifications studies mention functionalism.

Wright (in Hanson & Maxcy, 1996) bases his idea of functionalism from sociologist Robert K. Merton. Every social activity is goal directed and carries significant consequences or functions (p. 65). These are not necessarily one and the same, and when applied to mass communication it means that the functions of mass communication are not always the same as what was intended by the communicators (p. 65). Essentially,

there are what he calls functions (positive consequences) and dysfunctions (negative consequences) (p. 65). Each message may carry one or both of these effects. Further, each message or campaign has intended consequences (manifest) and unintended consequences (latent) (p. 65).

Wright gives the example of a public health campaign in which mass communication is used to relay the message to society. For instance there may be a campaign to persuade people to stop smoking. The manifest function would be that people receive the intended message, but the campaign could also carry a latent function, or side effect. This could come in the form of improved morale and publicity for the public health officials who carry out the campaign. Although the latent function is positive, it would be considered unexpected and unintentional.

A positive result of such a campaign would be that some members of society choose to stop smoking, however the campaign may also be dysfunctional. An example would be that after hearing about the negative aspects of smoking some people would avoid going to the doctor for fear that they have lung cancer or another condition as a result of their smoking habit. Each message or campaign can be purely functional or dysfunctional, and in many cases both. Wright (in Hanson & Maxcy, 1996) warns that the interpretation of a message as functional or dysfunctional is based on the subjectivity and judgment of the researcher. He gives two possible solutions to this problem. First he emphasizes that researchers should not try to classify every effect of mass communication as functional or dysfunctional (p. 65). Rather we should limit our analysis to those effects that are significant to a change in our society's behavior. He also says that, "it is important to avoid equating the terms functional and dysfunctional with our

personal ideas of good and bad,” (p. 66). The idea of an effect being functional simply means that it contributes to the “strength and continuing operation of the society under study,” (p. 66).

Understanding the theory

The literature thus far has set the stage for understanding the uses and gratifications approach by exploring the sociological background, particularly functionalism. Some of the basic characteristics of uses and gratifications have already been discussed, and this section of the thesis will further explore in detail what exactly uses and gratifications is and how researchers have used it in mass communication studies.

Uses and gratifications is often called an approach rather than a theory with scholars divided on the issue. Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) attach the label of “approach” to uses and gratifications rather than “theory” in order to disclaim any commitment to a specific method, saying that it expands uses and gratifications’ flexibility and therefore its influence (p. 510). Critics of uses and gratifications may assume that this label gives the idea that it is less than a full-fledged theory (Lin, 1996). Regardless of whether one calls it an approach or a theory, the uses and gratifications perspective can be considered influential in communication research (Lin, 1996).

Katz and his colleagues refer to Lundberg and Hulten for their labeling of uses and gratifications as a “model” and thus give five important elements of the model that explain some of the important characteristics of uses and gratifications (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974). First, the audience is seen as active and goal directed (p. 510). Media exposure, although sometimes casual and unintentional, is usually done with a specific

purpose. A person can walk into a room full of friends who just happen to be watching television and this would be an example of casual exposure. However, most of the time people use the media with needs in mind.

A second assumption is that the link between mass media use and need gratification lies with the audience member (p. 511). For instance, a person may watch the Super Bowl and be emotionally affected by the outcome of the game, but it is not the television itself that has the effect; the person chooses to watch the game and therefore plays the active role in the communication process. Third, we can assume that people use the media to satisfy needs, but some needs cannot be derived from media use and, therefore, must be fulfilled through other ways (p. 511). In essence, the media compete with other forms of communication such as interpersonal relationships in fulfilling a person's needs.

A fourth assumption deals with the methodological approach of uses and gratifications research. Audience members are aware enough of their own media use to be able to report data regarding their goals and needs (p. 511). Some people may not be aware of some of the less obvious goals and needs but they will be able to recognize them when presented with a well-constructed survey or questionnaire. A final assumption states, "Value judgments about the cultural significance of mass communication should be suspended while audience orientations are explored on their own terms" (p. 511). This basically says that a contrast exists between the uses and gratifications approach and the speculative writing about popular culture (p. 511).

The previous five assumptions are pretty straightforward in laying the groundwork for the theory but it is in the methodological approach where one can see the

flexibility of gratifications research. Katz et al. (1974) outline a seven-step research process that was only implicit in the early works (p. 510). The steps are provided in a linear form, saying that: “(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones,” (p. 510). The methodological flexibility comes into play when researchers pick a starting point for their studies. One approach is to specify needs and then attempt to find where the gratifications come from, either media or otherwise (p. 510). Other researchers may take the observed gratifications as a starting point and reconstruct the needs being gratified (p. 510). Regardless of where scholars choose to begin their studies, gratifications research is open to great methodological flexibility.

History

Media and sociology scholars have been studying mass media audience gratifications since the 1940s, but the early studies focused primarily on qualitative data and failed to make any generalizations toward the greater population (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974). The researchers of this era spent time investigating the functions served by either media content or the medium itself (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974). Although the early studies provided a solid methodological framework for uses and gratifications research, it wasn't until Katz, Blumler, Haas and Gurevitch began studying this approach in the 1970s that studies began to focus on social and psychological needs of media users, taking into account their personality traits (Holz & Wright, 1979; Finn,

1997). The early studies focused on media content and users' needs but did not make the correlation between the needs and the personalities of the users.

Uses and gratifications research went through a makeover in the 1970s when Katz and his colleagues began studying this approach, and many scholars since that time period credit Katz et al. as the most influential researchers in the field of gratifications research (Elliot & Quattlebaum, 1979; Finn, 1997). One of the characteristics of the pre-Katz era of gratifications research is that the researchers based their studies around one medium; studies that analyzed audience gratifications in a wide variety of media were rare (Elliot & Quattlebaum, 1979). For instance, Herzog (1942) studied quiz programs and soap operas, Suchman (1942) focused on motives for getting interested in serious music on radio, and Berelson (1949) analyzed the functions of newspaper reading (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974). One of the most innovative and ambitious uses and gratifications studies was Katz, Haas and Gurevitch's 1973 article "On the Use of Mass Media for Important Things" in which they studied audience gratifications across several media rather than focusing on a single medium (Elliot & Quattlebaum, 1979; Holz & Wright, 1979).

The ambitious study

The 1973 Katz, Haas and Gurevitch study was presented in *American Sociological Review*. The researchers analyzed previous literature and then compiled a list of 35 statements regarding social and psychological needs said to be satisfied by mass media exposure (p. 165). The 35 statements were categorized into five groups according to resource and mode. The first group of needs related to the strengthening of information and knowledge, which the researchers labeled as *cognitive* needs (p. 166). The second

group consisted of needs related to the strengthening of pleasurable and emotional needs, which were labeled as *affective* needs (p. 166). Group three was made up of needs related to strengthening confidence, stability and status, which combine cognitive and affective needs and were labeled as *integrative* needs (p. 167). The fourth category, also labeled as an integrative function, contained needs related to strengthening contact with family, friends and the world (p. 167). The final group contained needs based on escape and tension-release and were defined “in terms of the weakening of contact with self and one’s social roles,” (p. 167).

Katz and his colleagues used the 35 need statements and surveyed 1,500 Israeli adults on their use of various media to satisfy their needs. The media used in the study were radio, television, newspapers, books and film (p. 165). The underlying meaning of this study was to correlate media use and the gratifications sought with the social and psychological needs of the individuals. The 35 statements covered a wide variety of social and psychological needs. Some examples of the need statements are: “To release tension,” “To feel that others think as I do,” “To participate in discussions with my friends,” and “To know myself,” (p. 170). For each statement survey respondents were asked whether or not they felt the need was “very important” (p. 170). The researchers then asked respondents to rank their media use based on the 35 need statements.

The results showed that different media were useful in satisfying different needs. For instance, newspapers satisfied many of the cognitive needs while television and film were helpful in fulfilling the affective and escape needs (p. 172). One important thing that this study showed was that while each medium satisfies different needs, there is often an overlap across several media. Some people may use newspapers primarily to gain

knowledge but they may also read the newspaper for entertainment. On the same notion, people watch television for escape and entertainment, but it can satisfy other needs as well such as to strengthen knowledge.

This innovative study showed that there is more to uses and gratifications research than just simply analyzing media content and its effects on users. Social and psychological implications do exist among media users and should be taken into consideration when conducting audience gratifications studies.

2. Theory in Action

Social implications

Since the inception of audience gratifications research in the 1940s, a variety of studies have explored this approach. Not only does uses and gratifications research allow scholars some flexibility in the methodological realm, it also is open to an array of different studies. With a brief look at some contemporary studies of audience gratifications, we see studies regarding television, radio, print news, cellular phone use and more recently computer and Internet use, with many of the studies taking into account gratifications across several media (Perse & Ferguson, 1993; Eighmey, 1997; Finn, 1997; Perse & Dunn, 1998; Dimmick, Kline & Stafford, 2000; Leung & Wei, 2000).

Each study takes on a different methodological approach, but they all have the same goal in mind: Why do people use certain media and what needs do the media fulfill? This section of the thesis will look at contemporary (meaning post-Katz era) uses and gratifications studies and analyze the methods and approaches the researchers take to draw some conclusions regarding the development of the theory.

A study by Elliot and Quattlebaum (1979) follows closely the Katz, Haas and Gurevitch study done just a few years earlier. Elliot and Quattlebaum mimicked the Katz et al. study and by taking the 35 need statements and reducing them to 20 with the help of an introductory telecommunication research class (p. 62). The 20 statements were pretested on a nonprobability sample of 55 students and based on responses, the statements were further reduced to the 10 that were used on the final survey (p. 62, 63). The purpose was to see whether the results of the Katz et al. study in Israel showed any

of the same correlations with a different cultural group, interviewed at a different time and with a different method of clustering the responses (p. 62).

