Implication of Malaysia's Movement Control Order towards Online News Reading Preference Among Public University Students

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Abstract
Online news publication had undergone revolutionary changes since the fall of Berlin Wall, 09 November 1989. When Malaysian Government regulated the Movement Control Order (MCO) beginning 18 March 2020 till 03 January 2022 to curb the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of online news reading became much more significant. This phenomena has brought massive implications to media audience, predominantly among university students – of which, utilizing most of the online news material for their academic references. The online news became major reading materials for the university students in deriving latest information, especially on COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, this study was conducted to identify its implications, news preferences, and satisfaction levels. This purposive random quantitative study had been conducted by disseminating questionnaires online, due to the restriction on public movements. A total of 400 respondents were involved in this study, and interesting findings had been discovered. The study was purposively focused on random public university students within The Klang Valley, due to the fact that students from these universities had been the nation's catalyst of change ever since. Conclusively, this paper provides significant insights for media practitioners and consumers in developing pertinent strategies for better maneuvering such challenges in our digital future.
Keywords: Implication; Movement Control; Online News; Reading Preference; Public University

Introduction
The spread of COVID-19 pandemic had brought an unprecedented social calamities all over the globe, at the dawn of the second decade of the new millenneum quarter. The official names COVID-19 were issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 February 2020 (Retrieved 13 March 2020). The abbreviation was later explained by the WHO Director-General, Tedros Adhanom on the same day. The CO stands for corona, VI

for virus, D for disease, and the number 19 is for the beginning year of the outbreak, 2019 (ibid.) Despite naming the virus according to the first location of the outbreak (began in December 2019 in Wuhan, China), WHO altered the feudal paradigm to prevent social stigma (*The Economist*, 17 February 2020). In the past, many diseases have been named after geographical locations, such as the Zika virus, Middle East respiratory syndrome, and Spanish flu (Shablovsky, S., September 2017). The

outbreak forced Malaysia to regulate Movement Control Order (MCO) approximately within the span of two years, beginning 18 March 2020 till 03 January 2022.

On 16 March 2020, under the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988 and The Police Act 1967, the then Malaysian Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin made an official speech and officially promulgated the MCO which was implemented two days later on 18 March 2020 (Tang, Ashley, 16 March 2020). On 25 March, Tan Sri Muhyiddin announced a first extension of the MCO to last until 14 April (*New Straits Times,* 16 March 2020)*.* As the number of cases in Malaysia was expected to peak in mid-April referring to the WHO, Malaysia extended her MCO on 8 April until late April or May of the same year (*Bernama, 25 March 2020).* Two days later on 10 April, the Tan Sri Muhyiddin announced a second extension of the MCO by another fortnight until 28 April. (Tee, Kenneth, *The Malay Mail,* 25 March 2020*).* On the night of 23 April, Tan Sri Muhyiddin announced a third extension of the MCO for two more weeks till 12 May, with the possibility of further extension (Ho, Yudith, *Bloomberg,* 3 April 2020). The two years long journey for the nation's recovery has just begun. Under the MCO, there are several others, as: (1) Enhanced Movement Control Order (EMCO); (2) Semi Enhanced Movement Control Order (SEMCO); (3) Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO); (4) Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO).

Beginning 27 March 2020, a few specific locations were subjected to EMCO for two weeks. Later, on 14 May 2020, Pudu area of Kuala Lumpur were put under SEMCO, with soldiers and policemen putting up barbed wire fences at every road exits to prevent residents from getting out of their confinement. Concurrently, other commercial districts of Klang Valley had also been put under various lockdowns, including the EMCO. As the daily and active cases of COVID-19 reduced in mid-

April 2020, Malaysian Government had eased several restrictions by *introducing* Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO). The plan was announced by the then Prime Minister, on 1 May 2020. The plan's major goal was to reopen the national economy in a controlled manner (Bernama, 30 March 2020). The CMCO began 4 May (Azil, Firdaus, *Astro Awani,* 14 April 2020). Subsequently on 7 June, Tan Sri Muhyiddin further announced the end of CMCO on 9 June 2020. Malaysia began entering the RMCO phase between 10 June and 31 August (Lim, Ida, *The Malay Mail*, 3 May 2020). He also announced that interstate travels were allowed beginning 10 June, except for the remaining areas under the EMCO (Razak, Razi, *The Malay Mail,* 13 November 2020). However, the outbreak came up with its second wave – and thus MCO 2.0 had to be exercised from 13 to 26 January 2021 in several states and territories, which include Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Selangor, Johor, Malacca, Penang, Sabah, and Labuan.

