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community through uses and gratifications theory

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## 1. Introduction

*“Wherever in the world life takes you, our  
InterNations Communities help you feel at home”*

*InterNations.org*

InterNations represents the key social network for expatriates worldwide. Founded in Munich in 2007 by three young entrepreneurs from Germany (former expatriates themselves), it is the first international community for all people living and working abroad. The website unites 3.3 million expatriates and global minds around the world (InterNations.org, 2018). Similar to Facebook, InterNations allows users to create an online profile, build a network of connections and directly communicate with their contacts.

InterNations helps members liaise with other expatriates in a similar situation, with comparable interests and needs. It has local social networking websites in 420 cities worldwide, including Austria (InterNations.org, 2018).

Since social networking sites are popular communication tools nowadays, it is important to study the characteristics that make social networks appealing to people and to understand user behavior online. These sites become a platform for social interaction, information, news, and entertainment (Khan, 2017). Therefore, the current study aims to provide a better understanding of social media engagement and exact motivations that encourage participation. Subsequently, the results of this study may help to predict InterNations effectiveness for users based on their motivations and intensity of use.

Though InterNations is an important tool for networking and has many possible influences on an expatriate's life, there are no studies that have attempted to probe motives for site use. Previous research shows the negligence of this communication channel in mass media and communication science. There is a research gap in existing literature of scientific examination of InterNations as a social media tool for communication. To narrow this gap, the current study uncovers motives behind social

network site use not identified in previous literature. This will not only expand our knowledge about InterNations website as a communication tool but will add to our understanding of why people integrate this form of social media on the basis of the gratifications it fulfills. To address these inquiries, a theoretical framework of uses and gratifications has been utilized in present study.

In light of the exponential growth of social network sites, many researches have used the uses and gratifications approach to unearth the motivations of social network sites like Facebook (Alhabash, Chiang, & Huang, 2014; Gülnar & Balci, 2010; Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2006; Malik, Dhir, & Nieminen, 2015; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Sheldon, 2008; Smock, Ellison, Lampe, & Wohn, 2011; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010), LinkedIn (Basak & Calisir, 2014; Florenthal, 2015) and Twitter (Chen, 2011; Liu, Cheung, & Lee, 2010; Yoo, Choi, Rho, & Choi, 2014).

According to previous research, motivations to use social networking sites could be categorized in five categories: (1) cognitive (information); (2) entertainment (relaxing, diversion); (3) social connection (social utility, companionship, relationship maintenance, social interaction, inclusion); (4) habitual use (passing time); and (5) identity (self-expression, recognition) (Leung, 2009; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009; Shao, 2008; Sheldon, 2008).

Researchers in mass communication have revealed important gratifications which predict the use of social network sites. They are: utilitarian (rational and goal-oriented) gratifications of immediate access and coordination, as well as hedonic (pleasure-oriented) gratifications of affections and leisure (Xu, Ryan, Prybutok & Wen, 2012). While prior research was focused on hedonic gratifications of networking sites, researchers argue that it is important to focus on utilitarian factors as well to provide better understanding of social network sites usage (Xu et al., 2012). Scholars claim that users know what they are doing: they choose to participate in social network sites activities due to the functionalities offered by them, not just taking part in activities because they are enjoyable (Xu et al., 2012).

Summarizing the previous findings on gratifications of social media usage, researchers identified the main motivations to use Facebook, Twitter and other social network sites (Alhabash et al., 2014; Gang & Wang, 2015; Malik et al., 2015). Entertainment,

information sharing, media appeal, escapism, socialization, self-documentation, self-expression, as well as affection, attention-seeking, disclosure, habit and social influence are the main motivations for Facebook usage (Alhabash et al., 2014; Malik et al., 2015). Hedonic, utilitarian and social appearance-gratifications could be obtained from Twitter usage (Yoo et al., 2014). Relationship maintenance, information seeking, amusement, style and sociability are main motivations for social network sites usage (Ku, Chen, & Zhang, 2013). Utilitarian, hedonic gratifications and Website social presence directly affects social network sites usage (Xu et. al., 2012).

The purpose of this study is to discover the main motivations for expatriates to participate in the social network community InterNations. Additionally, the current study examines the relations between the motives and the intensity of use of the InterNations website.

The research question of the study is: What are the main motives for InterNations usage? To answer the question it is important first to define: What is social networking? What are the main sites for social networking? What main motivations for users to network were found? What are the main characteristics of the InterNations website? What motives may affect the intensity of participation on InterNations?

The current study examines five motives of InterNations use: *social interaction, information seeking, information sharing, entertainment and social networking*. These motives are similar to those identified for using online networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

To explore members' gratifications derived from using InterNations, a quantitative approach was implemented in this study. The data was collected among network members in Austria via an online questionnaire. The objective of this study is to explore the general gratifications obtained from using expatriates' website.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Uses and Gratifications Theory**

The uses and gratifications approach is recognized to be a sub tradition of media effects research (Ruggiero, 2000). In the early history of communication research scholars aimed to study the gratifications that draw users' attention to the kinds of media and the types of content that can satisfy their social and psychological needs (Ruggiero, 2000). They have revealed three main objectives of the uses and gratifications framework such as: to explain how people use the media to gratify their needs; to understand the motives for media behavior; and to identify the consequences of media use (Katz, Haas, & Gurevitch, 1973).

The uses and gratifications theory assumes that media consumers' behavior is goal-directed and that users actively interpret and integrate media messages in their lives to fulfill their needs and desires; that their behavior is guided, filtered or mediated by social and psychological factors (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). The theory focuses on what people themselves actively do with the media rather than just being influenced by media itself (Katz, Blumer, & Gurevitch, 1974).

The research focuses on linking the media-use motives with media attitudes and behaviors; comparing motivations across media forms; studying the different social and psychological factors of media use; analyzing the connection or difference between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained; exploring whether behavior and attributes are influenced by variations in backgrounds; taking into account the methods, reliability and validity of measuring motivation (Dunne, Lawlor & Rowley, 2010).

Uses and gratifications is one of the most appropriate perspectives to study consumers' behavior on different media channels (Ruggiero, 2000). It was originally developed to examine traditional media (Katz et al., 1974; Katz et al., 1973). Media scholars examined newspapers (Elliott & Rosenberg 1987), radio (Herzog, 1940; 1944; Mendelsohn, 1964) and television (Bantz, 1982; Kippax & Murray, 1980; Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979; Rubin, 1983).

The uses and gratification theory was rejuvenated with the spread of the Internet. Active Internet users choose themselves websites they want to visit, items to read, communities to join, information they post and applications they use (Lev-On, 2015). Behind these actions there are conscious decisions and a vast area research of people's uses and gratifications (Ruggiero, 2000)

### **2.1.1. Gratifications Obtained and Sought**

There is a key distinction in uses and gratifications theory – a distinction between gratifications obtained and gratifications sought (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010).

Obtained gratifications are those that audience members experience through the use of a particular medium. Gratifications sought, which can also be referred to as “needs” or “motives”, are those gratifications that users expect to obtain from a medium before they are in a contact with it (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Obtained gratifications may differ from those sought. The resulting gap can predict the level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction that users experience when they use a particular medium (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Moreover, previous research was mostly focused on gratifications obtained in order to explain what motivates continued use of specific medium (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Katz et al., 1973).

The frequent use of medium and predictable consumption habits takes place when a medium provides the expected gratifications originally sought (Palmreen & Rayburn, 1979; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). When the sought-after gratifications are not fulfilled by a medium, users can be disappointed and will likely stop utilizing the specific medium. They will seek out another medium that can provide them with the kinds of gratifications they seek (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). It is important to understand the gap between two types of gratifications to know how audience members use different kinds of media, what expectations they bring to their media habits and what gratifications they obtain being exposed to diverse media products (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010).

The characteristics and therefore gratifications of each medium are different from other media (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Each medium also provides content that is characteristic of its format. The kinds of media attributes can differ from each other.

Some media only provide text, some provide sound and other media can combine different formats (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Moreover, each medium can provide different kinds of exposure situations that affects provided gratifications. There are differences between social media in terms of the nature of interactions they support, although they are characterized as “interactive”. It leads to different types of gratifications (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010).