One of the main differences between this study and the Katz et al. study was the selection of media. The Elliot and Quattlebaum study expanded the list of media to include magazines, recorded music and friends (p. 63). Some may not consider an interpersonal medium such as friends or family members to be relevant to an audience gratification study. However, since people rely so heavily on their peers for advice and reinforcement, the inclusion of friends as a mass medium is justifiable. The literature reviewed so far in this paper has shown the importance of social and psychological relation to audience gratifications, therefore, why should a study of this nature not include friends as a mass medium? After all, our peers can be as influential if not more influential than any of the traditional media analyzed in these studies. Friends and family are our direct link to society and their inclusion in the method of this study is justified.

The results of the Elliot and Quattlebaum study show that television was generally the most need-fulfilling medium (p. 71). Friends proved to be as functional as television in many areas of need satisfaction, but lacked in news-related areas such as “knowing the quality of our leaders” and “keeping up with the way government is doing its job,” (p. 66). In comparison to the Katz et al. research, this study drew many of the same conclusions in that different media satisfy different needs (p. 72). The authors noted a correlation between the two cultures used in the studies and their media usage (p. 72).

This study opened the doors for future gratifications research in that more and more studies focused on interpersonal relationships as well as media usage. Finn (1997) explored the use of media by college students based on personality traits. He collected

survey data from 219 college students who kept diaries of their mass media usage as well as non-mediated communication activities such as conversation to try and link personality traits with the type of gratifications sought through media use (p. 507).

Students were asked to keep track of the time they spent using media such as television, movies, radio and print media (p. 517). In addition to the traditional media exposure, the subjects also kept track of time spent in non-mediated communication activities including conversation, party/social event attendance, attendance at sporting events and participation in religious activities (p. 517). Finn analyzed the communication activities based on the students' personality traits. He hypothesized that there would be differences in media use based on traits such as extroversion and openness (p. 511, 513). The results showed that, like previous cross-media studies, television was the most used traditional medium while conversation with others ranked as the most used non-mediated communication activity (p. 518). Finn concluded that the "research demonstrates the feasibility of shifting the scope of uses and gratifications research from an exaggerated emphasis on using mass media to meet social deficits to the function it fulfills ... in helping people develop social identities," (p. 524).

Another contemporary study by Leung and Wei (2000) shows the importance of interpersonal communication in the realm of uses and gratifications research. The researchers sought to answer questions about the use of cellular phones by conducting a probability sample survey of Hong Kong residents (p. 308, 317). Although the telephone may not be considered a traditional mass medium, it does fall into the category of interpersonal media that previous researchers have included in their studies. Leung and Wei found that people generally use cellular phones because of their mobility and

immediacy factors and the researchers relate these traits in a sociological and psychological context (p. 316). Certain sections of the population used cellular phones to show affection toward friends and family while others seemed to use cellular phones for social reassurance (p. 317). The study also showed differences in gender, income and age (p. 317).

The three studies discussed here all have one thing in common: they all take into consideration social and psychological factors of the audience. What Katz and his colleagues called for in their research was for the expansion and development of these factors in uses and gratifications studies and the more current research seems to take heed of this call to action.

Technological influences

The previous section of this thesis showed how three different uses and gratifications studies had something in common: social implications of mass communication. Another mass media aspect that many contemporary uses and gratifications researchers draw upon is the analysis of new technology in the media (Perse & Dunn, 1998; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999). Although the avenues of gratifications research are virtually unlimited, the analysis of traditional media can become stale. However, the introduction of new media into our society provides scholars with a fresh approach to uses and gratifications research. This section of the thesis will pinpoint several studies that have been conducted because of the introduction of new media into our society.

The Leung and Wei study of cellular phone usage fits would fit nicely into this portion of the thesis, but to give it more than a mere mention would be redundant. Other

innovative studies that revolve around new media exist and will be examined further.

Although slightly outdated in terms of today's technology, Perse and Ferguson (1993) conducted a study on the impact of newer television technologies on viewer satisfaction. The researchers analyzed cable television, videocassette recorders and remote control devices to see if these "new" technologies increased television viewer satisfaction (p. 843).

Perse and Ferguson conducted a random telephone survey of adults living off-campus in a Midwest university town (p. 845). The researchers found that "to pass the time" and "companionship" were chief reasons why people used the new television technologies (p. 849). They found that television satisfaction was increased by the ability to change channels with a remote control, but satisfaction was not necessarily increased by cable subscription and VCR use (p. 850). Although some of the results of the study proved insignificant, the study itself was important in that it was based on new technology. Other contemporary studies have also taken advantage of media technology.

A study by Perse and Dunn (1998) investigated the use of computers and their multimedia functions. The researchers conducted a random telephone survey of more than 1,000 American adults to gain some insight on their use of computers in comparison to more traditional forms of media such as television and newspapers (p. 440). Many of the same need-based statements were present in this survey that were present in previous gratifications studies. Perse and Dunn explored the use of computers in terms of how people wanted to be entertained, wanted to relax, wanted to keep busy and wanted to keep up with current events (p. 442). The results showed that computer users found computers to be useful for entertainment and escape, but non-users saw no real need for

computers (p. 449). One limitation to this study in today's context was that connectivity to the Web at the time of the study was still on the rise and many people had not yet discovered this capability of computer use. Again, the results of the study are not the issue here. To quote Perse and Dunn, "most importantly, the results of this study reinforce the value in taking a uses and gratifications approach in studying new technologies," (p. 451).

Dimmick, Kline and Stafford (2000) also studied the Internet from a uses and gratifications perspective, this time to see how personal e-mail has replaced the telephone in interpersonal communication. The results of a survey showed that the telephone was superior to e-mail in providing people with gratifications such as personal relationships, expressing emotion and giving advice (p. 240). However, e-mail was more helpful in saving time and communicating with people across time zones (p. 241). The overall results of the study stay consistent with previous studies in that certain gratifications can be met by one medium, while other media are more likely to fulfill other needs.

Along the same lines as this study, Ferguson and Perse (2000) explored the idea of the Web as a functional alternative to television use. The results of this study showed that television is used for relaxation while respondents to the survey indicated that surfing the Web was not a relaxing pastime (p. 169). Respondents also said that surfing the Web, a very goal-oriented activity, was widely used in gathering information (p. 170).

The previous four studies all show that the uses and gratifications approach is helpful in analyzing the use of new media technology. As our society becomes more technologically advanced, the need for audience gratifications research increases. On the other hand, the methods of research may become more complicated with the convergence

of two or more media (e.g.: Web TV, Palm Pilots, e-mail capabilities on cellular phones, video streaming on the Web). Researchers must continue to find new and innovative ways to analyze audience gratifications.

Today's theory

This literature review has gone as far back as the 1940s, through the golden age of uses and gratifications in the 1970s and into the late 20th century citing specific research examples. Throughout this time period researchers have continued to refine their perspective in response to continued criticism of the uses and gratifications approach (Ruggiero, 2000). Even the most basic assumptions that the audience is goal-directed and that individuals freely choose their level of media exposure have come under fire (p. 11). For several decades media scholars lost interest in uses and gratifications theory until the emergence of new technology (p. 13).

Ruggiero (2000) offers some insight on the current state of uses and gratifications research. He says that the emergence of the Internet will provide scholars with a virtually endless realm of gratifications research (p. 21). The Web allows users an unprecedented amount of interactivity when compared to other traditional forms of media, and based on the assumption that the audience is goal-directed, this medium will present itself as a worthy vehicle for study. Despite the continued evolution of uses and gratifications research, Ruggiero contends that "scholars will continue to debate which prevailing theories should be acknowledged as 'legitimate' communication theories ... skeptics may question the theory for a lack of empirical distinction between needs and motivations and the obstacles of measuring the gratification of needs," (p. 26).

The uses and gratifications approach, with all of its developments over time, continues to revolve around the same basic questions: Why do people choose one medium over another? What needs and gratifications do they seek through the media? (p. 29). Ruggiero argues that although researchers will continue using traditional tools to study audience gratifications, they must expand their theoretical models to include things such as interactivity and interpersonal communication (p. 29). Uses and gratifications research has come a long way since the early studies in the 1940s but its development must continue as we enter a new age in the 21st century.

3. Method

Uses and gratifications studies cover a wide range of topics from cellular phone usage to the use of television by the elderly. With so many media available in our society, there is virtually no limit to the number, or type, of studies that researchers can conduct using the uses and gratifications approach. The literature review suggests that the survey is the most widely used method in audience gratifications studies. The current study follows this trend by surveying University of Tennessee students regarding their media use to gain sports news and information. The terms news and information could be seen as different to some, but for this study, the terms were intended to be synonymous. No distinction between the two was presented on the survey, and the researcher anticipated that respondents would answer according to both terms meaning the same thing.

The sample

Several uses and gratifications studies focus on the media use of adults, children and adolescents (Vincent & Basil, 1997). This study will focus on the special population of college students. College students are an important sample because they are in the midst of the socialization process, beginning to develop self-images and establishing close relationships with peers (Vincent & Basil, 1997). College students can also provide researchers with a unique perspective because they are perceived as active and goal directed in their media use (Vincent & Basil, 1997).

Students were selected using a purposive convenience sample. Several instructors from the College of Communications and Department of Sports Management were asked whether they felt comfortable administering the survey during class time. All but one or

two instructors said they would help with the distribution of the questionnaires. A few of the instructors took it upon themselves to hand out the surveys on their own time during class while others felt more comfortable having the researcher come to the class and administer the survey. The questionnaire was administered within three weeks following the Super Bowl in February and March 2002. This was done so that the questions regarding what respondents said their media use for Super Bowl information was received a more accurate response.

After the researcher received permission from the University of Tennessee Human Subjects Committee to administer the study, the surveys were ready for distribution. Although the surveys were distributed in slightly different ways, a typical situation would be as follows:

The researcher went to the instructor's class a few minutes early and was introduced by the instructor. The researcher then handed out the questionnaires while briefly explaining the cover page. The researcher reminded students that participation in the survey was optional and that the results were kept confidential. Students were asked to first answer two qualifier questions on the cover page. The purpose of these questions was to differentiate between sports fans and non-sports fans. For research purposes, the term sports fan was defined as: "A person who watches at least two hours of a sporting event either in person or through the use of media (television, radio, Web) or a person who devotes at least two hours a week gathering news and information about sports through the media."