Evidently, the launch of Malaysia National COVID-19 Immunisation Program had evidently brought significant changes to Malaysia's pandemic landscapes (Adam, Ashman*, The Malay Mail,* 15 January 2021). However, the fight for recovery against COVID-19 did not come easily. Despite rigorous efforts and measures, MCO had to be reinstated (known as MCO 3.0) beginning in Kelantan from 16 April until 29 April 2021, and further extended until 17 May 2021 (Yusof, Amir, *Channel News Asia,* 2 February 2021 – Retrieved 3 May 2021). Moreover, beginning from 1 June to 14 June 2021, Malaysia had to experience a nationwide 'total lockdown' or FMCO. The announcement was made on 28 May 2021, by Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin. The second phase of FMCO lasted for four weeks beginning from 14 June 2021, under which, more sectors were allowed to reopen (*The Straits Times*, 14 April 2021)*.* Details of the Malaysia's MCO phases may be referred to Table 1 below:

Table 1. Malaysia's Movement Control Order (MCO) by Phase

Phases	Dates
Movement Control Order (MCO), 18 March 2020 – 3 May 2020)	
Phase 1	18 March 2020 – 31 March 2020
Phase 2	1 April 2020 – 14 April 2020
Phase 3	15 April 2020 – 28 April 2020

Phase 4	29 April 2020 – 3 May 2020
Conditional MCO (CMCO, 4 May 2020 – 9 June 2020)	
Phase 1	4 May 2020 – 12 May 2020
Phase 2	13 May 2020 – 9 June 2020
Recovery MCO(RMCO, 10 June 2020 – 31 March 2021)	
Phase 1	10 June 2020 – 31 August 2020
Phase 2	1 September 2020 – 31 December 2020
Phase 3	1 January 2021 – 31 March 2021
MCO by states (13 January 2021 – 31 May 2021)	
Each states switch between MCO, CMCO, RMCO, EMCO, and semi-EMCO depending on the COVID-19 condition in each states.	
Full MCO (FMCO, 1 June 2021 – 28 June 2021)	

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malaysian_movement_control_order, *"Malaysian movement control order".* (Retrieved 10 February 2021).

Without prejudice, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought excruciating tense to everyone, globally. As for Malaysia, the country began her actual recovery phase when the then Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin introduced a four-phase National Recovery Plan (NRP) on 15 June 2021. Indeed, NRP aimed at helping the country emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout (*Bernama,* 23 May 2021). Each phase was based on the number of new cases, people requiring ICU treatment, and vaccination rates (by having two shots). As over 40% of the adult population had been vaccinated, asymptomatic cases were no longer counted (Povera, Adib, *New Straits Times,* 22 May 2021). More and more freedoms were granted as the situation was improving (ibid.). Malaysia began to move into Phase 4 by 31 December 2021 when 80 to 90% of Malaysian population (of above 12 years old) had been fully vaccinated. Eventually on 3rd January 2022, Sarawak and Kelantan had moved to Phase 4. This marked an end to all restrictions on public movement, and somehow has restored Malaysia's psychological détente. (Details of the Malaysia's NRF phases may be referred to Table 2 on the following page).