### **2.1.2. Social and Psychological Aspects**

Uses and gratifications theory is one of the most relevant perspectives to explain psychological and behavioral dimensions involving mediated communication (Ruggiero, 2000). It focuses on individual use and choice and states that different people can use the same mass medium for different purposes (Severin & Tankard, 1997). Social and psychological circumstances of users, their motives and expectations are important factors that can influence media use and effects (Katz et al., 1974). Therefore, individual differences effect motivations for engaging with different media (Katz et al., 1974).

Physical health, mobility, interpersonal interaction, life satisfaction, social activity and economic security are relevant elements to explain interpersonal needs and motives. They are more informative than demographics and affect our motives to communicate, our strategies to seek information and diversion, and dependency on a medium (Rubin & Rubin, 1982).

Typologies, which are used to explain media consumption, speak to connections between goals and outcomes suggesting the complexities between media uses and effects (Katz et al., 1973; Lull, 1980; McQuail, Blumler, & Brown, 1972; Rubin, 2002). The background of people and gratifications sought were linked to categorize the types of gratification from television usage. Scholars formulated a typology of media-person interactions (McQuail et al., 1972; Rubin, 2002). People are motivated to watch television to escape and for emotional release; for companionship and social utility; for personal reference; to acquire news and information (McQuail et al., 1972). Users might seek media as alternatives to personal interaction for compensation, change, escape (Rosengren & Windahl, 1972).



The Internet users who are more satisfied with life and interpersonal interaction prefer information seeking via the Internet (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). Those users who were less satisfied with life used the Internet as alternative to interpersonal communication and to pass time (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). Consumers with stronger information seeking motives engage in human-message interaction on a website. In human-to-human interaction engage those with stronger social interaction motives (Ko, Cho & Roberts, 2005).

Media uses and effects depend on the potential for interaction and the context of interaction (Ruggiero, 2002). People's social and psychological circumstances, including lifestyle, life position and personality may influence it (Rubin, 2002). "Variations in expectations, attitudes, activity and involvement lead to different behaviors and outcomes" (Rubin, 2002: 175).

### **2.1.3. Social Media and Motivations**

5 main categories were classified from 35 needs that motivate people to use media: 1) *cognitive needs* (acquiring information, understanding, knowledge); 2) *affective needs* (emotion, feeling, pleasure); 3) *personal integrative needs* (credibility, stability, status); 4) *social integrative needs* (interacting with family and friends); 5) *tension release needs* (escape and diversion) (Katz et al., 1973). Information, integration and social interaction, personal identity and entertainment are four main reasons of mass media usage (McQuail, 1994).

Diversion (escape from problems, emotional release); personal identity (value reinforcement, self-understanding); personal relationship (social utility of information in conversation, substitute of the media for companionship) and surveillance are main categories of television usage (McQuail et al., 1972).

The uses and gratifications approach is the best for understanding Internet as a medium because the Internet is driven by individual users with their own individual gratifications (Stafford, Stafford, & Schkade, 2004). Unlike traditional media Internet requires a higher level of interactivity from its users (Ruggiero, 2000).

Social escapism, transactional security and privacy, information, interactive control, socialization, nontransactional privacy and economic motivation are seven factors of Internet users' motivations (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999). Researchers suggested that people use the Internet not only for informational reasons, but also for entertainment and escape (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999).

Information seeking, interpersonal utility, parasocial interaction, surveillance, diversion, entertainment, passing time and good feelings are unique gratifications of Internet usage (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

Content (information, entertainment) and process (passing time, browsing) were defined as “old” media gratifications to predict Internet use, while a third dimension – social gratifications – could be Internet-specific (Stafford et al., 2004).

Scholarly research has used uses and gratifications theory to analyze motives for using online communities. The main motives of participating in online communities such are: getting information, giving information, reputation building, relationship development, recreation, and self-discovery (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; Lampe, Wash, Velasquez, & Ozkaya, 2010).

Thus, there is an undeniable effectiveness of uses and gratification theory in understanding motivations and needs for using the Internet (Ko et al., 2005).

## **2.2. Social Network Sites**

Social network sites attract millions of users, for many of whom these sites became their everyday practice (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). They have different technological affordances; support a lot of interests and practices. Users of most sites can maintain pre-existing social networks. There are also sites that help strangers to connect based on shared interests or activities (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). While some sites attract diverse audiences, others unite people based on common language or shared racial, sexual, religious, or nationality based identities (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Users of social network sites can create personal profiles, articulate their identities, connect with other users and brands, they can view, share, upload and comment on

photos, messages, videos and other content posted on their newsfeeds (Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2016). Among the most popular social networking sites are Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram (Phua et al., 2016)

The power of social networking is undeniable since the number of worldwide users is expected to reach some 3.02 billion monthly active social media by 2021, around a third of Earth's population (Statista, 2018).

### **2.2.1. Definition of Social Network Sites**

Social network sites are web-based services that allow its members to construct a public or semi-public profile on a certain networking site, to articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and to view their list of connections (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Important to say, that the nature and classification of these connections can differ from site to site (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Social network is an “explicit representation of the relationship between individuals and groups in the community” (Finin, Ding, Zhou, & Joshi, 2005: 418). Members of networks have similar interests, they gather on virtual platforms to communicate, share and discuss ideas (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008).

Since users of social network sites can articulate and make visible their networks they can make new connections with other members that would not otherwise be made (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Members of many of the social network sites prefer to communicate with people who are already a part of their social network. They do not necessarily “network” or want to meet new people (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

The central element of users' social networking existence is a profile (Dunne et al., 2010). Each profile page is unique to the owner. After creating a profile members can upload their profile photograph, share personal information, details about their tastes (Dunne et al., 2010). Users also have control over the information they share and they try to portray themselves in the most positive light (Dunne et al., 2010).

Social network sites include different communication tools. For example, such tools as broadcasting messages to many users with the help of status updates and wall posts, providing group and private chats (Smock et al., 2011).

### **2.2.2. Motivations for Using Social Networking Sites**

Many researches applied uses and gratifications framework to study social networking sites use motivations (Alhabash et al., 2014; Gülnar & Balci, 2010; Leung, 2009; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011; Park et al., 2009; Phua et al., 2017; Rains & Brunner, 2015; Shao, 2009; Sheldon, 2008; Urista, Dong & Day, 2009) and added new gratifications in order to explain how individuals use social media.

The categorization of motivations to use social networking sites includes five main motivations: (1) cognitive (information); (2) entertainment (relaxing, diversion); (3) social connection (social utility, companionship, relationship maintenance, social interaction); (4) habitual use (passing time); and (5) identity (self-expression, recognition) (Leung, 2009; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011; Park et al., 2009; Urista et al., 2009). There are also additional motivations like narcissism, mood management, media drenching, performance, esthetic experience and vending negative feelings (Gülnar & Balci, 2010; Leung, 2009; Shao, 2009).

Members stay on social networking sites to keep in touch with friends, to post/look at pictures, to make new friends, to locate old friends, to learn about different events, to feel connected, to share information, for academic purposes and dating (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008)

The components like community membership, information value, participation concerns, friendship connections, and participation confidence are relevant for developing the motivational factors of social networking sites usage (Basak & Calisir, 2010; Foster, Francescucci, & West, 2010).

Utilitarian (rational and goal-oriented) gratifications of immediate access and coordination, as well as hedonic (pleasure-oriented) gratifications of affections and leisure predict the use of social network sites (Xu et al., 2012). Prior research was mostly focused on hedonic use of social networking sites, not giving enough attention

utilitarian factors. But when users start to obtain utilitarian gratifications, hedonic gratifications get less important and predictive in social network sites usage (Xu et al., 2012). People's intentions to explore technologies are increased by the effects of utilitarian factors. It is important to focus on the social networking sites functionalities to provide users with both utilitarian and hedonic gratifications (Xu et al., 2012). With the help of a focus group researchers revealed the social network sites patterns. Eight gratifications like affection, coordination, disclosure, entertainment, escape, immediate access, relaxation, and stylishness were the result of the discussion (Xu et al., 2012).

Descriptions of SNS gratifications.

Gratification	Description
Affection	People adopt SNS as a channel to express their heartfelt sentiments to friends
Coordination	People use SNS to organize social activities, make arrangements, and disperse information
Disclosure	People need to have someone to talk with when surfing on SNS
Entertainment	People use SNS as an entertaining tool for fun and pleasure
Escape	People turn to SNS for a moment of being away from current pressures
Immediate access	People use SNS to transcend temporal and geographic limitations to get connected with others
Relaxation	People use SNS to get relaxed and to relieve stress and boredom
Stylishness	People use SNS as a status symbol

*Table 1:* Description of social network sites gratifications (*Source:* Xu et al., 2012: 212)

Social media platforms include social networking sites like Facebook, micro-blogging sites like Twitter, business-networking sites like LinkedIn, video-sharing sites like YouTube and others. These websites are often free to use and inexpensive (Williams & Whiting, 2013).