Those who did not fit the definition of a sports fan in the qualifier questions were asked to return their copy of the questionnaire without answering any further questions.

Respondents who answered yes to either or both of the qualifier questions were instructed to continue filling out the survey. Respondents finished filling out the questionnaires and the researcher collected the surveys from each respondent and put them in a file folder. A copy of the survey can be seen in the Appendix.

The survey instrument

The current study took into consideration several different aspects of previous studies' survey methods. The survey included some multiple-choice questions asking respondents to indicate where they get their sports news and non-sports news each day. The survey also consisted of 17 Likert-scale statements relating to respondents' personal feelings regarding their media habits. The purpose of this part of the survey was to try to draw some conclusions between respondents' media use and their self-image as well as their social habits. The first group of five statements was categorized as relating to how respondents said they used the media for their own self-gratification. The second group of five statements was categorized as relating to the media's influence on respondents' social life. The third group of five statements was categorized as relating to the idea of sports news being either "news" or entertainment. The last two statements related to gambling and its effects on a person's media habits for gathering sports information.

The current research attempts to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the differences in University of Tennessee students' media habits in gathering sports news and information versus non-sports news and information?

The data for this question were analyzed according to which media are being used as well as how often respondents said they used each medium on a weekly basis.

Frequency distributions were used to measure the answers to survey questions two through five (see Appendix for survey).

RQ2: Did University of Tennessee students' media habits for gathering sports news and information differ during Super Bowl week as opposed to the rest of the year?

Two survey questions asked about students' media habits regarding the 2002 Super Bowl. The data were analyzed and compared to the data from survey questions two and four.

RQ3: Are there differences in how University of Tennessee students gather sports news and information based on demographic segmentation?

The data were analyzed and compared in several ways: Male versus female; athlete versus non-athlete; light, medium and heavy media users; classification in school. This research question was answered by performing crosstabulations and chi square tests.

RQ4: Are there differences in why University of Tennessee students gather sports news and information based on demographics and media usage habits?

This research question was answered by comparing demographic groups with the responses to the first 15 Likert-scale statements, taking into account the assumption of the uses and gratifications theory that media are important to a person's social and psychological standing. The data were analyzed by running t-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

RQ5: Do University of Tennessee students wager money on sporting events, and how does this affect their media habits?

Running a Pearson Correlation on the last two Likert-scale questions as well as comparing the means to the questions in demographic categories answered this question.

4. Results

This section of the thesis is dedicated to reporting the findings of the survey. It begins with a profile of the sample frame, laying the groundwork for the analysis of the data.

The Sample Profile

The original research for this thesis was based on a convenience sample survey of University of Tennessee students who identified themselves as sports fans according to the qualifier questions. Because of the two qualifier questions on the cover page of the questionnaire, only those respondents who answered yes to one or both of the questions were considered as part of the sample. A total of 261 surveys were distributed and 158 identified themselves as sports fans. All 261 surveys were completed as far as the qualifier questions and were collected by the researcher.

Of the 158 respondents, 82 were female (51.9%) and 76 were male (48.1%). These figures may not be a direct resemblance of the entire University of Tennessee population, but having an almost equal number of males and females was good for statistical purposes.

The sample was made up of 21 freshmen (13.3%), 21 sophomores (13.3%), 36 juniors (22.8%), 48 seniors (30.4%) and 32 graduate students (20.3%). The relatively low number of freshman and sophomores may be because the questionnaires were not distributed in entry-level classes such as English or the sciences.

One of the more surprising results of the frequency distribution was the number of athletes who completed the questionnaire. A total of 118 respondents said they participated on a high school athletic team (74.7%). Although this percentage is not

unrealistic, it was certainly higher than anticipated. Within the category of those who participated on a high school athletic team, 55 were female (46.6%) and 63 were male (53.4%). The final demographic question on the survey was designed to find how many respondents were participants on an intercollegiate team at the University of Tennessee. Things such as intramural sports and clubs were not factored into this survey question. This sample consisted of 16 University of Tennessee athletes (10.1% of sample), which seemed like a relatively high number given the somewhat small sample size. A possible explanation of this could be that Sports Management and Communications are traditionally popular majors for athletes to choose. Of the 16 student-athletes seven were female and nine were male.

The next section of the thesis will use the data from the survey responses to answer the five research questions. The sample profile sets the stage for the rest of the statistical findings and will be referred to throughout the following section.

Answering the research questions

The purpose of the research was to determine how University of Tennessee students, more specifically sports fans, fulfill their sports informational needs through the use of the media. In order to draw some general conclusions about this research purpose, the research is divided into the five research questions listed on pages 23 and 24. Each question was answered through different statistical comparisons, using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Significance levels for the statistical tests were based on the $p < .10$ level. The following section of the thesis will go in order from research question one through five.

RQ1: What are the differences in University of Tennessee students' media habits in gathering sports news and information versus non-sports news and information?

This research question was answered by calculating frequency distributions of survey questions two through five. Survey question two asked respondents to indicate which media they used to gather sports news and information. The choices were: newspaper, magazine, radio, television, Web and friends. Respondents were instructed to check all that apply. Survey question three was identical to question two except that respondents were asked to indicate which media they used to gather non-sports news and information.

Of the 158 respondents, 121 said they used the newspaper to gather sports news and information (76.6%) while 127 said they used the newspaper to gather non-sports news and information (80.4%). Although these numbers are only slightly different, the data shows that sports fans used the newspaper more for non-sports information than they did for sports information.

Table 1 shows that there was a more significant difference when respondents indicated their magazine use. Only 43 respondents said they used magazines to gather sports information (27.2%). A much higher number of respondents, 69, said they used magazines for non-sports information (43.7%). This difference is somewhat surprising given the popularity of sports magazines such as *Sports Illustrated* and *ESPN the Magazine*. A likely explanation could be that some journalism and public relations classes require students to read news magazines rather than sports magazines on a weekly basis.

Table 1- Sources for sports and non-sports information

Percentage (Number)

Medium	<i>Sports info.</i>	<i>Non-sports info.</i>
Newspaper	76.6 (121)	80.4 (127)
Magazine	27.2 (43)	43.7 (69)
Radio	41.8 (66)	51.9 (82)
Television	95.6 (151)	95.6 (151)
Web	69.0 (109)	70.9 (112)
Friends	74.7 (118)	56.3 (89)

Total N=158

Much like the respondents' indication of magazine use, radio use was higher for non-sports information than sports information. Although the differences in radio usage were not as drastic as the differences in magazine usage, 82 respondents said they used the radio for non-sports information (51.9%) while 66 said they used radio for sports information (41.8%). One interesting perspective that can be drawn from these numbers, however, is the overall number of respondents who said they used radio for any information. Radio is not considered a new medium, and it may be surprising to note that college students who say they are sports fans still use radio as much as they do for information gathering, more than likely while driving in a car.

In today's fast-paced environment television has become a popular medium for information gathering as well as for entertainment. An overwhelming 151 respondents said they used television for sports information (95.6%). The same percentage also said they used television for gathering non-sports information. The results from the respondents' answer to whether or not they said they used the television for sports and non-sports information should not be surprising as a whole, but the fact that the two numbers are identical is worth noting.

The next medium that respondents were asked to indicate their media use for was the World Wide Web. The Web is a new medium and for today's society, and like television, the Web plays a huge part in newsgathering as well as entertainment. The results of this question were almost identical, as 109 respondents said they used the Web for sports information (69.0%) and 112 said they used the Web for non-sports information (70.9%). The Web provides a quick and easy way to gather news, and our society seems to rely more heavily on the Web each day. It is interesting to note that newspapers outranked the Web for both categories of information.

The final variable that was analyzed was friends. The idea to include friends as a medium came about from reading previous uses and gratifications literature. One might assume that before answering this survey a majority of the respondents would have never thought to include friends as a medium for gathering news and information. The results of the question indicate otherwise as 118 respondents indicated that they used friends as a source for sports information (74.7%) while 89 said they used friends as a source for non-sports information (56.3%). Information gathering in and of itself may not be a social event, but the fact that people are constantly talking about and discussing the latest news, sports and non-sports alike, shows that friends are worthy of being considered a medium just like newspapers or television.

The overall results from survey questions two and three showed some interesting differences in the way University of Tennessee students gather news and information. Television and newspaper were the most popular media for gathering both sports and non-sports information. The next part of the answer to research question one dealt with how often respondents said they used each medium for information gathering. Survey

questions four and five asked respondents to indicate how often they used each medium every week for information gathering. Respondents were given the choice of answering as follows: less than two hours, two to four hours, five to seven hours, eight to 10 hours and more than 10 hours. For statistical purposes the categories were collapsed and respondents were categorized into low, medium and high users. Low users were those who used a given medium four hours or less. Respondents who said they used a given medium five to seven hours were considered medium users. Respondents who said they used each medium eight or more hours were considered to be high users.

As a whole, the majority of respondents fell into the low category. However, there were some significant differences in those who used each medium beyond the low level. The amount of newspaper use per week showed a large gap between sports and non-sports information gathering. Nearly 16 percent of respondents exceeded the low category for weekly newspaper usage for non-sports information while only 6.3 percent were at the medium and high level for sports information. Table 2 shows the difference between newspaper usage per week for sports and non-sports information gathering.