Table 2. Malaysia's Phases of National Recovery Plan, 15 June – 31 Dec 2021

Phases	Dates
Phase 1	1 June 2021 – 1 October 2021
Phase 2	5 July 2021 (begun early with Perlis, Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, and Perak)
	7 July 2021 (Penang)
	10 July 2021 (Sabah)
	14 July 2021 (Sarawak)
	26 August 2021 (Negeri Sembilan)
	4 September 2021 (Malacca)
	10 September 2021 (Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, and Putrajaya)
	24 September 2021 (Johor)
	1 October 2021 (Kedah)
Phase 3	4 August 2021 (began early with Perlis, Sarawak and Labuan)
	4 September 2021 (Negeri Sembilan)
	17 September 2021 (Terengganu)
	24 September 2021 (Pahang)

	1 October 2021 (Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Malacca)
	8 October 2021 (Johor)
	18 October 2021 (Kelantan, Perak, Penang, Sabah, Kedah)
Phase 4	26 August 2021 (began early with Labuan)
	24 September 2021 (Negeri Sembilan)
	8 October 2021 (Pahang)
	18 October 2021 (Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Putrajaya, Malacca)
	25 October 2021 (Johor, Terengganu)
	8 November 2021 (Sabah, Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak)

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malaysian_movement_control_order, *"Malaysian movement control order"*. (Retrieved 10 February 2021).

Problem Statement

The MCO regulated was an unprecedented matter, proclaimed as the Malaysia's Third Emergency Period (M3EP). All universities had to be temporarily adjourned from all academic activities. This, has altered the overall university students' preference on online news, especially for their academic referencing. This new approach of learning process needs to be empirically studied.

M3EP was proclaimed within digital age, whence majority of citizens had access to online news. However, such news were provided by different agencies' platforms from different resources. It's difficult to identify which platforms were the most preferred.

University students are the future of intellectual backbones of a country – thus, this study is highly pertinent. After all, everything that someone heard of, listened to, and observed at, could eventually developed into different opinions and presumptions (Rahman, S.N.A. & Hashim, N., 2022).

Research Objective

The overall objective of this study is to know the implication of Malaysia's Movement Control Order (MCO) towards reading preference of online news among public university students. Specifically, this study was aimed at: (1) Determining the reading preference among Malaysia's public university students during the MCO; (2) Determining the preferred website of online news among Malaysia's public university students during the MCO; (3) Determining the level of satisfaction from reading online news among Malaysia's public university students during the MCO.

Theoretical Framework

The treacherous journey of recovery from COVID-19 has brought the rise of dependency on online news for Malaysia's public university students via internet platforms. In fact, no other information system besides the internet has had such significant effect on education, culture, economy, science, technology, and society (Tapsall, S. & Varley, C., 2001). There are an immense number of web sites on the internet that are roughly increasing every year. What's more, the quantity of web users is expanding. A large number of users throughout the world access the internet for a variety of purposes (Jowkar, A. & Didegah, F., 2010).

Prior to the introduction of the online news, companies offered their news exclusively in print structure, producing income through purchase-sales and advertising. This business model which newspapers had been grounded upon for so long was debilitated with the presence of the internet. Indeed, internet has provided a perspicacity to information by expanding the quantity of news sources and competition and destroying value-chains (ibid.). Such rapidity of online news development has resulted in the birth of new preferences (Abdul Rahman, S.N., et. al., 2022).

Interestingly, the word 'preference' means, the word (1) a greater interest in or desire for something or somebody than something or somebody else, and (2) a thing that is liked better or best (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2000). According to American Heritage Dictionary (2000), preference is (1) the selecting of someone or something over another or others, (2) the right or chance to choose, and (3) someone or something so chosen. The definition of "preference" is when you like something or someone more than another person or thing. It also means give preference to somebody to give

special treatment to someone (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2003). Procter, P. (1978) defines preference as if you have a preference for something, you like it more than another thing and will choose it if you can. In fact, the term preference may be utilized in numerous manners (Warren, C., McGraw, A.P., & Van Boven, L., 2011).

In the field of online news, scholars and journalists typically measure clicks in terms of the most read or viewed news stories, and in turn use these as a proxy for people's 'preference' for or 'interest' in news (Boczkowski, P.J. & Mitchelstein, E., 2013; Schaudt, S. & Carpenter, S., 2009). For instance, Schaudt, S. & Carpenter, S. (2009) conclude from most viewed stories lists that readers 'most preferred' the news values 'proximity' and 'conflict' and 'least preferred' 'timeliness' and 'prominence'. In general, preference is the act of choosing. It may contain favourable or preferential bias. It's liking for something. Preferring is choosing as more desirable; something that's superior to another.