Facebook is the most popular social networking site and has over 2.2 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2018). Many studies have examined various motivations of Facebook usage (Alhabash et al., 2014; Gülnar & Balci, 2010; Lampe et al., 2006; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Sheldon, 2008; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; van Dijck, 2013).

Habitual passing time, expressing information sharing, escapism, relaxing entertainment, cool and new trend, companionship, professional advancement, social interaction and meeting new people are relevant motives for using Facebook (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011).

Users of Facebook are motivated to use the site to maintain offline relationship, post and view pictures, make new friends, feel connected, learn about social activities, and share information about themselves (Lampe et al., 2006; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008).

Socialization, entertainment, self-status-seeking and information seeking are key factors that explain the motives of individuals to participate in Facebook groups (Park et al., 2009). To satisfy socializing needs members were interested to meet with others as well as to get peer support and a sense of community (Park et al., 2009). Users may also join online communities to meet like-minded people and gain social support (Khan, 2017).

Social connection, photographs (viewing/sharing), shared identities (creating/joining groups and events), content (applications, games, etc.), social investigation, social network surfing, and status updates are seven unique motivations to use Facebook (Joinson, 2008). These motivations, except social network surfing, are positively associated with Facebook use intensity (Alhabash et al., 2014; Joinson, 2008).

Exploring the relationship among motivational reactivity, the motivations, and intensity to use Facebook, seven motives like self-expression, medium appeal, information sharing, socialization, self-documentation, entertainment and escapism were discovered by scholars (Alhabash et al., 2014). The motivation to use Facebook for entertainment was strongest in predicting intensity to use this tool for social networking (Alhabash et al., 2014).

While self-presentation is the main focus of Facebook, professional self-promotion is the main target of LinkedIn's interface (van Dijck, 2013). Members of LinkedIn can upload online resumes and establish connections with colleagues and friends in order to maintain communication, trade information and refer each other (Papacharissi, 2009). They can create a profile based on their professional affiliation and connect professionals within and outside their professional networks (Papacharissi, 2009). LinkedIn profiles are more factual. They include one formal picture and text arranged

mostly in the form of lists (van Dijck, 2013). Self-expression or emotional attachments are not appreciated (van Dijck, 2013).

Self-promotion, job and job affairs, group activities, finding old and new friends easily, follow up, profile viewer data and professional networking are factors that determine uses and gratifications of LinkedIn (Basak & Calisir, 2014). Professional networking is an important motive of usage of LinkedIn. Building a network and making new connections are the main missions of LinkedIn (Basak & Calisir, 2014).

Students use LinkedIn for interpersonal communication, online identity, information and career development (Florenthal, 2015). The first three factors are similar to those identified for Facebook usage. Such category as career development gratifies only LinkedIn users (Florenthal, 2015). Facebook profiles are self-expressive and provide more relational information, interests and hobbies, while LinkedIn profiles display professional information mainly for self-promotion that looks like formatted CVs (Florenthal, 2015). Facebook users want to socialize, while LinkedIn users look for professional connections for their career advancement (Florenthal, 2015).

Twitter is also an important tool for communication nowadays. It is a social network and micro-blogging platform which includes both mass and interpersonal communication features (Chen, 2011). The main difference between Twitter and other social media is that messages on Twitter, called tweets, are limited to 140 total characters (Chen, 2011).

People use Twitter to give and receive advice, to gather and share information and to meet people (Johnson & Yang, 2009). They also share their everyday experiences and chitchat online in order to establish common ground and connectivity through social media (Donath & Boyd, 2004; Rheingold, 2000).

Twitter was examined to see if its active users fulfill the need for human connection. Researcher found that frequent Twitter usage over a longer period of time is more significant to fulfill the need to connect than the hours per day spent on Twitter (Chen, 2011).

The previous findings of studies on uses and gratification theory were summarized in order to explore the gratifications for social media usage (Gan & Wang, 2015).

Social media	Gratifications	Study
IM	Peer pressure/entertainment, relationship maintenance, free expression and sociability	Lo & Leung(2009)
Social network	Relationship maintenance, information seeking, amusement, style and sociability; Utilitarian gratifications, hedonic gratifications and Website social presence	Ku et al. (2013)  Xu et al. (2012)
Twitter	Hedonic, utilitarian and social appearance values	Yoo et al. (2014)
Facebook	Entertainment, information sharing, media appeal, escapism, socialization, self-documentation, self-expression; Affection, attention-seeking, disclosure, habit, information sharing and social influence	Alhabash et al. (2014)  Malik et al. (2015)

Table 2: Gratifications from social media uses (Source: Gan & Wang, 2015: 354).

Thus, research reveals the general and specific gratifications obtained from different social media, examines the components of gratifications and how they affect users' adoption of different social media (Gan & Wang, 2015).

### 2.2.3. Motives to Use InterNations

Based on the previous studies of gratifications obtained from using social network sites, the present study postulates five main motives for using InterNations: *social interaction, information seeking, information sharing, entertainment and social networking*.



The five motives are most appropriate from an engagement perspective, in better understanding user participation in social network community InterNations.

### *Social Interaction*

According to previous studies on social media motivations, social interaction is an important motive of participating in social network communities (Dholakia et al., 2004; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999; Ku et al., 2013; Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Park et al., 2009; Whiting & Williams, 2013; Xu et al., 2012).

Social interaction in uses and gratifications literature is defined as using social media to communicate and interact with others (Whiting & Williams, 2013). The scale items of researchers included: “meet people with my interests” and “keep up with what is going on” (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Social motivation (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999), interpersonal utility (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000), and companionship (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979) are similar constructs. Social interaction is narrower than interpersonal utility and broader than companionship (Ko et al., 2005). It can be also found under definitions as social presence, socialization (Khan et al., 2017; Park et al., 2009).

Social interaction can be defined as “maintaining interpersonal connectivity” (Dholakia et al., 2004). It “refers to the social benefits derived from establishing and maintaining contact with other people such as social support, friendship, and intimacy” (Dholakia et al., 2004: 244). This contact with content and other users leads to further participatory behaviors which increases social connections (Dholakia et al., 2004).

In order to satisfy socializing needs individuals are interested to meet and talk with like-minded people, to get peer support and a sense of community (Park et al., 2009). Park et al. (2009) argues that users may join networking communities to meet like-minded people and to reduce the effects of loneliness.

Since InterNations website is designed to help expatriates to build social connections – business and personal contacts in a city of residence, such important factor as social interaction is relevant for the current study. Continued use of InterNations website over a period of time may cause users to build social connections leading to an increase in participatory and interactive behaviors.

### *Information Seeking*

According to previous uses and gratifications studies, information seeking is a common motive to media use (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Whiting & Williams, 2013) and social network sites use, in particular (Alhabash et al., 2014; Khan, 2017; Ku et al., 2013; Park et al., 2009; Phua et al., 2016; Shao, 2009; Xu et al., 2012).

Such uses and gratifications theme as information seeking is defined as using social media to seek out information or to self-educate (Whiting & Williams, 2013). A similar construct called information motivation is defined as how consumers use the web for information and self-education (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999).

Information seeking is “driven by people’s desire to increase awareness and knowledge of one’s self, others, and the world” (Shao, 2009: 10). This is why, for example, people often visit Wikipedia to get some information about subjects that interest them, or Facebook and other social media to learn how to make sense of things from their peers on any subject (Shao, 2009).

Seeking information, including gaining information and learning how to do things, is a main motivation for participation in an online community (Khan, 2017).

Since InterNations is a source of expat-relevant information, information seeking is an important motive of expatriates’ social network usage. InterNations offers variety of resources to stay informed about expats’ experiences: blogs, guides, groups of interest, forum, expert’s articles, advertisements. InterNations websites’ tools are ideal for providing information, by virtue of promoting maximum user participation.

### *Information Sharing*

Information sharing is an important motive of participation in social network community. Active users provide others with information and contribute to a pool of information or to generate ideas (Khan, 2017).