Magazine use proved to be the least-often used medium for gathering both sports and non-sports information. Only five respondents fit into the medium or high category for magazine use per week for sports information (3.2%) and seven fit into the medium or high category for non-sports information (4.5%). As stated in the first part of research question one's discussion, one could argue that the low amount of magazine use is surprising. One possible explanation for this trend is the frequency of magazine publication. Magazines are generally produced on a monthly or weekly basis and the amount of time required to "use" magazines in comparison to newspapers or television

**Table 2- Comparison of media use per week
for sports and non-sports information
Percentage (Number)**

Medium	<i>Sports info.</i>			<i>Non-sports info.</i>		
	<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>
Newspaper	93.7 (148)	3.8 (6)	2.5 (4)	84.2 (133)	12.7 (20)	3.2 (5)
Magazine	96.8 (153)	1.9 (3)	1.3 (2)	95.6 (151)	3.2 (5)	1.3 (2)
Radio	91.1 (144)	6.3 (10)	2.5 (4)	92.4 (146)	6.3 (10)	1.3 (2)
Television	58.9 (93)	23.4 (37)	17.7 (28)	60.1 (95)	25.3 (40)	14.6 (23)
Web	74.1 (117)	14.6 (23)	11.4 (18)	75.9 (120)	15.2 (24)	8.9 (14)
Friends	82.9 (131)	10.1 (16)	7.0 (11)	81.6 (129)	11.4 (18)	7.0 (11)

Total N=158

Low = 4 hours or less per week

Medium = 5-7 hours per week

High = 8 or more hours per week

on a weekly basis is lower. A magazine that is published monthly can easily be read in a few hours while television news information is often gathered for a few hours each day.

Another possible explanation is that magazines are expensive and harder to acquire than other media. Most people subscribe to one or two magazines (if any) per year and can get the same information each day from the television or the Web. Those who do not subscribe to a magazine are subject to high newsstand prices each time they purchase an issue. Compare this to the Web. It is much easier to simply turn on the home computer and visit a favorite news site to get the day's news. The users do not have to leave their house, and the news is updated constantly whereas magazine news is outdated by the time the reader gets the latest issue. However, good sports news magazines do not try to compete with daily news sources such as newspapers or television. They provide a different type of timely information by going further in-depth into past or future sporting events and issues.

The results for radio use in the first half of research question one showed that students are still using radio to gather information; however, it is a different story when it comes to how often they use it. Only 14 respondents fit the medium or high category for weekly radio use for sports information (8.8%) and 12 fit the medium or high category for non-sports information (7.6%). One possible explanation, other than the stiff competition television and Web provide, is that many people only listen to the radio while in their cars. When given a choice of watching a sporting event on television or listening to a radio broadcast, most sports fans are likely to tune in to the television.

It should not be surprising that television turned out the highest number of medium and high users. Television use per week for sports information showed that 41.1 percent of respondents fit into the medium or high category. An almost identical 39.9 percent of respondents were categorized as either medium or high television users for non-sports information. Table 2 shows the results of yet another nearly identical frequency.

The next variable, Web use per week, kept with the trend of new media being a dominant force in American society for newsgathering. An even 26 percent of respondents fit into the medium or high category for Web use per week for gathering sports information, while a close 24.1 percent was categorized at the medium and high level for non-sports information.

The final analysis was done for the use of friends for information gathering. One might expect that college students consult their friends as often than any other medium for gathering information, and although this prediction is not entirely correct, it is not far off. Just over 17 percent (17.1%) of respondents fit into the medium or high category for

friend use per week for gathering sports information while 18.4 percent of respondents fit into the two upper-level categories for non-sports information. Results of this comparison show again that friends are indeed a legitimate source of information and can be included as a medium in a uses and gratifications study.

Television and newspapers ranked as the most-used media for sports and non-sports information gathering. However, in terms of use per week, television and the Web ranked highest. Newspaper use per week was much less than television and Web use per week. Respondents indicated they used newspapers more than the Web, but for shorter periods of time. In part, this is surprising given that the method used for information gathering is similar for both newspapers and the Web. Both media require users to read information, and one would imagine that it takes the same amount of time to read stories using both media. Magazines ranked as the least-used medium for information gathering across all categories.

RQ2: Did University of Tennessee students' media habits for gathering sports news and information differ during Super Bowl week as opposed to the rest of the year?

Research question one dealt with the differences in students' media habits in gathering sports news and non-sports news. Results of the frequency distributions from survey questions two through five were used to show the differences in those media habits. Research question two is similar to research question one in that it compares media use habits across two independent variables; the only difference is the variables. Survey questions six and seven asked respondents to indicate their media habits for gathering sports news and information during the week leading up to Super Bowl XXXVI in February 2002. Frequency distributions from these questions were matched

with frequencies of survey questions two and four to determine whether and how students' media habits for gathering sports information differed during Super Bowl week in comparison to the rest of the year.

Students' use of newspaper during Super Bowl week was quite a bit lower than it was for the rest of the year for gathering sports information. Under half (48.7%) of respondents said they used the newspaper to gather Super Bowl information. Compared to the high number that used newspaper for sports information, 121 (76.6%), there is a great difference in newspaper use. One possible explanation is that the local papers in Knoxville may not have covered the Super Bowl as extensively as, say the newspapers in the competing teams' cities St. Louis and Boston. Although the Super Bowl is an event that draws global attention, one could assume that St. Louis and Boston newspaper coverage of the 2002 game was much greater than that of Knoxville's coverage. Assuming this is correct, the only newspaper that University of Tennessee students could turn to for extensive Super Bowl coverage would have been a national paper such as *USA Today*. This may have had some influence over whether or not respondents said they used the newspaper during Super Bowl week.

As research question one showed, magazine use for both sports and non-sports information gathering was relatively low. This trend continued into Super Bowl week, in fact, it got even lower. Only 23 respondents said they used magazines to gather Super Bowl information (14.6%) compared to the 27.2 percent who said they used magazines to gather sports information during the rest of the year. This figure was unexpected considering many sports magazines had plenty of time to prepare Super Bowl preview issues a week before the game. While during the rest of the year magazine information is

outdated when the reader finally gets the issue, during Super Bowl week the news and information is still timely.

Another result that showed a difference was for radio use during Super Bowl week. Data from research question one showed that 41.8 percent of respondents said they use radio for gathering sports information. However, only 42 respondents said they used radio to gather Super Bowl information (26.6%). The decline in radio use during Super Bowl week may be due to the fact that Knoxville recently lost its national sports talk radio affiliate. Without a prominent sports talk radio station, it would be more difficult for sports fans to gather Super Bowl information via radio.

It was no surprise that television ranked as the No. 1 medium for gathering sports news and information. The trend continued on into Super Bowl week; however, there was a slight difference in the data from those who use television for sports information and those who used it for Super Bowl information. Compared to the 95.6 percent of respondents who said they used television to gather sports news, 90.5 percent said they used the television for gathering Super Bowl news. Given the overwhelming amount of television coverage dedicated to pre-game Super Bowl analysis, this figure is somewhat surprising. One could assume that the data would be equal, if not higher for television use during Super Bowl week compared to the rest of the year.

Another drastic difference in students' media habits for gathering sports information and gathering Super Bowl information was for Web usage. Less than half (46.8%) of respondents said they used the Web to gather Super Bowl information compared to the 69 percent who said they use it to gather sports information. Again, like the difference in television use, the difference in Web use is interesting. Super Bowl

information was prevalent on the Web. Even non-sports sites such as MSN.com and Yahoo.com had links to Super Bowl news. The information was so plentiful that the only real explanation for this change in Web use is that students simply did not use the Web for sports information during Super Bowl week. One cannot blame lack of coverage for this statistical difference shown in Table 3.

The final variable that was analyzed for the first half of research question two was the use of friends for Super Bowl information. As noted in the literature review, the Super Bowl is more than another football game; it is a social event. The following statistics may be surprising. A large number (118 or 74.7%) of respondents said they use their friends as a source for sports information, whereas only 78 said they used friends as a source for Super Bowl information (49.4%). Assuming that the Super Bowl is a social event, this difference is worth noting, as Table 3 shows.

As a whole, respondents indicated they did not use media during Super Bowl week as much as they said they did during the rest of the year to gather sports news and information. The differences are surprising given one assumption that even casual sports fans would follow the Super Bowl more than they would other sports during the rest of the year. No single medium was used more during Super Bowl week than the rest of the year for gathering sports information. A potential factor that should be considered in explaining this difference is that of respondents' memories. It is likely that respondents overestimated their media use for the rest of the year, but were more accurate in their estimate of media use during the Super Bowl because of the timing of the survey. Another explanation could be that this particular sample follows college football more closely than professional football because of the presence of a nationally recognized

Table 3- Sources for sports and Super Bowl information

Percentage (Number)

Medium	<i>Sports info.</i>	<i>Super Bowl info.</i>
Newspaper	76.6 (121)	48.7 (77)
Magazine	27.2 (43)	14.6 (23)
Radio	41.8 (66)	26.6 (42)
Television	95.6 (151)	90.5 (143)
Web	69.0 (109)	46.8 (74)
Friends	74.7 (118)	49.4 (78)

Total N=158

team. Other local sports such as basketball and baseball may also draw respondents' attention away from the Super Bowl.

The second half of research question two compares the amount of media use during Super Bowl week against the amount of media use for sports information. Respondents were asked to indicate how many hours they spent using each medium during Super Bowl week. Respondents were again grouped into low, medium or high users according to their answers to survey question seven.

According to the data from survey question four, 6.3 percent of respondents were categorized as either medium or high users of newspapers for sports information. For Super Bowl newsgathering, only 2.5 percent of respondents were classified as either medium or high users of newspapers for Super Bowl information.

Once again, magazine use statistically turned out to be the lowest form of media use for Super Bowl information gathering. Although the figures for magazine use per week for sports information were low (only 3.2% at medium or high), magazine use per week for Super Bowl information was even lower. Only one respondent was categorized

consideration possible relationships in demographics. Research question three is dedicated to exploring the relationships in how various demographic segments gather sports news and information. The data was compiled by running crosstabulations and Chi-Square tests.

The first independent variable that was measured was gender. Are there differences in the way male and female respondents said they used the media for sports information? Several crosstabulation tests showed significant differences between males and females. A Pearson's Chi Square test showed that there was a significant difference in gender and newspaper use for sports information. A crosstab shows that males were more likely, than females to use the newspaper for sports information, as 84.2 percent of males said they use the newspaper for sports information compared to 69.5 percent of females. Table 5 shows the differences in media use according to gender.

The aggregate data showed that magazine use for sports information was low, however, within gender there was a significant relationship. A crosstab shows that 34.2 percent of males used magazines for sports news while only 20.7 percent of females used magazines for sports news. Of the 43 respondents who said they used magazines for sports news 60.5 percent were male.

