APPLYING USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE PROCESSES TO UNDERSTAND STUDENTS' PERVASIVE ADOPTION OF YOUTUBE

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Abstract

This research paper delves into the widespread adoption of social networking sites (SNSs) among university students, emphasizing the factors contributing to their deep engagement and immersion in these platforms. While previous studies have extensively covered the addictive tendencies associated with SNSs, our study focuses on gaining a deeper understanding of the factors driving the enthusiastic acceptance and integration of SNSs into students' lives.

The study addresses a gap in prior research by exploring the comprehensive adoption of SNSs, particularly the pervasive adoption characterized by the extent to which users willingly embrace and make these platforms integral to their lives. The research is grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and the Social Influence (SI) Processes Framework, both of which highlight individual needs, gratifications, and social imperatives as key factors influencing SNS adoption.

Drawing on data from diverse social and personal needs, the study identifies various motivations driving students' pervasive adoption of SNSs, such as boosting personal creativity, self-expression, and social motivations like strengthening bonds, collaboration, community engagement, and relationship enhancement. The research employs UGT to explore the connections between individual needs and gratifications and SNS usage, shedding light on how information seeking, self-discovery, entertainment, and social enhancement impact the pervasive adoption of SNSs. The study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge on SNS adoption by providing valuable insights into the factors influencing students' deep engagement with and immersion in these platforms. By concurrently considering individual needs, gratifications, and social influence, the research seeks to offer a comprehensive understanding of the pervasive adoption of SNSs among university students.

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1   Introduction

Social networking sites (SNSs) are online platforms designed to facilitate user connections and interactions (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Chiu, Cheng, Huang, Chen, 2013). In essence, SNSs empower users to forge online friendships while also nurturing offline relationships (Kavanaugh, Reese, Carroll, & Rosson, 2005; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela 2009; Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). Well-known SNSs include Facebook, Badoo, Bebo, Friendster, Renren, and LinkedIn.

It's important to note that regional preferences play a role in SNS choices. For example, Badoo enjoys popularity in Latin America, Bebo has a higher user base in the United Kingdom (Ku, Chen, & Zhang, 2013), and Renren is a favored platform in China (Bai, Yao, & Dou, 2015). However, a consistent global trend is the widespread adoption of SNSs by young adults (DailyMail, 2014; Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009; Pew Research Center, 2015).

The usage among university students is particularly noteworthy. Studies indicate alarmingly high SNS use among youth, with approximately 97% of university students in the United States actively using an SNS daily (Smith & Caruso, 2010). A 2008 study reported that university students spent around three hours each day on SNSs, and this level of engagement has since surged significantly (DailyMail, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2015; Pempek et al., 2009; Ryan, Chester, Reece, & Xenos 2014). For instance, a UK news outlet recently revealed that university students in the country spend up to six hours daily on Facebook (DailyMail, 2014).

These findings raise concerns globally regarding the escalating use of SNSs among students (Koc & Gulyagci, 2013; Pempek et al., 2009; Turel & Serenko, 2012). The magnitude of student involvement with SNSs has become a cause for concern, prompting further exploration into the potential impacts on various aspects of their lives.

Recent examinations of social networking site (SNS) adoption have extensively covered the addictive tendencies associated with such technologies among the youth (Koc & Gulyagci, 2013; Kuss & Griffiths, 2011a, 2011b; Turel & Serenko, 2012; Ryan et al., 2014). However, the primary focus of this study is not on the addictive impacts of SNSs, considering the established body of research in that specific domain. Instead, our interest lies in gaining a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to the widespread adoption of SNSs among university students, emphasizing their integration with and enthusiastic acceptance of these technologies (Vannoy & Palvia, 2010).

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To date, several researchers have approached SNS adoption by examining use or usage (characterized by frequency and volume), intention to use, and continuance usage intentions (Hsu & Wu, 2011; Kang, Min, Kim, & Lee, 2013; Kim, 2011; Ku, Chen et al., 2013; Mäntymäkia & Kai Riemer, 2014; Pinho & Soares, 2011; Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009).