Engagement in the form of user participation on social media can be distributed not equally (Khan, 2017). Many users may simply consume content while some of them play an active role and participate in different interactions. They can even repurpose content to fit their needs (Khan, 2017). For example, on a website like Wikipedia small

percentage of users write articles or edit them. On YouTube only a fraction of visitors contribute videos, comment and engage in discussions on videos (Khan, 2017). It is known as Pareto principle. It states that 80% of the work on websites is done by 20% of individuals (Best & Neuhauser, 2006). Therefore, it is important to examine active participation in order to have a wholesome understanding of engagement (Khan, 2017).

Sharing information on InterNations website is manifested through actions such as contributing in forum discussions, creating new groups of interest, writing expat articles, becoming the InterNations Ambassador to organize different events. Users of InterNations may play an active role by participating in various interactions. Thus, a user who is more adept at InterNations use may be more inclined to participate.

### *Entertainment*

Entertainment as a type of social media usage provides relaxation, fun and enjoyment (Whiting & Williams, 2015). It involves engaging in an activity or with people (Malik et al., 2015). Many researchers have discovered motive of entertainment studying gratifications obtained from social network sites use (Alhabash et al., 2014; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999; Malik et al., 2015; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Park et. al., 2009; Smock et al., 2011; Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Entertainment, called also as escapism, defined as pleasurable and enjoyable factor for internet use (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999). Users see social media not only as a source of information, but as an entertainment as well (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Considering that people join InterNations network community not only to find and exchange information, but for pleasurable experience, such motive as entertainment should not be overlooked.

### *Social networking*

InterNations is a website for social networking. The platform allows its members to build their own network of expats and global minds. It implements similar principles of connectivity like LinkedIn and Facebook (van Dijck, 2013).

Relationship maintenance is the most important gratification sought by social networking sites users (Ku et al., 2013). This factor expresses the motivation of social

network sites' users to keep in contact with family, friends and colleagues (Ku et al., 2013).

Professional networking, including building a network and making new connections, is one of the main factors that identify the uses and gratification of LinkedIn (Basak & Calisir, 2014). The platform gives a possibility to get in touch with professionals in or out of their network without searching their email addresses (Florenthal, 2015). Both Facebook and LinkedIn can help to satisfy the need for interpersonal communication (Florenthal, 2015).

Since a member of InterNations can build and maintain his/her online network such motive as social networking is relevant for exploring the uses and gratifications of InterNations.

### **3. InterNations**

#### **3.1. General Information about the Website**

InterNations is the largest international community for people who live and work abroad, offering global networking opportunities, local events and expat-relevant information. Members can connect with other expats in the cities of residence, join different events to meet international people and get tips and information about certain destinations.

InterNations launched a mobile app to make expats' communication easier: to connect and message with other international people, to join events in different cities around the world and to share personal photos with the community (InterNations.org, 2016).

InterNations website offers its members such benefits as:

- *connecting with international people in city of residence*: networking with interesting, international people both online and offline; building the network of expats & global minds, no matter where expat lives; getting in touch with people who share the same interests and experiences;

- *getting tips and information about certain destination*: finding information about everything needed to know when moving abroad; reading about other expats' experiences and share new experiences; exchanging tips and joining forum discussions with other global minds;
- *joining exciting events to meet fellow expats*: meeting international people in the city of residence at InterNations regular events; sharing hobbies and interests with other InterNations members; taking the chance to make a difference to the local community by donating time and talents to people in need (InterNations.org, 2007).

To register on the website, users are asked to state their email address and password and go through a simple registration procedure. After the registration is finished, new members can see their own profile where they can specify personal information, business information, groups they are interested in and their photo.

When members set their profile, they see a flag of their country of origin and people who are also from the same country. Those way users can communicate with compatriots and get some useful information or support from them. It is also possible to see in users profiles all the groups and hobbies they are interested in. Groups are divided into sections with photos and pictures and it is easy to navigate them and to see which groups of interest other members have joined.

Members can send messages on InterNations for free. Messages are in the section "My Messages". Users can receive and send twinkles and messages to other people to show their interest and willingness to communicate.

It is possible for users to add new people, for example, friends and/or business partners to the private network. This section is called "My Contacts". Events that InterNations users want to attend are in the section "My Events". There is a section called "Birthday" where members can see who is celebrating birthday. Viewing the profiles of other members and their short information is also possible.

### **3.2. Definition of Expatriate**

Studying motivations of expatriates to join InterNations it is important to define: who is Expatriate? Expats or expatriates are considered educated people who are not motivated

by basic needs, but rather by professional reasons or because they seek an experience abroad (Gatti, 2009). While migrants are perceived as people who leave their countries because of the tough life and work conditions in their homeland, expats are considered to be educated people motivated not by basic needs, but rather by professional reasons or because they want to gain experience abroad (Gatti, 2009). “Looking at the interviewees’ profiles, which provide a good survey of the average expat, we discover that, with just two exceptions, all are from families with a good social and cultural level, where at least one of the parents has a university diploma. They all hold at least a bachelor's degree, and the majority one or two master degrees. They all speak several or many languages.” (Gatti, 2009: 2).

Expatriates represent a sort of “positive” immigration, in contrast with the “negative” traditional immigration (Gatti, 2009). Traditional immigration is sometimes the target of xenophobia, stereotyped as potentially violent, prone to crime and hardly or not at all integrated (Gatti, 2009).

Unlike migrants, expatriates usually stay in a certain country for a limited period of time (Gatti, 2009). As a result, it is difficult to invest emotionally in interpersonal relationships with people who might leave within a short while. Therefore many expats, being in the same situation, make new connections at work (Gatti, 2009).

Expatriates present the following characteristics such as being job-driven, staying in a certain country for a short period (depends on contract), having a good education, grouping in an international community and being sociable and open-minded, establishing minimum contacts with locals, not speaking local language well, usually working in EU affairs and the related environment, having high wages (Gatti, 2009).

Gatti (2009) points out that expatriates should not only be associated with those who work in the EU institutions. It might give a narrow view of their reality. Expats can also be artists, engineers, scientific researchers, as well as families of many who have a stable professional position abroad (Ghatti, 2009).

## **4. Research Questions**

The aim of the research is to explore the benefits of InterNations use among expatriates as well as to find out which of their needs are gratified. The focus is on the motives of usage of the expatriate community and how strong the influence of these motives is on the decision of expatriates to be active members of InterNations.

The main question of the current research is:

### **Research Question 1: What are the main motives for InterNations usage?**

Previous studies highlighted the importance to study behavioral outcomes of using Internet, especially the amount of use (Khan, 2017; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Many studies on social networking sites have measured the amount of time users spent on the site (Chen, 2011; Sheldon, 2008; Zhang, Tang, & Leung, 2011). InterNations has different membership statuses – from free to paid membership that allows users to choose the preferred one to stay longer an active member of the community. The website has different sections – from informational section with articles about expatriates' life to forum where users can share the important information. Users can chat with other users on the platform to get to know new people, to establish new contacts.

The intensity of participation in the social networking community InterNations, measured by the duration of membership and the frequency of usage of InterNations website might be relevant to the study of InterNations. Considering that there has been no research done about InterNations, the following questions are asked:

### **Research Question 2: Is there any significant relation between motives of usage of InterNations and the length of stay in the community?**

### **Research Question 3: Is there any significant relation between motives of usage of InterNations and the frequency of visiting the expatriate community?**

## 5. Hypotheses

The here uttered hypotheses are presumed answers to the above-mentioned research questions. Their validation shall be based on theoretical deliberations, as well as the current state of academic research.

According to uses and gratifications theory users are active and choose media based on their needs (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). The needs are not equally important for all types of media.

People use more and more social networking sites to interact and socialize with others, to complement or further enhance their offline socialization (Park et al., 2009).

Socializing and communication are one of the main motives for the usage of a Facebook profile (Tanta, Mihovilovic & Sablic, 2014). This modern method helps users to keep in contact at any time, regardless of the physical proximity. Communication on social networking sites can also improve the sense of belonging (Tanta et al., 2014).

Based on the assumption that social interaction is a relevant motive for the expatriates to participate in the social networking community InterNations, the first hypothesis was formulated.

**Hypothesis 1:** *The stronger the motive of social interaction is, the more the expatriate will participate in the social networking community InterNations.*

Information seeking is an important factor to use social media (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Whiting & Williams, 2013). Seeking information, including gaining information and learning how to do things, is a main motivation for participation in an online community (Khan, 2017).