Crosstabs show that males were also more likely than females to use radio for sports news. Half of the male respondents said they used radio for sports information and only 34.1 percent of females said they used the radio for the same purpose. The final variable that showed a significant difference between genders was whether or not respondents said they used the Web for sports news and information.

**Table 5- Crosstabulation of media use
for sports news by gender**
Percent (Number)

Medium	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Significant?</i>
Newspaper*	84.2 (64)	69.5 (57)	yes
Magazine**	34.2 (26)	20.7 (17)	yes
Radio***	50.0 (38)	34.1 (28)	yes
Television	96.1 (73)	95.1 (78)	no
Web****	78.9 (60)	59.8 (49)	yes
Friends	72.4 (55)	76.8 (63)	no

* Chi square=4.75 d.f.=1 Prob.=.03

** Chi square=3.62 d.f.=1 Prob.=.06

*** Chi square=4.01 d.f.=1 Prob.=.04

**** Chi square=6.79 d.f.=1 Prob.=.01

The aggregate results for Web use show that both males and females were likely to use the Web for sports newsgathering; however, there is a wide range of percentages between genders. Close to 60 percent (59.8%) of females used the Web for sports news, and an overwhelming 78.9 percent of males used the Web for sports news. The Web offers users a unique opportunity in comparison to other media. The Web can be seen as an interactive medium. Users generally have a purpose and are goal directed, whereas television users can be more passive. A person can walk into a room where the television is on and without any real purpose they can gain information through a casual glance at the television or by simply listening to the background noise. The Web on the other hand is different. It is unlikely that people will gather information from the Web without accessing it themselves. The probability of a person accidentally gathering news from the Web is less than that of other media such as television or radio.

Differences in gender were also tested against the data from respondents' answers to their media use per week. A crosstab shows that there were more males in the medium and high category for newspaper use per week than females. All four of the respondents who fit into the high category were male, however, twice as many females were classified as medium newspaper users.

Television use per week showed a vast difference between males and females. A total of 65 respondents said they were either medium or high users of television for sports news. Males and females were almost equal in the medium usage category, however, males were six times more likely to be high users of television. Over half (56.6%) of males fit into the medium or high television use category, and only 26.8 percent of females were medium or high users. Table 6 shows the differences between males and females and their television habits per week.

Although not as drastic as the difference in television use per week, a crosstab shows a significant relationship in male and female Web use for sports news. Of the 82 female respondents, 13 were placed in the medium or high category for Web use per week (15.9%). More than twice as many males fit into the medium or high category (36.8%). This data shows that males tend to be more active and goal directed in their search for sports news and information.

The second demographic that was tested was athlete versus non-athlete. Only one significant difference was shown for high school athletes and media habits. An interesting comparison of high school athletes and the use of friends for sports news provided a significant result. Of the 158 total respondents, 118 said they participated on a high school team and 118 also said they used friends as a source for sports news.

**Table 6- Crosstabulation of media use
per week by gender**

Percent (Number)

Medium	Media use	Male	Female	Significant?
Newspaper*	Low	92.1 (70)	95.1 (78)	yes
	Medium	2.6 (2)	4.9 (4)	
	High	5.3 (4)	0.0 (0)	
Magazine	Low	94.7 (72)	98.8 (81)	no
	Medium	2.6 (2)	1.2 (1)	
	High	1.9 (3)	0.0 (0)	
Radio	Low	86.8 (66)	95.1 (78)	no
	Medium	9.2 (7)	3.7 (3)	
	High	3.9 (3)	1.2 (1)	
Television**	Low	43.4 (33)	73.2 (60)	yes
	Medium	25.0 (19)	22.0 (18)	
	High	31.6 (24)	4.9 (4)	
Web***	Low	63.2 (48)	84.1 (69)	yes
	Medium	17.1 (13)	12.2 (10)	
	High	19.7 (15)	3.7 (3)	
Friends	Low	81.6 (62)	84.1 (69)	no
	Medium	7.9 (6)	12.2 (10)	
	High	10.5 (8)	5.7 (3)	

* Chi square=4.88 d.f.=2 Prob.=.09

** Chi square=22.0 d.f.=2 Prob.=.00

*** Chi square=12.0 d.f.=2 Prob.=.03

Close to 80 percent (78.8%) of high school athletes said they used friends for sports news and 62.5 percent of non-athletes said they used friends for sports news. A possible explanation for this would be that a person's participation on an athletic team automatically puts them in a social setting. Therefore, they may be more likely to discuss sports information with their peers than those who do not participate on a team. The fact

that they are on a team gives them an extra opportunity to discuss sports in a social setting.

Three crosstabs showed significant differences between University of Tennessee athletes and media habits, however, one test in particular showed an interesting difference. Respondents who said they participate on a college team were less likely to be medium or high users of television for sports newsgathering than were non-athletes. Five of the 16 University of Tennessee athletes in the sample were medium or high users of television for sports news (31.3%). However, 42.3 percent of non-athletes fit the medium or high category for television use per week. It is quite possible that college athletes are so consumed with their sport that they do not have as much time as non-athletes to gather sports news from television. Also, it is very common for athletes to admit that they do not follow sports through the media. Oftentimes athletes do not like to get caught up in the hype surrounding their particular sport, especially when the sport attracts national attention or when a controversy arises within the sport. Many athletes would rather concentrate on their game than get mixed up in the media frenzy.

The final demographic used for crosstab analysis was school classification. In comparing school class and newspaper habits a few differences are worth pointing out. Sophomores had the largest number of medium or high newspaper users (total of 5, or 23.8%). All five of the school classifications had at least one member of the medium or high category except graduate students. All 32 graduate students were classified as low newspaper users.

RQ4: Are there differences in why University of Tennessee students gather sports news and information based on demographics and media usage habits?

The previous three research questions dealt with how respondents said they used the media for sports information. Differences in demographics were shown across several variables. The survey instrument included 17 Likert-scale statements that were designed to find out more about why students use media rather than simply describing their day-to-day media habits. The data for research question four was compiled from the analysis of the first 15 Likert-scale statements. The purpose of the 15 statements was to get a feel for how respondents said they used the media in order to fulfill social as well as personal needs. Previous uses and gratifications research has shown that it is not only important to calculate a person's media habits but to also gain some insight into why they choose to use certain media in fulfilling needs.

T-Tests and ANOVA were used in comparing the 15 statements across the same demographic categories used in research question three. T-Tests are designed to compare means to see if there are significant differences between the means. The purpose is to draw conclusions about population parameters based on statistics observed in the sample (*SPSS Guide*, p. 9). ANOVA is designed to compare means for significant differences when more than two groups are involved. This analysis examines the variability among the sample means relative to the spread of the observations within each group (*SPSS Guide*, p. 10).

For analysis purposes, respondents who answered either "agree" or "strongly agree" were considered to be in agreement with the given statement. Respondents who answered either "disagree" or "strongly disagree" were considered to be in disagreement with the given statement. A T-Test showed several significant differences between males and females in the means of the 15 statements. Males agreed more than females with the

statements “I spend more time gathering sports news than non-sports news” and “Sports news is more important to me than non-sports news.” The male average answer for the first statement was almost an entire point higher than the female average (3.12 compared to 2.20). Males also agreed more than females with the statement “I gather sports news and information to feel like an expert” with a mean of 3.08 compared to the 2.56 female average. Both males and females agreed that friends were a source for sports news and non-sports news; however, there was only a significant difference for the latter. The female average for the statement “I consider friends to be a source for non-sports news and information” was 3.87 while the mean answer for males was 3.53. Another significant difference worth pointing out is the means for the statement “I only keep up with my favorite teams.” Females agreed more than males with this statement, having an average of 3.46. Compared to the male mean of 2.75 one can assume that males are more interested in sports news in general while females generally keep up with only their favorite teams. Table 7 shows the comparison of gender for the 15 statements. Note that the final two Likert-scale statements were omitted from this research question and are dealt with in research question five.

A T-Test was also used to determine any significant differences in the 15 statements with athletes and non-athletes. Four significant differences were found within the high school athlete versus non-athlete demographic, although only two are worth noting. Respondents who said they participated on a high school athletic team agreed more than non-athletes with the statement “I follow sports more closely than my friends do.” Athletes turned in a mean score of 3.55 and non-athletes had a mean of 3.18. In

**Table 7- T-Test for gender differences in
why students use the media for sports news**

*means

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Prob.</i>	<i>Sig. Diff?</i>
Follow more than friends	3.57	3.35	0.22	no
Gather for personal benefit	4.09	3.80	0.05	yes
Gather to feel like expert	3.08	2.56	0.03	yes
Alone to gather sports news	3.25	2.70	0.02	yes
Prefer to watch Super Bowl alone	1.61	1.39	0.11	no
Gather to keep up with friends	2.88	2.84	0.82	no
With friends to gather sports news	2.83	3.30	0.00	yes
Prefer to watch Super Bowl with friends	4.39	4.59	0.12	no
Friends a source for sports news	3.68	3.82	0.34	no
Friends a source for non-sports news	3.53	3.87	0.01	yes
Spend more time on sports than non-sports	3.12	2.20	0.00	yes
Sports news more important than non-sports	2.82	2.18	0.00	yes
Only keep up with favorite teams	2.75	3.46	0.00	yes
Sports news is news	3.78	3.68	0.54	no
Sports news is entertainment	3.84	3.80	0.82	no

*means based on (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree
Significance based on the $p > .01$ level

contrast to the discussion in research question three, the higher average for athletes in this statement says that athletes do follow sports. High school athletes also agreed more than non-athletes with the statement “I consider sports news to be news.” Although both athletes and non-athletes were above the 3.00 neutral score, athletes had a mean of 3.82 and non-athletes had a mean of 3.45. The next statement on the questionnaire asked respondents to rate their feelings for “I consider sports news to be entertainment.” Although no significant difference was found between the two groups for this statement, the mean for non-athletes was higher than it was for the “I consider sports news to be news” statement. One might argue that athletes consider sports news to be “real” news more so than non-athletes who might view sports news as merely entertainment.