Notably, there is a gap in prior research concerning the comprehensive adoption of SNSs. Hence, the current study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge on SNS adoption. It's worth mentioning that limited research has explored the factors influencing students' deep engagement with and immersion in SNSs, which are synonymous with the concept of pervasive adoption used in this study (Park et al., 2009; Turel & Serenko, 2012). In this context, pervasive adoption refers to the extent to which SNS users willingly embrace and make these platforms a central and integral part of their lives (Turel & Serenko, 2012; Vannoy & Palvia, 2010).

Individuals' usage of social networking sites (SNSs) is primarily driven by diverse social and personal needs, which can vary from person to person (Kang et al., 2013; Jackson & Wang, 2013; Ryan et al., 2014; Park, 2014). In general, some individuals utilize SNSs to boost personal creativity and visibility, while others use them as a platform for self-expression (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Koc & Gulyagci, 2013; Lin & Lu, 2011; Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). Social motivations for SNS usage encompass the desire to strengthen social bonds, collaborate with fellow SNS members, foster community engagement, and enhance friendships and relationships (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Kavanaugh et al., 2005; Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012; Park et al., 2009; Zhong, Hardin, & Sun 2011).

To better comprehend the factors influencing students' pervasive adoption of SNSs, it is crucial to acknowledge the pivotal role of individual user needs, gratifications, and social influence. Therefore, this study is grounded in two relevant theoretical frameworks, namely the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and the Social Influence (SI) Processes Framework, both of which underscore individual needs, gratifications, and social imperatives. By concurrently considering individual needs or gratifications and social influence, we anticipate that valuable insights into students' pervasive adoption of SNSs will emerge, insights that each paradigm alone might not readily provide.

Previous studies have frequently employed UGT (Baek, Holton, Harp, & Yaschur, 2011; Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011; Hsu, Tien, Lin, & Chang, 2015; Park et al., 2009; Smock, Ellison, Lampe, & Wohn, 2011; Zolkepli & Kamarulzaman, 2015). These investigations, exploring the connections between UGT components and SNS usage, have consistently demonstrated the theory's applicability in explaining people's acceptance of SNSs and related platforms (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Mäntymäkia & Kai Riemer, 2014). Commonly cited individual needs and gratifications include information seeking or self-discovery, entertainment or enjoyment, and

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social enhancement. However, understanding how these needs impact the pervasive adoption of SNSs remains limited. Since no prior study has specifically examined the influence of needs and gratifications on students' pervasive adoption of SNSs, our intention is to illuminate this aspect.

2   Background of Literature on YouTube and Social Networking Sites

The prevalence and impact of social networking sites (SNSs), which are web-based platforms that facilitate online connections and interactions among users. The text highlights the popularity of SNSs such as YouTube, Facebook, Badoo, Bebo, Friendster, Renren, and LinkedIn, while also acknowledging regional variations in platform preferences.

The primary function of SNSs, is to enable users to establish online friendships and maintain offline contacts. The SNSs play a significant role in the lives of young adults, with university students being particularly engrossed in these platforms.

The escalating engagement with SNSs raises concerns. From, the various sources expressing worry about the potential negative implications of excessive SNS use, including studies that link high SNS engagement with issues such as addiction. The research suggests that the growing concern is not limited to a specific region but is a global phenomenon.

The widespread use of social networking sites, particularly among university students, and suggests that the high levels of engagement have become a cause for concern among researchers and media outlets worldwide. The impact of this pervasive adoption of SNSs on social dynamics, personal relationships, and individual well-being is an area of ongoing research and discussion.

3   Uses and Gratification Theory

UGT, a prominent sociological theory, elucidates the active selection of specific media outlets by individuals to fulfill distinct needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). This theoretical framework posits that individuals are conscious of their needs and purposefully utilize media, possessing the ability to evaluate the value of content and link needs and gratifications to their media choices (Katz et al., 1974; West & Turner, 2007). Traditionally applied to traditional media like newspapers, radio, and television, recent studies have extended UGT to examine needs and gratifications in the realm of computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies (Cheung & Lee, 2009; Cheung et al., 2011; Dholakia et al., 2004; Ku, Chu, & Tseng, 2013; Luo et al., 2011).