Since there are local and global expat forums, country and city guides, expat magazines as well as offline activities offered by InterNations network community, the motive of information seeking is important for studying the motives of expatriates to take an active part in the social networking community.

**Hypothesis 2:** *The stronger the motive of information seeking is, the more the expatriate will participate in the social networking community InterNations.*



Information sharing is the strongest factor to predict the intensity to use Facebook (Alhabash et al., 2014). Giving information was positively significant for all participatory acts on YouTube (Khan, 2017). Moreover, results showed that the more a person visited the site, the more likely were they to like and comment in terms of participation (Khan, 2017).

Assuming the interactive nature of InterNations that allows members to communicate and share information on the website, information sharing is a relevant motive for studying users' activity on the website.

**Hypothesis 3:** *The stronger the motive of information sharing is, the more the expatriate will participate in the social networking community.*

Entertainment is a predictor of users' active participation on an online site (Khan, 2017; Lampe et al., 2010). Users are motivated to use social networking sites because these sites offer many entertainment features that they enjoy to use (David, 2011).

Entertainment was found to positively influence social media interactivity and can affect the decision to continuously use specific social media (Khan, 2017). Entertaining interaction takes place through chatting tools or messengers, which could explain why entertainment emerged as a predictor (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

Since one can establish a profile and send/receive messages on InterNations to communicate with other members online, it is assumed that the motive of entertainment is important for understanding the usage of an online community by expatriates.

**Hypothesis 4:** *The stronger the motive for entertainment is, the more time the expatriate will spend on the social networking community InterNations.*

Zhang et al. (2011) discovered that extension and maintenance of the network are one of the relevant motives of Facebook use. Moreover, gratification such as network maintenance increases the Facebook usage, in time spent per day, number of friends and login frequency (Zhan et al., 2011).

Users of InterNations can build and maintain their online network. Therefore such motive as social networking is relevant for exploring gratifications of expatriates' community.

**Hypothesis 5:** *The stronger the motive of social networking is, the more the expatriate will participate in the social networking community.*

Since the design and usability features of social networking sites' platforms are different and unique, as well as motivations to stay on the platform (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010), InterNations users may have different motives to stay a member of the social network community. Therefore it can be hypothesized that the length of stay of users on InterNations is explained by five motives: social interaction, information seeking, information sharing, entertainment and social networking.

**Hypothesis 6:** *The length of stay is explained by the five motivational factors controlling for age and gender.*

The results of Zhan et al. (2011) findings have shown that the more users gratified their needs via Facebook, the more they perceived Facebook to be important in their lives. They used the social networking site more often (Zhan et al., 2011). It is important to one's identity to belong to a social group and it gives individuals more gratifications in online participation (Zhan et al., 2011). InterNations users can obtain different gratifications from the website usage. Therefore it can be hypothesized that the motives for InterNations usage play an important role for the frequent visit of the social network community.

**Hypothesis 7:** *The frequency of visiting the website InterNations.org can be explained by the five motivational factors controlling for age and gender.*

## **6. Methodology**

A quantitative approach is employed in this paper with the goal of exploring the uses and gratifications that expatriates both seek and obtain from InterNations. The method of the current research work is survey-based. Online survey is an appropriate and efficient method to conduct a study on gratifications of social networking sites (Zhan et al., 2011). With the help of a digital questionnaire it is easy to gather insights into a large number of people, and their responses are usually returned quickly at lower costs.

An online questionnaire design was examined and combined with the questionnaires' of the researchers Papacharissi & Rubin (2000), Phua et al. (2017), Sheldon & Bryant

(2016), Smock et al. (2011), Whiting & Williams (2013), Xu et al. (2012). It was hosted on esurveycrator ([www.esurveycrator.com](http://www.esurveycrator.com)). The invitation to take part in the survey was posted in the forum of InterNations local website in Austria (<https://www.internations.org/austria-expats>) from the end of July till early October 2018. It took longer than planned to get more survey responses, because due to InterNations website terms and conditions it is prohibited to send similar personal messages and to invite members to take part in a survey.

The questions of the survey could be categorized in three parts:

- The first part is InterNations usage: the length of membership and the frequency of visiting the website (How long have you been a member of InterNations? How often do you use InterNations website?).
- The second part includes questions relating to motivations to use InterNations. It includes Likert type scale questions where respondents had to make their level of agreement such as: Very Likely, Likely, Somewhat Likely, Somewhat Unlikely, Very Unlikely. Scores of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 were assigned respectively.
- The last part is demographic factors (e.g. age, gender, nationality) to give us more information about InterNations members.

A total of 202 questionnaires were received and were confirmed as valid questionnaires for data analyses.

InterNations is operated in English. Therefore questionnaire was made in English. The questions to the online survey can be found in **Appendix 13.1**.

## **7. Analysis and Results**

To find relations, descriptive statistics, factor analysis and regression analysis were performed by using the Statistical Software of the Social Sciences (SPSS) on the answers to the research questions.

All data was taken, even incomplete ones. None of the questions was marked as a compulsory question, the non-answering of which would have prevented the survey

from being completed, which is why also data sets for which answers were omitted were used in order to obtain as much usable data as possible.

## 7.1. Descriptive Statistics

*General information about age, gender, length of having stayed in Austria and German language skills*

Descriptive statistics were used to present the general information about the respondents. The mean age was 38.49, with 50% of participants being older than 38 and 50% younger. The youngest participant was 21 years old, the oldest 59 years old. The standard deviation of age was 6.94 for 187 valid responses. The split between males and females was slightly skewed towards men, who made up 53.2% of all participants. In total, 57 nations were participating in the sample, out of which 15.4% identified as Austrian, 11.9% as German and 5.97% as Russian.

Age			Gender		
Metric		%	Metric	%	Valid %
Mean	38.49		female	85	42.29%
Median	38.00		male	107	53.23%
Standard Deviation	6.94		Standard Deviation	NA	
Minimum	21.00		Minimum	NA	
Maximum	59.00		Maximum	NA	
Valid	187	93.03%	Valid	192	95.52%
Missing	14	6.97%	Missing	9	4.48%
<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Table 3: age and gender

34.8% of the participants live in Austria from one to five years, followed by 26.9% - from five to ten years. 23.4% stated that they live in Austria more than 10 years. Only 9.5% of respondents answered that they live in the country less than one year.

46.8% participants answered that they speak German very well. 25.9% speak German well followed by 18.4% speaking not well. Only 3.98% don't speak German at all.

How long have you lived in Austria?			How well do you speak German?				
Metric		%	Valid %	Metric		%	Valid %
10 years and more	47	23.38%	24.74%	Very well	94	46.77%	49.21%
5-10 years	54	26.87%	28.42%	Well	52	25.87%	27.23%
1-5 years	70	34.83%	36.84%	Not well	37	18.41%	19.37%
Less than 1 year	19	9.45%	10.00%	Not at all	8	3.98%	4.19%
NA	11	5.47%		NA	10	4.98%	
Valid	190			Valid	191		
Missing	11			Missing	10		
<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>100.00%</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

Table 4: Length of stay in Austria and knowledge of German

#### General information about frequency of visit

Overall, 38.8% of all people surveyed indicate they visit InterNations.org with a value of 5 (2-3 times a month) on a scale of 1 to 7. 21% of people visit InterNations once a week, followed by 20% – once a month. 9% check the website 2-3 times per week and 8.5% 1 – only less than 1 month. 1.5% and 1% go to InterNations once a day and several times a day.