The final T-Tests used to analyze data for research question four were done by comparing the 15 statements with respondents' indication of their media habits regarding sports news gathering. Several significant differences were found within each medium and the following paragraphs will summarize the findings of the data.

Respondents who said they used newspapers to gather sports information agreed more with the statement "I gather sports news and information for my personal benefit" than did non-newspaper users. Newspaper users recorded a mean of 4.02 and non-newspaper users had a mean of 3.68 for the statement. The same statement showed significant differences among Web users versus non-Web users. Web users had a mean of 4.12 while non-Web users had a mean of only 3.55.

Another contrast was found for the statements "I usually am with friends when I gather sports news and information" and "I usually am alone when I gather sports news and information." Of all the six media selected for the survey: newspaper, magazine, radio, television, Web and friends, three could be considered solitary and three could be considered social. Quite often people come together to watch television, listen to the radio and, obviously, talk with friends. On the other hand, it would be somewhat unusual to find a group of people sitting together to read the newspaper, a magazine or browse the Web. Table 8 shows the differences between the solitary media and the social media.

The single medium that provided the biggest number of significant differences was the Web. Means for eight of the 15 statements showed significant differences between Web users and non-Web users. One interesting finding was that Web users agreed more than non-Web users to the statements "I spend more time each day on sports news than non-sports news" and "Sports news is more important to me than non-sports

Table 8- Comparison of solitary and social media

*means

		<i>With friends</i>	<i>Use Alone</i>
Solitary media	Newspaper	2.98	3.03
	Magazine	2.91	3.14
	Web	2.87	3.24
Social media	Radio	3.10	2.97
	Television	3.15	2.99
	Friends	3.28	2.88

* means based on (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree

news.” The Web user versus non-user demographic was the only one that showed significant differences for both statements.

The final medium used for the analysis was friends. Four findings were significant, and all four dealt with statements regarding friends. A significant difference was found between respondents who said they used friends for sports information and those who do not use friends for sports information for the following statements: “I follow sports more closely than my friends do,” “I gather sports news and information to keep up with my friends’ views,” “I usually am with friends when I gather sports news and information” and “I consider friends to be a source for sports news and information.” Table 9 shows the contrast in means for the four statements.

The second half of the data for research question four was analyzed by running ANOVA tests for various demographic groups. No significant differences were found between respondents across school classification; however, there were many significant differences among the three levels of use per week within each medium.

Table 9- T-Test comparison of respondents who do or do not use friends for sports news

	Use friends for sports*			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Prob.</i>	<i>Sig. Diff?</i>
Follow more than friends	3.36	3.75	0.05	yes
Gather to keep up with friends	2.96	2.58	0.06	yes
With friends to gather sports news	3.28	2.48	0	yes
Friends a source for sports news	3.93	3.23	0	yes

*means based on (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree

High newspaper users differed significantly from low newspaper users on the statement “I usually am alone to gather sports news and information.” High users had an overwhelmingly high mean of 4.75 and low users a mean of 2.90. There were also significant differences between low and high newspaper users for the statements “I spend more time each day gathering sports news than non-sports news” and “Sports news is more important to me than non-sports news.” High-level users agreed much more strongly than low-level users for both statements.

The same comparison was tested between frequency of television use per week and the 15 statements. A total of 11 statements showed significant differences, and seven of those showed differences across all three television use categories. The significant differences within television users were particularly interesting because television had the highest number of users at the medium and high levels. For instance, high-level newspaper users were more likely to gather sports news and information than both medium and low users. High users had a mean of 4.36, medium users had a mean of 4.22 and low users averaged at 3.71. The two statements “I follow sports more closely than my friends do” and “I gather sports news and information to feel like an expert” also had

the same pattern in means from high to low-level television users, although the means for both statements were lower than in the previous statement. Table 10 shows the ANOVA test for weekly television use and the 15 statements.

The final two media that showed significant differences from the ANOVA test were Web and friends. The statement “I spend more time on sports news and information than non-sports news and information” showed significant differences between high, medium and low users of both Web and friends. High Web users had a mean of 4.06, medium Web users had a mean of 2.91 and low Web users had a mean of 2.37. The same trend was found within high, medium and low friend users, although the means were slightly lower (high-3.91, medium-2.69, low-2.53).

A significant difference was found between high Web users and low Web users for the statement “I follow sports news and information more closely than my friends do.” High users had a mean of 4.11 and low users were slightly over neutral at 3.30. A possible explanation is that the Web requires a high level of involvement, therefore, high-level Web users feel as if they are following sports news more than their friends.

The ANOVA test showed a significant difference for the statement “I consider my friends to be a source for sports news and information” across all three levels of friend users. Respondents who fit into the high category agreed with the statement, having a mean of 4.64. Medium friend users had a mean of 4.13 and low friend users had a mean of 3.63. Although all three lie on the agree side of neutral, the data shows that the more time a person spends gathering sports news from friends, the more they will agree that their friends are a source for sports news and information.

Table 10- ANOVA Comparison of frequency of television use and 15 Likert-scale statements

	Television use per week for sports news*				
	<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Prob. > F</i>	<i>Sig. Diff.?</i>
Number	93	37	28		
Follow more than friends	3.17	3.70	4.07	0.00	low/med/high
Gather for personal benefit	3.71	4.22	4.36	0.00	low/med/high
Gather to feel like expert	2.51	3.08	3.46	0.00	low/med/high
Alone to gather sports news	2.69	3.11	3.68	0.00	low/high
Prefer to watch Super Bowl alone	1.38	1.78	1.50	0.04	low/med
Gather to keep up with friends	2.83	3.03	2.75	0.55	no
With friends to gather sports news	3.22	2.97	2.75	0.09	low/high
Prefer to watch Super Bowl with friends	4.61	4.22	4.46	0.03	low/med
Friends a source for sports news	3.72	3.73	3.89	0.65	no
Friends a source for non-sports news	3.69	3.70	3.75	0.94	no
Spend more time on sports than non-sports	2.16	3.24	3.43	0.00	low/med/high
Sports news more important than non-sports	2.12	2.89	3.18	0.00	low/med/high
Only keep up with favorite teams	3.43	2.81	2.50	0.00	low/med/high
Sports news is news	3.56	3.92	4.04	0.02	low/high
Sports news is entertainment	3.74	3.78	4.14	0.19	no

*means based on (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree

RQ5: Do University of Tennessee students wager money on sporting events, and how does this affect their media habits?

Research question five was designed to learn whether University of Tennessee students have wagered money on a sporting event, and how gambling affects their media habits. Survey question one consisted of 17 Likert-scale statements in which respondents were asked to rank their feelings on a 1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree basis. The final two statements were regarding the gambling issue. Research question five is answered by showing data from a Pearson Correlation between the two statements and by comparing the means of the respondents based on several demographic categories.

In general, respondents did not agree with the statement “I have wagered money on a sporting event.” The mean was slightly lower than neutral at 2.78. Only 71 respondents agreed with the statement (44.9%). The biggest percentage by answer was that 34.8 percent strongly disagreed with the statement.

Even more significant was the results from the statement “Gambling increases my interest in gathering sports news through the media.” Only 24.7 percent of respondents agreed with the statement. Again, the largest percentage of answers was strongly disagree (43%). The mean answer was well below neutral at 2.29. One possible answer to the below average mean for the first statement is that respondents may have been hesitant to answer truthfully, although the surveys were kept confidential. The low mean for the second statement, however, is more mysterious. One could easily assume that gambling would increase a person’s interest in keeping up with the sports news. When deciding whether or not to place a bet, it is not uncommon for the bettor to try to gain an edge by researching the teams and the event in detail in hopes of getting a favorable return on the investment. One likely explanation for the low mean on statement two is that the respondents who disagreed with statement one either disagreed or were neutral to statement two. Hence, a person who does not gamble would not follow the media closer as a result of gambling.

Although the means to both statements turned out on the side of disagree, a Pearson Correlation comparing the answers to the two statements did prove significant. The two statements show a .64 correlation at the $p > .01$ level. Table 11 shows the results of the means and the correlation.

Table 11- Differences in means for gambling statements

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>N</i>
I have gambled	2.78	1.55	158
Gambling increases my interest	2.29	1.4	158

		Gambling	
		I have	increases
		gambled	my interest
I have gambled	Pearson Correlation	1	.643**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0
	N	158	158
Gambling increases my interest	Pearson Correlation	.643**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	.
	N	158	158

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

The second part of the answer to research question five deals with the gambling issue by analyzing the answers according to demographic categories. The first demographic analysis was gender. The means for the two statements showed a significant difference between males and females. Males agreed more with both statements. The means for the first statement showed the most diversity as males averaged 3.33 and females 2.27. More data show that, although both groups disagreed with the second statement, males were more agreeable to the idea that gambling increases interest in media use for sports information. Table 12 shows the breakdown of demographic differences.

**Table 12- T-Test on gender and athlete/non-athlete
for gambling statements**

	Gender*		Prob.	Sig. Diff?
	Male	Female		
I have wagered money on sports	3.33	2.27	0	yes
Gambling increases interest in sports news	2.64	1.96	0	yes

*means based on (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree

	Participate on High School Team*		Prob.	Sig. Diff?
	Yes	No		
I have wagered money on sports	2.92	2.38	0.06	yes
Gambling increases interest in sports news	2.36	2.08	0.26	no

*means based on (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree

Another significant difference between the two statements was shown in athlete versus non-athlete. A T-Test was run comparing the two statements with respondents' answers to whether or not they participated on a high school athletic team. Those who participated on a high school team were more agreeable to the first statement with a mean of 2.92 compared to 2.38 for those who did not play high school sports. There were no significant differences between the two statements when compared to University of Tennessee athletes versus non-athletes. A valid explanation for this is that betting among student athletes is very taboo, as serious NCAA rules violations are associated with gambling among athletes on college campuses. However, although there were no significant differences between college athletes and non-athletes, UT athletes had a mean of 2.56, not far below the neutral mark.