According to Ku, Chen et al. (2013), individuals opt for specific CMC technologies to fulfill their particular gratification needs in communication. Considering that Social Networking Sites (SNSs) represent a new CMC tool, UGT becomes a valuable framework for investigating

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students' pervasive adoption of SNSs, suggesting that sustained engagement occurs when their gratifications and needs are met (Ku, Chu et al., 2013).

Research identifies several categories of uses and gratifications, including information seeking, enhanced social interaction, entertainment, and escapism (Katz et al., 1974; McQuail, 2010; Tankard Jr. and James, 2000). For SNS studies, we will employ five categories aligned with UGT (purposive value, self-discovery, entertainment value, social enhancement, and maintaining interpersonal connectivity), mirroring the previously mentioned gratification categories. These UGT categories have found widespread adoption in the study of CMC technologies (Cheung & Lee, 2009; Cheung et al., 2011; Pai & Arnott, 2013).

"Purposive value" pertains to the values an individual gains from achieving a predetermined informational or instrumental purpose (Cheung et al., 2011; Leung & Wei, 2000). "Self-discovery" refers to an individual's motivation to understand aspects of oneself through online group participation (Cheung et al., 2011; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008).

"Maintaining interpersonal interconnectivity" involves the social benefits derived from establishing and sustaining contact with others in an online network (Cheung et al., 2011; Ku, Chen et al., 2013). "Social enhancement" refers to the values individuals derive from gaining acceptance, approval, and enhancing their social status within the online network (Cheung et al., 2011). Lastly, "entertainment value" relates to the fun and enjoyment derived from interacting with others in an online network (Ku, Chen et al., 2013; Pai & Arnott, 2013).

Recent research has delved into the impact of social networking site (SNS) usage, particularly highlighting its potentially addictive effects on the youth (Koc & Gulyagci, 2013; Kuss & Griffiths, 2011a, 2011b; Turel & Serenko, 2012; Ryan et al., 2014). However, this study diverges from exploring the addictive aspects of SNSs, acknowledging the well-established body of work in that specific domain. Instead, the focus is on comprehending the factors that contribute to the widespread adoption of SNSs among university students, placing a particular emphasis on how these technologies become embedded in and embraced by their lives (Vannoy & Palvia, 2010).

To date, various researchers have approached the study of SNS adoption from perspectives such as usage frequency and volume, intention to use, and continuance usage intentions (Hsu & Wu, 2011; Kang, Min, Kim, & Lee, 2013; Kim, 2011; Ku, Chen et al., 2013; Mäntymäkia & Kai Riemer, 2014; Pinho & Soares, 2011; Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009). Notably, there is a notable gap in existing research, as there has been no prior investigation into the pervasive adoption of SNSs. Consequently, the current study aims to contribute new insights to the existing body of knowledge about SNS adoption. It is noteworthy that limited research has explored the factors likely to influence students' heightened engagement with and immersion in SNSs,

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concepts closely aligned with the idea of pervasive adoption (Park et al., 2009; Turel & Serenko, 2012).

Within the context of this study, pervasive adoption refers to the extent to which SNS users willingly incorporate and make these platforms a central and integral part of their lives (Turel & Serenko, 2012; Vannoy & Palvia, 2010). This perspective seeks to shed light on the nuanced dynamics of how individuals embrace SNSs as a fundamental aspect of their daily existence.

4   ANALYSIS

4.1   Compliance has a positive impact on students' behavioral intention to use YouTube

Kelman's theory from 1958 and 1974 proposes that individuals might be swayed by the perspectives of their social groups, especially when actions align with their personal values or are inherently rewarding. In the context of Social Networking Sites (SNS) usage, the opinions of others carry significant weight alongside one's individual viewpoint (Li, 2011; Cheung et al., 2011; Qin et al., 2011). Examining the internalization process within virtual communities, research has shown that individuals are inclined to participate in group activities when they perceive shared values or goals among fellow network members (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Cheung et al., 2011; Malhotra & Galletta, 1999). Moreover, studies highlight that students' internalization processes regarding SNS usage positively correlate with their intentions to utilize these platforms (Cheung et al., 2011; Li, 2011).