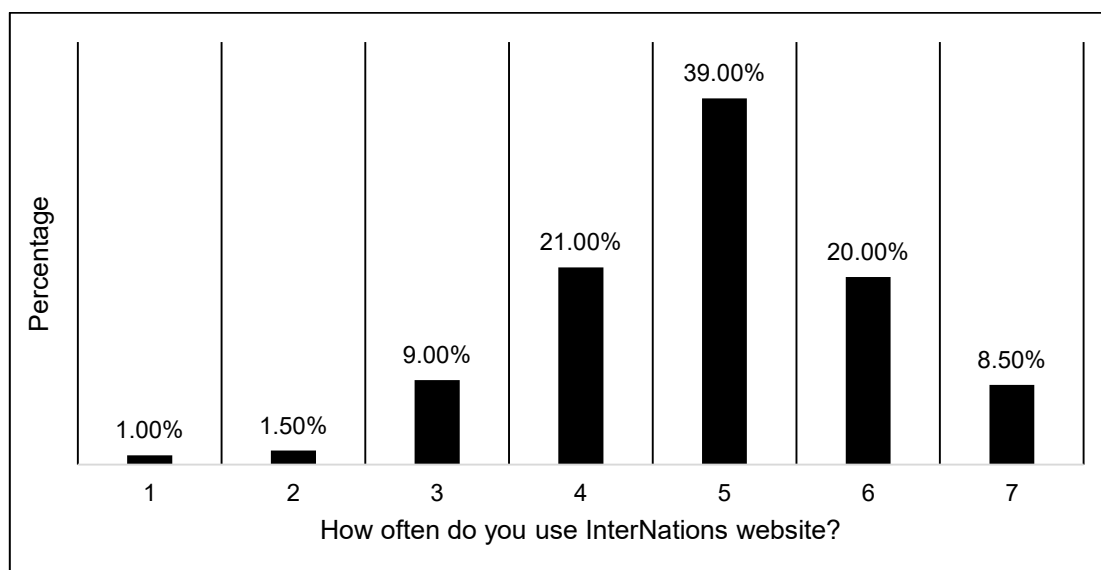
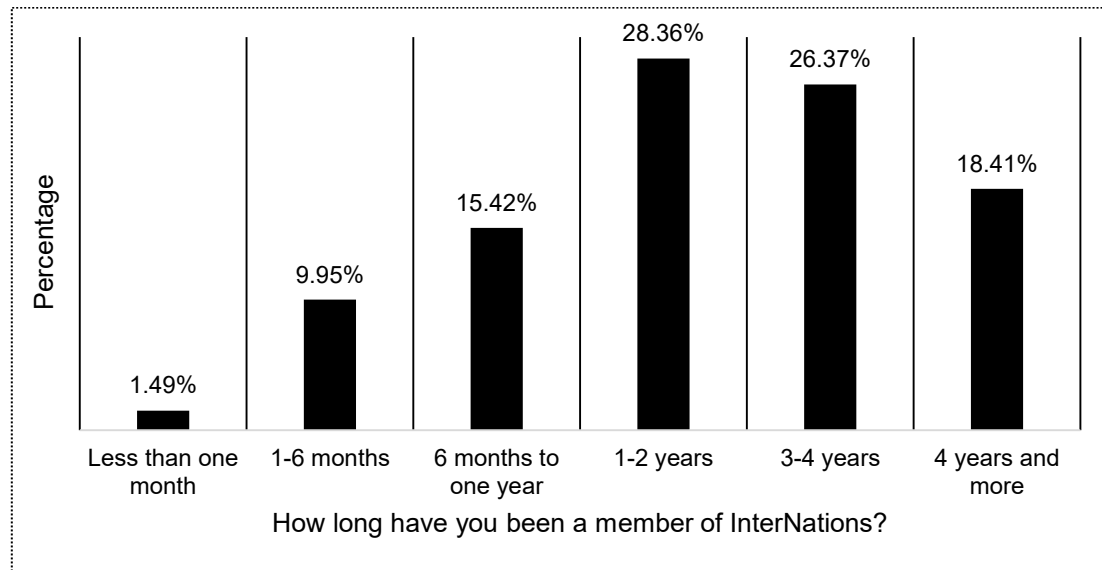


Figure 1: the frequency of visiting InterNations website

#### General information about length of stay

The relative majority of all participants have been a member for 1 to 2 years, with 26.37% being a member for 3 to 4 years, and 18.41% having been a member for 4 years or more. Hence, the majority of all participants has been a member for at least 1 year.



*Figure 2: the duration of membership on InterNations website*

## 7.2. Research Question 1

A pool of gratification items was conducted by the researcher to find out why people use InterNations. Overall 18 different reasons were included in the questionnaire. Survey participants had to answer how often (from 1 – very unlikely to 5 – very likely) they used InterNations for the given reasons. An exploratory factor analysis was used to extract and interpret motives for InterNations use. The factor analysis used a principal component analysis and varimax rotation method and specified the retention of factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1.0. This resulted in four factors that accounted for 74.531% of the variance.

The following table shows the attribution of the motivations to the extracted factors:

Factor 1	To find out what is new out there	0.835
	To stay informed about your local communit	0.808
	To get information about things that interest ou	0.770
	To keep up with current issues and events	0.735
	To learn how to do things	0.652
Factor 2	To connect with people who share some of my interests	0.817
	To connect with people who are in a similar situation as me	0.743
	To meet new people	0.726
	To maintain my social networks	0.641
	To feel like I belong to a community	0.633
	To stay in touch with other users	0.608
	To know others in the world	0.547
Factor 3	To contribute to a pool of information	0.935
	To provide others with information	0.901
	To generate new ideas	0.872
Factor 4	To enjoy	0.846
	To be entertained	0.773
	To relax	0.772

Table 5: motives for InterNations use: primary factor analysis

The first research question asked for the motives of InterNations use. Results of the factor analysis yielded four interpretable factors or motives for InterNations use. The four factors have been named the following: ***information seeking, social interaction, information sharing and entertainment*** (Table 5). Originally, five factors were introduced in the theory. The factor *social networking* was, however, not confirmed as a unique factor. Two items (“to know others in the world”, “to maintain my social networks”) which should have represented *social networking* were summarized under *social interaction*. Thus, only the four confirmed factors will be examined further.

- Factor 1 was labeled *information seeking* and accounted for 21.97% of the total variance after rotation. It contained five items: “To get information about things that interest you”, “To learn how to do things”, “To find out what is new out there”, “To stay informed about your local community”, “To keep up with current issues and events”). This factor was originally proposed by Whiting and Williams (2013) and defined as using social media to seek out information or to self-educate.

- Factor 2 was labeled as *social interaction* and accounted for 20.86% of the total variance. It contained seven items: “To stay in touch with other users”, “To meet new

people”, “To feel like I belong to a community”, “To connect with people who share some of my interests”, “To connect with people who are in similar situation as me”, “To know others in the world”, “To maintain my social networks”. Whiting & Williams (2013) define this usage theme as using social media to communicate and interact with others. Researchers scale items included: “meet people with my interests” and “keep up with what is going on” (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

- Factor 3, *information sharing*, explained 16.7% of the total variance. It consisted of three items: “To provide others with information”, “To contribute to a pool of information”, “To generate new ideas”. Whiting & Williams (2013) defined this factor as using social media to share information about you with others. In Khans (2017) study *information sharing* is defined as providing others with information, contributing to a pool of information or to generating new ideas.

- Factor 4, *entertainment*, explained 15% of the total variance. It consisted of three items: “To be entertained”, “To enjoy” and “To relax”. Korgaonkar & Wolin (1999) define this usage theme as pleasurable and enjoyable factor for Internet use. Social media is not only seen by users as a source of information, but as an entertainment as well (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

**Hypothesis 1:** *The stronger the motive of social interaction is, the more the expatriate will participate in the social networking community InterNations.*

In order to answer this hypothesis, the motive *social interaction* was used and a correlation according to Pearson with the frequency of visiting the InterNations.org website was calculated.

There is a significant positive correlation between *social interaction* and the frequency of visiting InterNations.org,  $r = 0.382$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

**Hypothesis 2:** *The stronger the motive of information seeking is, the more the expatriate will participate in the social networking community InterNations.*

In order to answer this hypothesis, the motivation *information seeking* was used and a correlation according to Pearson with the frequency of visiting the InterNations.org website was calculated.



There is a significant positive correlation between *information seeking* and the frequency of visiting InterNations.org,  $r = 0.325$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

**Hypothesis 3:** *The stronger the motive of information sharing is, the more the expatriate will participate in the social networking community InterNations.*

In order to answer this hypothesis, the motive *information sharing* was used and a correlation according to Pearson was calculated with the frequency of visiting the InterNations.org website.

There is a significant positive correlation between *information sharing* and the frequency of visiting InterNations.org,  $r = 0.303$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

**Hypothesis 4:** *The stronger the motive of entertainment is, the more the expatriate will participate in the social networking community InterNations.*

In order to answer this hypothesis, the motive *entertainment* was used and a correlation according to Pearson was calculated with the frequency of the visit of the InterNations.org website.