In terms of reading preference of online news among Malaysia's public universities students', it relies on the diversity of its online contents. According to (Carpenter, S., 2010) in regards to content diversity, the primary topics included news media, technology, Gulf War II, entertainment, business/economy, crime/trial, science, international/foreign relations, education, disease/health, government/elections, lifestyle, environment/sprawl/ transportation, accident/disaster, human interest and other/can't tell. Online news are notorious for the provision of up-to-date information on national, regional, and global events. Online news often contained current and intriguing information meant for fulfilling readers' gratification (ibid.).

In the light of the same discussion, Jackob, N.G.E (2010) found that people who were increasingly reliant on media would in general be trusting them more than the individuals who were not. More, people who utilized alternative media sources feel less reliant on the media than those who do not use alternative sources. Rahman, S.N.A. & Hashim, N. (2022) found similar result that internet dependency could evolve into addiction. Their findings had also suggested that younger generation have moderate internet dependency. These findings were similar to a research by Yang, J. & Patwardhan, P. in 2004. The two researchers found that perceived credibility and dependency significantly contributed to clarifying on how individuals utilized internet contents. Of which, individuals who read online news would generally be more dependent on the internet, in comparison to those who did not subscribe to online news reading materials (ibid.).

The Birth of Malaysia Online News

Malaysia's online news was first triggered by The Star news agency in 1995 (Mohamed Ariffin, Mohd Yahya & Jaafar, Noor Ismawati, 2009). After two years, other mainstream newspaper agencies had ventured on the same path, i.e. Utusan Online, Berita Harian, and New Straits Times (ibid.). Such transformation had sparked others to establish their online news websites as well, such as Harakah Daily, Keadilan Daily, Malaysiakini, Malaysia Insiders, and many more. Since then, online news has received massive demands from Malaysia's public. However, during those years, online news were yet to be able to replace printed news in its totality (Erlindson M, 1995). Malaysia's online news were simply perceived as a continuity or an expansion of printed news' functions.

By the year 2018, Reuters Institute Digital News reported that online news platforms had became the escalating preference in news reading by the majority. According to Newman, N., et al., (2019), printed news had shown a significant decline – from 45% in 2017 to 37% in 2019. This new reading preference had been more obvious among the youth, especially university students. Significantly, the all-time-accessible nature of online news is one of the key factors for such escalation (De Waal, E., Schoenbach, K., and Lauf, E., 2005). Other influential factors are enlisted as follows (Lee, K.T., Liana, M.N., & Siti, S.O., 2016): (1) Availability of internet access regardless of location; (2) Wide access of online news via individual smart phones; (3) Individual freedom in choosing preferred reading contents; (4) Individual freedom in reading time, storing materials, etc; (5) Availability of various translations and languages; (6) Interactivity elements of online news in providing feedbacks; (7) Attractive illustrations on online news websites; (8)Timeliness and flexibility of online news publications

Two theories were applied for this study: (1) Media Dependency Theory (Ball-Rokeach, S. & DeFleur, M., 1976); (2) Uses and Gratifications Theory (Blumler. J.G. & Katz, E., 1974).

According to Media Dependency Theory, individuals became more dependent on media as their lives turned out to be more complex (Tai, Z., & Sun, T., 2007). Dependency happens when one entity's fulfilment relies upon the assets of another (Loges, W.E. & Ball-Rokeach, S., 1999). The theory as created by Ball-Rokeach, S. & DeFleur, M. (1976) holds that the ultimate basis of media impact lies in the idea of the connection between social system, the role of media in that system, and the relationship of the audience with the media. As indicated in this study, there had been a high reliance on media for information among public university students throughout MCO period. This phenomena was connected to the fact that media impact is dictated by the interrelations between the media, its audience, and society (ibid., 1982). Moreover, this theory predicted that mass media have cognitive, affective and behavioural affects on the society it serves (ibid., 1975). Cognitive functions include ambiguity resolution, which can be accomplished rapidly in the midst of social change (i.e. MCO regulation) when the media present exact information but which can delay inconclusively if the media cannot support this function. Affective effects of mass media include the feelings and emotion of individual members of society, while the behavioural effects could be described in terms of individual accomplishing something that they generally won't do on the off chance that it were not for the influence of the media on which they are reliant (ibid., 1976).