The concept of compliance is intricately woven into the fabric of students' behavioral intentions to use YouTube, influencing various aspects of their educational experiences. One key driver is the alignment of YouTube usage with academic requirements and guidelines. In educational settings, instructors and institutions often endorse YouTube as an integral part of the curriculum or learning resources. When students comply with these academic directives, a positive intention to use YouTube for educational purposes emerges, as it is perceived as a sanctioned and recommended tool within the learning framework.

Institutional policies further underscore the impact of compliance on students' behavioral intentions. Educational institutions may establish policies or guidelines that explicitly encourage the use of specific platforms, including YouTube, for educational content and collaboration. The act of complying with these institutional directives aligns students with the expected norms and standards of the educational environment, fostering a positive inclination to integrate YouTube into their learning practices.

Educational content accessibility serves as a crucial dimension in understanding the positive impact of compliance. YouTube functions as an expansive repository of educational materials,

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offering tutorials, lectures, and channels covering a diverse range of subjects. When students adhere to recommendations to use YouTube, they tap into this rich resource, enhancing their access to educational content and contributing to a positive behavioral intention by enriching their overall learning experience.

Collaborative learning, an emphasis in many academic institutions, finds expression through YouTube's platform for sharing knowledge through videos. Compliance with the collaborative nature of learning, such as engagement in group projects or shared educational content, reinforces positive behavioral intentions. The technological integration in education, where compliance involves embracing online platforms like YouTube, becomes a crucial component. As educational practices increasingly integrate technology, students complying with this trend exhibit a positive intention to utilize YouTube for educational purposes.

Peer influence also plays a significant role in the positive impact of compliance on students' behavioral intentions. Observing peers engaging with YouTube for academic reasons creates a social norm where compliance becomes a shared behavior. This peer-driven conformity reinforces positive intentions and further establishes YouTube as a valuable tool within the educational journey.

In conclusion, the multifaceted positive impact of compliance on students' behavioral intention to use YouTube underscores its role as a sanctioned and recommended tool within academic settings. This compliance is influenced by academic requirements, institutional policies, accessibility to educational content, collaborative learning practices, technological integration, and peer influence, collectively contributing to a favorable disposition among students to actively engage with YouTube as an indispensable educational tool.

4.2   Identification has a positive impact on students' behavioral intention to use YouTube

SNS adoption encompasses a diverse array of purposes as indicated by various studies (Guo, Shim, & Otondo, 2010; Leung & Wei, 2000; Park et al., 2009; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Ryan et al., 2014; Smock et al., 2011). For instance, students leverage SNSs to stay informed about both on-campus and off-campus events (Park et al., 2009; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). Some seek status updates through these platforms (Smock et al., 2011), while others use them simply for leisure and passing time (Hunt, Atkin, & Krishnan, 2012; Sheldon, 2008; Special & Li-Barber, 2012). The desire for self-discovery within online groups is a recurring gratification reported by SNS users (Cheung et al., 2011; Guo, Shim, & Otondo, 2010; Hunt et al., 2012; Park et al., 2009; Pai & Arnott, 2013; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Shoenberger & Tandoc, Jr., 2014). From these observations, it can be inferred that students' intentions to use SNSs are

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positively influenced by both the purposeful value they attribute to these tools and their intrinsic needs for self-discovery.

Identification, in the context of students' interaction with YouTube, plays a pivotal role in shaping their behavioral intention to use the platform. This identification can manifest through various channels, fostering a positive connection that influences students' attitudes and behaviors. Firstly, when students identify YouTube as a reliable source of educational content, they are more likely to develop a positive behavioral intention to use the platform for academic purposes. The platform's vast array of educational videos, tutorials, and lectures allows students to identify YouTube as a valuable supplementary resource that enhances their learning experience. As they recognize the educational merit and relevance of the content available on YouTube, the platform becomes a preferred destination, positively impacting their intention to use it as an educational tool.