Classification in school was also compared to the two statements regarding gambling and its effects on media use. An ANOVA was run to determine whether there were any significant differences between the two statements and the respondents' class in school. Freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors were generally in disagreement with both statements. Interestingly enough, graduate students had a slightly higher than neutral mean for statement one at 3.16. Although, the mean for graduate students was higher than the other four classes, the ANOVA showed a significant difference between freshmen and graduate students at the $p > .10$ level. All classes were in general disagreement with statement two and the ANOVA showed no significant differences among them. See Table 13 for specific data.

**Table 13- ANOVA test for classification in school
and television use per week for gambling statements**

	Classification in School*					Prob. > F	Sig. Diff.?
	Fr.	So.	Jr.	Sr.	Gr.		
Number	21	21	36	48	32		
I have wagered money on sports	1.9	2.95	2.72	2.88	3.16	0.06	Fr./Gr
Gambling increases interest in sports news	2.05	2.24	2.47	2.27	2.31	0.87	no

*means based on (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree

	Television use per week for sports news*			Prob. > F	Sig. Diff.?
	Low	Medium	High		
Number	93	37	28		
I have wagered money on sports	2.82	2.3	3.29	0.04	med/high
Gambling increases interest in sports news	2.48	1.86	2.21	0.07	low/med

*means based on (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree

A final ANOVA was run to compare media use habits per week with the gambling statements. High television users agreed more with the first gambling statement than both low and medium users. Statement one showed a significant difference between medium and high users of television for sports news. Medium television users had a mean of 2.30 and high users had a mean of 3.29. Statement two also had a significant difference, but with different groups. Low television users had a mean of 2.48 for statement two and medium users had a mean of 1.86 providing for a significant difference between the two groups.

Before the data for research question five was compiled, there were no predictions on what the outcomes of the tests would be. However, it was expected that the means for statement two regarding whether or not gambling affects media use, would be higher than the actual means.

5. Discussion

Now that the data for the five research questions have been analyzed and the research questions answered, this section of the thesis will package all of the results together and draw some final conclusions. This section will point out some recurring themes uncovered by the data and also tie in the findings of this original research with the research discussed in the literature review.

Newspapers

The findings regarding students' newspaper use habits could be seen as both reassuring yet somewhat disturbing to media professionals and communication professors. Much has been made in recent years about the newspaper industry's decline. Some publishers are claiming revenue losses for their newspapers. Two-newspaper cities have become nearly extinct. The increasing popularity of television and, more recently, the World Wide Web has provided stiff competition for newspaper as a source of daily newsgathering. The results of this study showed that about three-fourths of college students who identify themselves as sports fans are using the newspaper for gathering sports and non-sports information. This is not an attempt to contradict the ideas that newspapers are losing circulation, or that new media are slowly replacing the need for newspapers. It is simply saying that the newspaper industry can rest assured that it is still a vital source of information and entertainment in the U.S.

One might have predicted that the statistics regarding newspaper use would have been much lower. If for nothing else, the competition with television and the Web would have driven the statistics down. Today's college-aged population is the first generation to be born with cable television. The next generation, those born within the last five or so

years, are the first to be born with the Web. One could assume that their media habits would rely more heavily on television and the Web as opposed to an older media such as newspapers. After all, today's society is so fast paced that television and the Web seem to suit the needs of busy American college students more so than newspapers. However, the older generations seem more comfortable reading the newspaper instead of new media and have tried to instill that value into this generation. Journalism schools still preach the importance of newspapers to their students. Is it possible that college students feel a sort of obligation to read the newspaper? If nothing else, to at least browse through the campus paper?¹

The disturbing side of this issue is that, although college students who identify themselves as sports fans are still using the newspaper for information gathering, they are not using it frequently. An average of about 90 percent of the sample for this study said they use the newspaper four hours or less each week for sports and non-sports news alike. It is hard to imagine that, on a college student's budget, if given the choice to subscribe to a daily newspaper or subscribe to a monthly Internet carrier the majority of students would rather get the daily paper. Although the yearly fee for an Internet subscription is much more than for a year's subscription to the daily paper, the Web simply offers college students more opportunity than the newspaper does. Couple that with the fact that having an Internet connection is practically mandatory these days, it is not all that surprising to see that newspaper use per week is not as frequent as that of new media. It

¹ One interesting thing to ponder is how journalism and broadcast journalism schools will react to the changing face of the media industry. Students are encouraged, and oftentimes required, to read online versions of daily newspapers or magazines. The question is whether schools will continue to stress the importance of print journalism while trying to prepare students for life in the information age.

should be noted that the availability of Internet on campus is part of the tuition and fees for respondents in this survey.

Television

Many of the studies mentioned in the literature review found that television was the most popular medium used by its audience (Katz, Haas & Gurevitch, 1973; Elliot & Quattlebaum, 1979; Finn, 1997). Television proved to be the most widely used medium in this study, which one could assume. Television's popularity has skyrocketed over the years, and nowadays cable and satellite subscribers have access to hundreds of channels, many of them sports-related. Since the birth of ESPN, sports on television has become more than just entertainment. It used to be that the biggest sporting events were broadcast each week with some analysis of the game by broadcasters. One could also turn to their local news in the afternoons and evenings for the two-minute wrap up of the day's action. ESPN has changed the way our society views sports. Not only are sports considered as entertainment, they have become news and opinion as well.

Television users can turn to one of several 24-hour sports news and information channels. It is no surprise that the results from this study show that television is the most widely used medium for gathering sports information. Increased choice can lead to more television viewing (Perse & Ferguson, 1993). Aside from the increasing interest in sports news, there are dozens of sporting events broadcast live each week on television. Our society is obsessed with sports, and television is the most efficient and comprehensive source for sports information. Television presents unparalleled sports coverage and no single medium can match it.

These assumptions about television's influence are backed by the results of this study. Television was far and away the most used medium on a per week basis. The ability to present updated sports information 24 hours a day gives television the advantage over other media. It involves low levels of activity and the user does not need to be goal directed. The Web also offers users 24 hours of updates but it requires users to be more active and goal directed than does television.

Much like the current study, a 1973 study by O'Keefe and Spetnagel found that among college students, television was the preferred source for news with newspapers being second (Vincent & Basil, 1997). Over a span of nearly 30 years, television has been the most popular medium for newsgathering among college students.

The Web

In the last 10 years the success of the World Wide Web has gone from a dream to a reality. With more and more people around the globe connecting to the Internet each day, there is no telling what influence the Web will have in providing information and entertainment in the next decade. The results of this study showed that the Web is indeed a popular medium among college students for news and information. As its popularity rises, so does the question of whether the Web will reduce peoples' needs for other media. Respondents from this survey indicated that they use the newspaper more than they use the Web for sports information, but will this trend continue on into the next decade? Or will this same study done 10 years from now show that college students who identify themselves as sports fans use the Web two or even three times as much as newspapers? There is no way to predict the answers to these questions but some assumptions can be made.

As technology increases, so does our society's demand for it. The Web offers users many things other media cannot offer. Web users thrive on the ability to interact with and control their news gathering process. The Web is seen as a fun and entertaining way to gather information. Scholars have insisted that the traditional audience concept must be modified because of the Interpersonal potential of the Internet (Ruggiero, 2000).

The presence of sports information on the Web is virtually unlimited. Even if every sports team in the world had its own Web site it would not even scratch the surface of the amount of sports information available online. Web users can participate in online polls, play fantasy sports and interact with other sports fans (and with professional athletes) in chat rooms. Information is updated constantly and users can turn on their home computers at any time to get the latest news. Also, with the invention of Web-based television and Webcast video feeds, users can now watch their favorite games live via the Internet.

It is unlikely that the Web will have the same effect on television, as it will on more traditional media such as newspapers or radio, in the near future. One might assume that the Web will continue to diminish peoples' needs for other media, but television use is likely to stay at a very high level. However, as technology increases, who is to say that in another few decades the Web will not totally replace television? Ruggiero (2000) suggests that as the development of the Internet increases, it will soon be as widely disseminated a medium in daily usage as television (p. 28). However, Ferguson and Perse (2000) contrast by saying that even major uses of the Web such as information searching and keeping up with hobbies do not seem to compete with television's dominant content – drama, comedy, sports and news. The future of the Web and its impact on sports news

and information is unpredictable. After all, few people 25 years ago could have imagined the impact that ESPN alone has had on television sports coverage.

The results of this study showed that television, newspapers and the Web were the most used media for information gathering. As our society becomes more technologically advanced, it will be interesting to see how the uses of these three media change. The convergence of these media, along with corporate conglomeration, may have an impact on how students use these media in the future.

Magazine and radio use ranked as the least used media for information gathering. The low frequencies of magazine use are somewhat surprising, but magazines tend to be a recreational media. Although many people read magazines to gather information, magazines are not usually used to gather new information on a daily basis whereas newspapers and television are used on a daily basis. The relatively low frequencies of radio use are easier to speculate about. One could assume that the popularity of radio use for information gathering is much lower than the popularity of television or the Web. It is not hard to imagine that a household (or college dorm room) has more televisions and computers than radios. People most likely are using the radio primarily in their vehicles. Radio use is being replaced by the use of other media for gathering information at home.

Gender

The sample used for this study had an almost even number of males and females, which for analytical purposes, makes for some easy generalizations. It is rarely suggested that a researcher base his or her assumptions on stereotypes, but our society does carry a double standard when it comes to gender differences and sports. Despite the continued growth of female participation in sports from high school to college, and now in the

professional ranks, American society still assumes that males are supposed to be more infatuated than females with sports. Stereotype or not, this study does reinforce some of the standards society has set.

All but one of the media mentioned in this study were used more by males than females for gathering sports information. The three solitary media (newspaper, magazine and Web) were particularly dominated by male use compared to female use. Assuming that these three media require users to be more active and goal directed, one might assume that males are more likely to be active than females in their search for sports news. This is also shown by the results of two of the 15 Likert-scale statements in survey question one. Males had a much higher mean than females for the two statements, “I spend more time each day gathering sports news than non-sports news,” and “Sports news is more important to me than non-sports news.” The results suggest that males do in fact place more emphasis than females on sports.