There is a significant positive correlation between *entertainment* and the frequency of visiting InterNations.org,  $r = 0.291$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

		Social Interaction		Information Seeking		Information Sharing		Entertainment	
		How often do you use InterNations website?	Social Interaction	How often do you use InterNations website?	Information Seeking	How often do you use InterNations website?	Information Sharing	How often do you use InterNations website?	Entertainment
How often do you use InterNations website?	Pearson Correlation	1.00	0.382	1.00	0.325	1.00	0.303	1.00	0.291
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00
	N	200	191	200	191	200	190	200	189
Factor	Pearson Correlation	0.382	1.00	0.325	1.00	0.303	1.00	0.291	1.00
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000	
	N	191	192	191	192	190	191	189	190

Table 6: correlations of factors versus participation

### 7.3. Research Question 2

*Hypothesis 5: The length of stay is explained by the four motivational factors controlling for age and gender.*

For this hypothesis a multiple linear regression was calculated, whereby the criterion was length of stay. Predictors were age, gender and the four motivations.

Conditions were also examined here and considered accepted. The model is of significant importance,  $F = 4.932$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , and the model explains 11.4% (adjusted R-Squared) of the total variance of length of stay.

Also, there is a significant effect of age,  $t = 4.064$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , while there is no effect of sex on the length of stay. The factors *information seeking* and *entertainment* were significant, while *social interaction* and *information sharing* were not significant.

*Entertainment*, being significant, has a negative effect, meaning the higher the motive of *entertainment* is, the less time he or she will spend on the platform.

	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>t value</i>	<i>p value</i>	
(Constant)	3.7388	0.7287	5.13	0.0000	***
gender	-0.0167	0.1866	-0.09	0.9290	
age	0.0553	0.0136	4.06	0.0001	***
InformationSeeking	0.3490	0.1459	2.39	0.0180	*
SocialInteraction	-0.3670	0.1904	-1.93	0.0550	.
InformationSharing	0.0035	0.0931	0.04	0.9700	
Entertainment	-0.3537	0.1518	-2.33	0.0210	*
R-Squared		0.143			
Adjusted R-Squared		0.114			
F-Statistic		4.93 on 6 and 178 DF, p-value: 0.000108			
*** <i>p</i> <0.001, ** <i>p</i> <0.01, * <i>p</i> <0.05, . <i>p</i> <0.1					

Table 7: multiple regression report with outcome variable the length of stay

### 7.4. Research Question 3

*Hypothesis 6: The frequency of visiting the website InterNations.org can be explained by the four motivational factors controlling for age and gender.*

For the analysis of this hypothesis, a multiple linear regression was calculated with the frequency of visiting the site as a dependent variable (criterion). The four motivational factors from the factor analysis were the predictors, as well as age and sex.

The requirements for the linear regression were examined and considered as given. There was no autocorrelation between the data, no multicollinearity between the predictors, the residuals were normally distributed and behaved linearly and homoscedastically.

The regression model explains 21% (adjusted R-Squared) on the criterion (frequency of visit). The model is of significant importance,  $F = 9.179$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Gender and age have

no significant influence while *information seeking* and *entertainment* also do not affect the frequency of the visit. On the other hand, *social interaction* and *information sharing* do have a significant impact on the frequency of visit, in a positive way. For *social interaction*, we can witness  $t = 2.613$ ,  $p < 0.05$  and for *information sharing* we see  $t = 2.518$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>t value</i>	<i>p value</i>
(Constant)	2.4701	0.6174	4.00	0.0001 ***
gender	0.0904	0.1584	0.57	0.5689
age	-0.0192	0.0116	-1.66	0.0979 .
InformationSeeking	0.0316	0.1236	0.26	0.7985
SocialInteraction	0.4215	0.1613	2.61	0.0098 **
InformationSharing	0.1985	0.0789	2.52	0.0127 *
Entertainment	0.1797	0.1287	1.40	0.1644
R-Squared		0.237		
Adjusted R-Squared		0.211		
F-Statistic	9.18 on 6 and 177 DF, p-value: 0.00000000948			

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , . $p < 0.1$

Table 8: multiple regression report with outcome variable frequency of visit

## 8. Discussion

Based on the previous studies five motives were presented in the theoretical part in order to understand user participation in social network community InterNations. They are: social interaction, information seeking, information sharing, entertainment and social networking. Four motives were produced as a result of the analysis, and include *information seeking, social interaction, information sharing, and entertainment*.

### *Information Seeking*

Of the four motives, *information seeking* was the most influential reason behind InterNations use. 21.97% of respondents reported using InterNations for informational reasons. This notion confirms that many people use social networking sites to seek out information. The motive of *information seeking* has a similar construct called *information motivation*. According to this this construct consumers use the web for self-education and information (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999).

InterNations is the most popular source of expat-relevant information. The website includes different resources to keep members updated with variety of information. According to Whiting & Williams (2013) *information seeking* includes such item as “finding information on events, birthdays, and parties”. Similarly, in this study the

“keeping up with current issues and events” dimension reflected the interest of InterNations members in both online and offline communication. Users stay on InterNations not only to read blogs, forum and expert’s articles but to stay updated with current events and parties as well.

### *Social Interaction*

The second most important motive is *social interaction*. 20.86% of respondents found interaction to be an important motive for InterNations usage. This notion confirms that people use social networking sites to communicate and interact with others (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

The motive *social interaction* includes not only online communication on the website but offline communication as well. The item “to meet new people” is taken into account to show the importance of face-to-face communication of InterNations members. They are interested to meet new people, to socialize, to do different activities together. Since many expatriates are in the similar situation connecting with like-minded individuals and belonging to a community is important for them. It confirms the prior findings of Park et al. (2009) that individuals are interested to meet and talk with like-minded people, to get peer support and a sense of community. This might help them to reduce the effects of loneliness and to gain social support.

InterNations website is designed to help expatriates to build social connections, to put them in touch with an extensive community of fellow expats in a certain area. Thus, social support and meeting like-minded people is a priority for many members of InterNations.

### *Information sharing*

16.7% of respondents find *information sharing* to be an important motive for InterNations usage. Users of the website not only consume the content but play an active role by participating in various interactions. They contribute in forum discussions, create new groups of interest, and write expat articles. InterNations members can also repurpose content to fit their needs (Khan, 2017). Some members become InterNations Ambassadors to organize different events and make new groups of interest. Therefore, they can create a new content on the website. It confirms the Pareto

principle which suggests that 80% of the work in terms of user participation is done by 20% of individuals (Best & Neuhauser, 2006).

### *Entertainment*

15% of respondents reported using InterNations for *entertainment*. They stated that they use social networking site to be entertained, to relax and enjoy. The motive of *entertainment* was discovered by many researchers of gratifications obtained from social networking sites (Alhabash, 2014; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999; Malik et al., 2015; Park et. al., 2009; Smock et al., 2011). Similar to previous studies, people join InterNations for pleasurable experience. The study also includes relaxation in the dimension of entertainment (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999). It provides relief from stress for InterNations members.

Entertaining interaction on InterNations takes place through chatting tools or messengers. Members of the community establish their profile and exchange messages on the website to enjoy the communication with other members online.

Thus, the results show that out of 4 motives 2 seems to be more important – *information seeking* and *social interaction*. Gaining new information and communicating is very important for the users. *Information sharing* and *entertainment* are also relevant motives for InterNations usage.

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to explain the relationship between the length of stay and the motives of usage of InterNations. The results have shown that motives *information seeking* and *entertainment* have an impact on the length of stay on InterNations. This means that users who seek new information as well as enjoyable experience stay longer InterNations members. They are interested to find out what is new in the community, to learn how to do certain things, to keep up with current issues and events. Users of the platform also have enjoyable, entertaining and/or relaxing experiences therefore they prefer to continue being members of the website. This is aligned with the previous findings of Whiting and Williams (2013) stating that people see social media not only as a source of information, but as an entertainment as well.

Such motives as *social interaction* and *information sharing* don't play a big role on the length of stay on InterNations. This means that users who are actively interacting on the

website and contributing to a pool of information not necessarily become long-term members of the website.

Interesting to note is that the more someone wants to be entertained on the platform the shorter is his or her length of stay. Although Khan (2017) argues that the motive *entertainment* can affect the decision to continuously use specific social media, the current study shows that it has no influence on the decision of users to stay longer on the website.