The identification of YouTube as a social and collaborative space contributes significantly to students' behavioral intentions. The platform's features, such as comments, likes, and shares, facilitate interaction and engagement among users. When students identify YouTube as a space for collaborative learning, where they can share knowledge, exchange ideas, and participate in discussions, it fosters a sense of community. This identification with YouTube as a collaborative learning environment aligns with contemporary educational trends that emphasize peer-to-peer interaction. As a result, students are more likely to develop a positive behavioral intention to use YouTube as a means of social learning, recognizing its potential to facilitate collaborative educational experiences.

Identification with YouTube as a valuable source of educational content and as a collaborative learning space positively influences students' behavioral intentions. The recognition of YouTube's educational merit and its role in fostering social interactions contributes to a favorable attitude among students, encouraging them to actively engage with the platform for academic purposes. This identification process underscores the importance of YouTube as a dynamic and versatile tool in the educational landscape, impacting students' intentions and behaviors in a positive manner.

4.3 Self-discovery value has a positive impact on students' behavioral intention to use YouTube.

One of the predominant reasons prompting individuals to utilize SNSs is for entertainment purposes, as highlighted by various studies (Hunt et al., 2012; Hsu et al., 2015; Jackson & Wang, 2013; Park et al., 2009; Ryan et al., 2014; Sheldon, 2008; Special & Li-Barber, 2012; Zolkepli & Kamarulzaman, 2015). The enjoyment derived from SNS use is crucial, as users are less likely to actively engage with these platforms if they perceive them as uninteresting or dull. The

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widespread global acceptance of such technologies, especially among youth and various demographic groups, can be attributed in part to the widespread pleasure users derive from SNSs (Internetworldstats.com, 2015; Junco, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2015; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Ryan et al., 2014; Smith & Caruso, 2010; Statistca.com, 2015). Scholars like Cheung et al. (2011), Hsu et al. (2015), Ku, Chen et al. (2013), Ku, Chu et al. (2013), Lin and Lu (2011), and Wu et al. (2010) have consistently found that the entertainment value of SNSs significantly influences usage intentions, particularly among student populations.

The self-discovery value associated with using YouTube has a profound and positive impact on students' behavioral intentions to engage with the platform. YouTube's diverse content ecosystem allows students to explore and discover information tailored to their unique learning needs and interests. Whether it's educational tutorials, skill development videos, or content related to personal interests, the platform serves as a reservoir of knowledge. When students recognize YouTube as a tool for self-discovery, enabling them to independently explore and learn, it fosters a positive attitude towards the platform, enhancing their behavioral intention to use it for educational and personal growth purposes.

Moreover, the self-discovery value on YouTube extends beyond traditional academic subjects. The platform offers a wealth of content that caters to diverse interests, hobbies, and personal development areas. Students can identify YouTube as a space for exploring new passions, acquiring practical skills, and gaining insights into various fields. This broad spectrum of content aligns with the self-discovery aspect, providing students with opportunities to delve into areas beyond their formal curriculum. As students perceive YouTube as a platform that supports their individual exploration and self-directed learning, it contributes significantly to a positive behavioral intention to regularly use the platform as a valuable resource for both academic and personal development purposes.

Additionally, the interactive nature of YouTube, with features like comments and discussions, enhances the self-discovery experience. When students engage with the platform's community and share their thoughts, questions, and insights, it creates a sense of participation and connection. This active involvement fosters a positive self-discovery environment, reinforcing the perception that YouTube is not just a passive learning tool but a dynamic space for interactive and personalized exploration. In turn, this contributes to a strengthened behavioral intention among students to consistently use YouTube as a multifaceted tool for self-discovery and knowledge acquisition.