If the popularity of women’s sports continues to increase, this same study five or 10 years from now may show that the gap between men and women’s media habits for sports news is decreasing. The only way this can happen, though, is if the media give more coverage to women’s sports. Women’s sports have gained tremendous popularity in the last few years, and this is reflected by the increasing amount of television coverage of women’s sports. The best thing that could happen to women’s sports is if the media continue to have more parity in its coverage of sports and female talent. Women’s sports will gain the respect they deserve, and more women will want to follow sports through the media.

The results of this study also suggest that women were more social in their sports information gathering. The only medium that women said they used more than men for information gathering (sports and non-sports) was friends. In the comparison of media use per week, the closest relationship between males and females was for the use of friends for sports information. Females certainly do have a deep interest in sports information, but on average they choose to gather it socially rather than actively.

Friends

The idea to include friends as a medium came from the previous research by Katz et al. and by Elliot and Quattlebaum. The results of this study positively reflect that friends are indeed a source for information and should be included as such. Respondents agreed overwhelmingly that they consulted friends for sports information. Sports news gives people something to talk about. Sports fans share a common bond with one another, whether they root for the same team or whether they are casual observers. The sample for this study is unique in that it only included college students who identify themselves as sports fans. The impact of sports on this group may very well be more than that of the general population. Sports are an integral part of daily life on campus and people are constantly talking about the big games each week. A similar study done involving non-students might show that the use of friends for sports information is lower than on campus. The likelihood of non-students considering friends to be a source of information is still high, but the frequencies may not be as high as that of the student population.

Something that this study shows is that the media serves its audience's needs in different ways. Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1973) argue that there is a sort of division of labor among the media for the satisfaction of audience needs. They suggest that media

that have similar attributes are more likely to serve similar needs. The results of this study support these suggestions. Respondents indicated that they use each medium at different levels according to different needs (sports news, non-sports news and Super Bowl news). Differences between male and female respondents show that each gender has its own set of needs that can be fulfilled in different ways.

Conclusion

Although this study was not an exact replica of any previous study, it did draw ideas from several pieces of research, particularly that of Katz et al. and Elliot and Quattlebaum. It would not be fair to conclude this thesis without giving mention to some comparisons and contrasts to these influential studies. The idea to include the 17 Likert-scale statements came from these two studies, which tried to investigate audience gratifications across several media according to feeling statements.

Data from the Katz et al. study showed that the majority of respondents agreed that participating in discussions with friends was important in satisfying needs. Other statements regarding the need to know oneself and to strengthen knowledge about current events also ranked high as important needs to be fulfilled by media use. The current study supports some of the same premises. For instance, respondents from the current study overwhelmingly agreed that they use the media to gather sports information for their personal benefit and to feel like an expert.

Elliot and Quattlebaum (1979) found that, although television ranked first for only one specific need, it was the medium most useful in satisfying all 10 of the need statements. Their study also showed that friends function nearly as well as television for need satisfaction except in areas of newsgathering. Respondents from the current study indicate that friends serve the need for newsgathering quite well, although still not as much as other media such as television or newspapers.

To call the current research “breakthrough” or “exploratory” might be overstating its contributions to uses and gratifications research, but ideally it presented a new application of the theory. None of the uses and gratifications studies found for the

literature review had anything to do with sports and media. The influence of sports on media users is a topic that could be explored in many different ways by applying the uses and gratifications theory.

One suggestion for future research would be to use a larger and wider variety of the student population as part of a national sample. The current study focused mainly on communication students (who tend to be high media users) and sports management students (who are likely to be sports fans). More projections could be made toward college students as a whole if a larger and more diverse group was surveyed. Another suggestion would be to not limit the sample to college students, but instead gather data from the rest of the population as well. A study with a sample of 18-35 year olds for instance might provide for some interesting statistical differences.

Although it was not necessarily a limitation to this study, the method in which the surveys were distributed could be altered in future studies. Perhaps respondents could fill out surveys online or over the telephone. The convenience sample for this study, however, provided for a successful response rate.

Another way to approach this topic would be to use more qualitative research methods possibly using focus groups or interviews. This could provide researchers more insight into why respondents choose certain media for fulfilling their needs. Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) note, "Much uses and gratifications research has still barely advanced beyond a sort of charting and profiling activity . . . the further step, which has hardly been ventured, is one of explanation," (p. 78). An obvious choice for further research would be to focus an entire qualitative study on Web use for sports information.

Another possible expansion of the current research would be to distinguish between sports news, sports information, sports opinion and sports entertainment. All four of these categories could be seen as having their own persona and characteristics, and an entire study could be based around respondents' media habits for each of these interests.

Although the idea regarding solitary and social media was not something the researcher expected to find in the current study, the idea could be explored further. A qualitative study, for example, could focus on the solitary and social media in an effort to find out more about respondents' social habits regarding media use for sports news and information.

Further research could fine tune the Likert-scale statements and focus an entire study based on those need statements like the Katz et al. and Elliot and Quattlebaum studies. Researchers could design their survey instrument along the same lines as those two studies. There are virtually infinite ways a researcher could approach the topic of sports and the media by implementing the uses and gratifications approach. Now more than ever sports have become an integral part of everyday life in the media and this topic deserves more scholarly research.

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Appendix

College Student Use of Media for Sports News and Information

You are invited to participate in a research study as part of a Master's Degree thesis. The purpose of the research is to determine where and how often University of Tennessee students, more specifically those who follow sports, use the media to get sports news and information. The results of this study will be beneficial in adding a new perspective on media research.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed. Return of the completed survey constitutes your consent to participate.

At the bottom of this cover sheet you will notice two introductory questions. Please answer these before moving on to the rest of the questionnaire. The purpose of the introductory questions is to differentiate between those students who follow sports and those who do not follow sports. Following the introductory questions you will find the rest of the questionnaire, which should only take a few minutes to complete.

When you are finished with the questionnaire please place it in the folder at the front of the room. Your input is strictly confidential and will only be viewed by the researcher. To insure your confidentiality please do not identify yourself in any way on the questionnaire. If you have questions at any time about the study or procedures, you may contact the researcher, Jeff Garstka, at 577-2844. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Compliances Section at 974-3466. Thank you for your time.

Please answer the following introductory questions:

Do you read about, watch or listen to at least two hours of sporting events each week either in person or through the use of media (newspaper, magazine, television, radio, Webcast)?

Do you devote at least two hours each week to gathering sports information from the media or through your friends and family?

If you answered yes to either question, please continue filling out the survey.

If you answered no to both questions, please return the survey without answering any further questions. Thank you for your time.

1. For the following statements please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree by circling the appropriate number.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

a. I follow sports more closely than my friends do.	1	2	3	4	5
b. I gather sports news and information for my own personal benefit and knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
c. I gather sports news and information so I can feel like an "expert."	1	2	3	4	5
d. I usually am alone when I gather sports news and information.	1	2	3	4	5
e. I prefer to watch the Super Bowl alone.	1	2	3	4	5
f. I gather sports news and information to keep up with my friends' views.	1	2	3	4	5
g. I usually am with friends when I gather sports news and information.	1	2	3	4	5
h. I prefer to watch the Super Bowl with friends and family.	1	2	3	4	5
i. I consider my friends to be a source for sports news and information.	1	2	3	4	5
j. I consider my friends to be a source for non-sports news and information.	1	2	3	4	5
k. I spend more time each day gathering sports news than non-sports news.	1	2	3	4	5
l. Sports news is more important to me than non-sports news.	1	2	3	4	5
m. I only keep up with my favorite teams.	1	2	3	4	5
n. I consider sports news to be news.	1	2	3	4	5
o. I consider sports news to be entertainment.	1	2	3	4	5
p. I have wagered money on a sporting event (Super Bowl, NCAA basketball tournament, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
q. Gambling increases my interest in gathering sports news through the media.	1	2	3	4	5

2. Which media do you currently use to gather **sports news and information** every day?

Mark an x for all that apply:

Newspaper ☐

Magazine ☐

Radio ☐

Television ☐

Web ☐

Friends ☐

Other ☐

3. Which media do you currently use to get **non-sports news and information** each day?

Mark an x for all that apply:

Newspaper ☐

Magazine ☐

Radio ☐

Television ☐

Web ☐

Friends ☐

Other ☐

The following two questions will ask about your media usage on a weekly basis.

4. Please estimate how many hours you spend each week using the media to get **sports news and information**. Mark the one that best describes you.

Newspaper: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

Magazine: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

Radio: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

Television: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

Web: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

Friends: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

5. Please estimate how many hours you spend each week using the media to get **non-sports news and information**. Mark the one that best describes you.

Newspaper: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

Magazine: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

Radio: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

Television: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

Web: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

Friends: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

The following two questions will ask about your media usage regarding the Super Bowl this year.

6. Which media did you use to get Super Bowl news and information in the week leading up to the game? Mark an x for all that apply.

Newspaper ☐

Magazine ☐

Radio ☐

Television ☐

Web ☐

Friends ☐

Other ☐

7. Please estimate how many hours you spent using each medium to gain Super Bowl news and information during the week leading up to the game. Mark the one that best describes you.

Newspaper: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

Magazine: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

Radio: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

Television: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

Web: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

Friends: less than 2 ☐ 2-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-10 ☐ 10+ ☐

8. What is your gender? Male ☐ Female ☐

9. What is your classification in school?

Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior ☐ Graduate ☐

10. Did you participate on a high school athletic team? Yes ☐ No ☐

11. Do you participate on an intercollegiate athletic team at UT? Yes ☐ No ☐

Thank you for your time in filling out this survey.

Vita

Jeffrey Michael Garstka was born in Pittsburgh, Penn. on April 14, 1978. At nine years old his family moved to Orlando, Fla. where he grew up and attended Winter Park High School. Following graduation in 1996, Jeff spent the next four years studying journalism at Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C. Upon graduation, Jeff went to the University of Tennessee in Knoxville to obtain a Master's Degree in communication with a concentration in journalism.

Jeffrey is currently working in the media industry as a professional and hopes to return to school someday for his doctorate in communications with plans to teach at a large university.

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