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to explain the relationship between the frequency of visit and the motives of usage of InterNations. The results have shown that motives *social interaction* and *information sharing* have a significant impact on the frequency of visiting InterNations. This means that users participate on the website by interacting with other members and sharing different information. This proves the findings of Khan (2017) that the more users visit the site the more likely were they will participate on it. Interaction and socialization on the platform, as well as complementing offline communication increase the participatory activity on InterNations. Important to mention is that young people are more active on InterNations than the older ones. They use the website more often to network with like-minded people and organize different activities.

Motive *information seeking* does not affect the frequency of visiting the website. It can be assumed that members who look for information and want to educate themselves about certain issues do not necessarily use InterNations very often. Long-term members put more emphasis on socializing and participating on the platform than gaining new information. *Entertainment* has also no influence on the frequency of visit. Members who have established their network and participated in offline communication might not need to use the website very often. Although Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) argues that entertaining interaction takes place through chatting tools or messengers on the website, InterNations members can switch to other communication channels once the connection on the website is established.

## 9. Conclusions

InterNations is the most popular platform for expatriates. When it comes to motivations that draw people to this social network community no research has been done on this topic. Yet the community is growing and attracting new members. The main goal of this master thesis was to identify the motives of InterNations usage and their influence on the intensity of using the website. In order to achieve this objective, 202 members of social network community InterNations participated in an online survey posted on InterNations website. Quantitative method was used because this study deals with theory testing. As such data were analyzed by descriptive statistics, factor analysis and multiple regression analysis. Four motives were extracted with the help of exploratory factor analysis: *social interaction*, *information seeking*, *information sharing* and *entertainment*. *Information seeking* is the most important motive for using InterNations, followed by second most powerful predictor influencing websites' usage – *social interaction*. *Information sharing* and *entertainment* are also relevant motives of using the platform.

Gratifications such as social interaction and information sharing increase one's InterNations usage, especially in login frequency. Active users communicate and share their interests and experiences by being online more often. Such motives as information seeking and entertainment play an important role on the duration of one's stay on InterNations. Users prolong their membership to be updated with latest information and to have some positive and enjoyable experiences. However, members who seek only entertainment on the platform don't stay on InterNations for a long time.

The current study contributes some useful insights to the existing literature on social networking sites and helps to understand users' behavior online. Furthermore, it provides a better understanding of social media engagement and exact motivations that encourage online participation. This research adds theoretical discussions on members' motivations to use InterNations platform to existing literature on uses and gratifications theory.

Another contribution of this study is predicting InterNations effectiveness for users based on the main motives and intensity of use of the platform.

By evaluating the results of the present study, some limitations should be noted. First, the sample consisted only of participants of Austrian social network community of InterNations. Since InterNations has local online communities in many countries of the world it would be interesting to compare members' motivations to join InterNations in other countries. Due to varying expatriates experiences in different countries the findings might turn out differently. Another limitation sampling is that the members of InterNations were invited to participate in a survey only in the websites' forum. Future research can recruit more participants by posting a link to a survey in Facebook group and/or Instagram page of InterNations.

Future research can focus on such factors such as social and psychological circumstances of users (life satisfaction, social activity) that may impact their participation on InterNations. Personality characteristics may also influence user behavior on InterNations. Since many expatriates are in the same situation in a new country of residence and want to meet, connect and exchange information, it would be interesting to probe how personality impacts InterNations use.

For example, extraverted people may engage more in online and offline participation while introverted people may be less active on the website waiting for the initiative of other users to network online and offline.



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## **13. Appendix**

### **13.1. Online Survey**

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled „InterNations: Expatriates’ Use of an Online Social Networking Community”. This study is being done by Oksana Chekal in partial fulfillment of her Master’s Degree in Communication Studies at University of Vienna.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

Your survey answers will be sent to a link at [esurveycrator.com](https://esurveycrator.com) where data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. Esurveycrator does not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. To have your responses included, please click the “done” button at the end of the survey.

If you have questions about this project, you may contact the researcher, Oksana Chekal via phone +4369910859107 or via email [chekoksana@gmail.com](mailto:chekoksana@gmail.com).

1. How long have you been a member of InterNations?

Less than one month	<input type="radio"/>
1-6 month	<input type="radio"/>
6 month to one year	<input type="radio"/>
1-2 years	<input type="radio"/>
3-4 years	<input type="radio"/>
4 years and more	<input type="radio"/>

2. How often do you use InterNations website?

Several times a day	<input type="radio"/>
Once a day	<input type="radio"/>
2-3 Times a week	<input type="radio"/>
Once a week	<input type="radio"/>
2-3 times a month	<input type="radio"/>
Once a month	<input type="radio"/>
Less than once a month	<input type="radio"/>

3. **People use InterNations for different reasons. Express how likely it is that you use InterNations.org website ...?**

5-point Likert-type scale from “very unlikely” (scored as 1) to “very likely” (scored as 5)

	very unlikely				very likely
To get information about things that interest you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To learn how to do things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To find out what is new out there	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To stay informed about your local community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To keep up with current issues and events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To provide others with information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To contribute to a pool of information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To generate new ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To stay in touch with other users	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To meet new people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To feel like I belong to a community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To connect with people who share some of my interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To connect with people who are in similar situation as me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To be entertained	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To enjoy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To relax	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To know others in the world	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To maintain my social networks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. **What is your gender?**

**Male**

☐

**Female**

☐

5. **How old are you?**

.....

6. **What is your nationality?**

**Austria**

☐

**Germany**

☐

**Italy**

☐

**France**

☐

**Russia**

☐

**Poland**

☐

**Greece**

☐

**Croatia**

☐

**Bulgaria**

☐

**Other, namely:**

7. What is your employment status?

Full-time

☐

Part-time

☐

Unemployed

☐

Student

☐

8. How long have you been living in Austria?

Less than 1 year

☐

1-5 years

☐

5-10 years

☐

10 years and more

☐

9. How well do you speak German?

Very well

☐

Well

☐

Not well

☐

Not at all

☐

**Thank you for your participation!**

You have completed the survey. I would like to thank you very much for helping me.

You can close the browser window now.

## 13.2. Abstract

### *English*

Although the social networking site InterNations is increasingly popular among expatriates, no empirical study has yet investigated why expats use InterNations. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the motivations of expatriates to use online social networking community InterNations based on the uses and gratifications perspective. The main research question is: What are the main motives for InterNations usage? To be especially examined is if there is relation between the motives and the intensity of usage of the expatriate community.

A quantitative approach is employed in this paper. Male and female members of InterNations in Austria have completed an online survey posted on the official InterNations website. An exploratory factor analysis of statements regarding motives for using the social network community include: social interaction, information seeking, information sharing and entertainment. Furthermore, results have shown that such motives as social interaction and information sharing increase InterNations usage. In addition, information seeking and entertainment motives have a positive impact on the length of stay on InterNations.

*Keywords: InterNations, expatriates, uses and gratification theory, motivation, social network sites.*

### *Deutsch*

Obwohl die Social-Networking-Site InterNations bei Expatriates immer beliebter wird, hat noch keine empirische Studie untersucht, warum Expats InterNations nutzen. Daher ist der Zweck dieser Studie, die Motivationen von Expatriates zu identifizieren, die Online-Community InterNations für soziale Netzwerke zu nutzen, basierend auf der Uses- und Gratifications-Ansatz. Die Haupt-Forschungsfrage ist: Was sind die Hauptmotive für die Nutzung von InterNations? Insbesondere ist zu prüfen, ob ein Zusammenhang zwischen den Motiven und der Nutzungsintensität der Expatriate Community besteht.



In diesem Beitrag wird ein quantitativer Ansatz verwendet. Männliche und weibliche Mitglieder von InterNations in Österreich haben eine Online-Umfrage ausgefüllt, die auf der offiziellen InterNations Website veröffentlicht wurde. Eine explorative Faktoranalyse von Aussagen über Motive für die Nutzung der Social Network Community beinhaltet: soziale Interaktion, Informationssuche, Informationsaustausch und Unterhaltung. Die Ergebnisse haben gezeigt, dass Motive wie soziale Interaktion und Informationsaustausch die Nutzung von InterNations erhöhen. Darüber hinaus wirken sich Informationssuche und Unterhaltungsmotive positiv auf die Aufenthaltsdauer bei InterNations aus.

*Keywords: InterNations, Expatriates, Uses-and-Gratifications-Ansatz, Motivation, Soziale Netzwerke*