4.4 Entertainment value has a positive impact on students' behavioral intention to use YouTube

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Consistent research findings underscore the significance of socializing needs, encompassing the maintenance of interpersonal interconnectivity and the pursuit of social enhancement, as crucial gratifications derived from SNS usage (Cheung et al., 2011; Guo, Shim, & Otondo, 2010; Hsu et al., 2015; Ku, Chen et al., 2013; Park et al., 2009; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Sheldon, 2008; Special & Li-Barber, 2012; Wu, Wang, & Tsai, 2010; Zolkepli & Kamarulzaman, 2015). In essence, the intrinsic motivation to connect with others and augment one's social value serves as a driving force for engagement in online networks. Research studies conducted by Ryan et al. (2014) and Smock et al. (2011) highlighted that the desire for interpersonal interconnectivity, including relationship maintenance, and the pursuit of social enhancement are pivotal reasons guiding individuals' intentions to partake in SNS use. Consequently, we posit that students' intentions to use SNSs will exhibit a positive correlation with both their social needs and motives.

The entertainment value inherent in YouTube plays a pivotal role in shaping students' behavioral intentions to use the platform. YouTube's vast collection of content spans a wide spectrum, including entertaining videos, humorous content, and engaging storytelling. When students perceive YouTube as a source of entertainment, it creates a positive association with the platform, contributing to a heightened behavioral intention to use it regularly. The diverse array of entertaining content on YouTube not only serves as a welcome break from academic rigor but also provides students with a platform for relaxation and enjoyment. This positive and enjoyable experience fosters an inclination to incorporate YouTube into their daily routines, enhancing their behavioral intention to use the platform consistently.

Furthermore, the interactive and participatory nature of YouTube enhances its entertainment value. Features such as comments, likes, and shares enable students to actively engage with content, fostering a sense of community. When students identify YouTube as a space where they can not only passively consume entertainment but also interact with content creators and fellow viewers, it strengthens their behavioral intention to use the platform. The participatory aspect transforms YouTube into a social space where students can share their reactions, opinions, and recommendations, creating a more immersive and enjoyable experience that positively influences their intention to use the platform regularly.

The positive impact of entertainment value on students' behavioral intentions also extends to the versatility of content available on YouTube. From educational channels with engaging animations to informative yet entertaining content, students can find material that aligns with their preferences. This aligns with the idea that YouTube is not just a source of leisure but a platform where education and entertainment coexist, creating a dynamic and appealing space for students. In conclusion, the entertainment value of YouTube contributes significantly to students'

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behavioral intentions by providing an enjoyable and interactive platform that seamlessly integrates with their academic and leisure pursuits.

5   CONCLUSION

Understanding the factors that contribute to students' pervasive adoption of YouTube is a critical pursuit for both researchers and practitioners alike. This study acknowledges its place as a stepping stone in the ongoing exploration of this subject, emphasizing the need for additional research to expand the boundaries of knowledge in this domain. It recognizes that the complexities of student engagement with YouTube are multifaceted and dynamic, warranting a continuous and evolving examination.

Researchers are urged to delve deeper into the influences of Social Influence (SI) processes and the categories outlined by Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) on students' immersion in such digital tools. Both SI and UGT have proven to be relevant paradigms guiding the discourse, and further exploration within these frameworks can yield valuable insights into the intricate nature of students' interactions with YouTube. As technology and social dynamics evolve, a continuous exploration of these theoretical underpinnings remains crucial.

Moreover, an inclusive approach to research is encouraged, urging scholars to incorporate perspectives from diverse cultural contexts worldwide. Understanding how cultural nuances shape students' interactions with YouTube can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors at play. This global perspective allows for the identification of universal patterns as well as context-specific influences, contributing to a richer understanding of pervasive adoption trends.

From a practical standpoint, practitioners stand to gain valuable insights from research findings regarding the specific uses, gratifications, and socialization elements that resonate most with students. Armed with this knowledge, practitioners can tailor their strategies and interventions to align with the preferences and motivations driving students' extensive use of platforms like YouTube. This symbiotic relationship between research and practice ensures that the practical implications drawn from the study findings are relevant, effective, and attuned to the dynamic landscape of students' digital engagement.

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