Uses and Gratifications Theory, created by Blumler. J.G. & Katz, E., (1974) dealt with comfortability of media audience. It assumes that the audience actively uses mediums to fulfil few needs (Katz, E., et al., 1974), and individuals knew the reasons that lead them to use a specific medium (Johnson, T.J. & Kaye, B.K., 2004; Palmgreen, P., 1984). It dealt with audience-centred perspective, emphasizing on individual choice in clarifying media effects. Audience activity is the perspective's core concept, and becoming apparent in people's utility, intention, selectivity, and involvement with the media (Blumler. J.G. & Katz, E.,

1979). When someone became comfortable with a certain media source, he would hardly be going to change as long as he felt gratified with the contents (Wimmer, R.D. & Dominick, J.R., 1997). However, people exhibit varying amounts of activity when using the media, proposing that media behaviour is variably purposeful and goal directed. At the end of the day, levels of utility, intention, selectivity, and involvement vary when media are experienced by people under different circumstances (Kim, Y., 2015). The theory also focuses on the identification of the people's motivations for the use of different media, and had become one of the most acknowledged analysis perspectives of the adoption and use of communication media (ibid.). As for this study, it was applied to determine the level of gratifications among the public university students upon online news coverage during the MCO.

Material and Methodology

The research instrument for this study is a set of self-administered questionnaires, disseminated online via google form application. This method was chosen due to: (1) MCO regulation during the research period; (2) a good set of questionnaires will never create any difficulties of understanding to the respondents; and, (3) a set of questionnaires are non-time consuming and most of the time it saves a lot of energy and cost. Respondents were contacted via emails – of which were derived from Student Bodies of the respective universities. The questionnaires were divided into two sections. The first section dealt with demography, while the other dealt with respondents' perception and preference. The uni-dimentionality of Likert scales were applied to this section: (1) *Strongly Disagree*; (2) *Disagree*; (3) *Agree*; (4) *Strongly Agree*.

These questionnaires were developed after precise references to techniques applied by Wimmer, R.D. & Dominick, J.R. (1997) and Babbie, E.R. (2021). All of the demographic questionnaires were aimed at determining the independent variables of the study. The list of the top 10 online news websites were derived from latest survey in the year 2021. It had been retrieved on early September 2021. All questions in the second section were developed to measure the dependent variables. This study which imposed utilizing questionnaires on purposive random sampling was in accordance

with suggestions made by McLeod, S. (2019) in searching for reliable data. Therefore, survey in Klang Valley had involved students from four public universities, i.e. Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Malaya (UM), and Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM). The population size was first derived from the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia 2021 enrolment data – of which the total number of students' enrolment from the selected universities was accumulated to 123,953 students. The details of the enrolment may be referred to Table 3 below:

Table 3. Enrolments of Four Public Universities in 2021

Universities	Enrolments
Universiti Putra Malaysia	29,123
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	30,774
Universiti Malaya	36,472
Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia	27,584
Total	123,953

Source: https://www.mohe.gov.my/muat-turun/statistik/2021-1/850-statistik-pendidikan-tinggi-2021-04-bab-2-universiti-awam/file. (Retrieved 10 February 2021).

According to Krejcie, R.V. & Morgan, D.W. (1970), the suggested sample size is approximately 400 respondents. Accordingly, a total of 400 respondents were purposively divided into four at random, with a total of 100 respondents for each university. Remarkably, all respondents had returned their completed and useable questionnaires for analysis. The process of data gatherings began in mid-September 2021.

All data were analysed using Stastistical Package for the Social Science for Windows (SPSS version 27.0, 2020), applying descriptive statistics. However, significant tests were first set-up upon the demographic independent variables. There are no significant differences among the independent variables. The alpha levels of all independent variables are more than 0.05 – and that means all of the respondents shared almost the same demographic characteristics in the statistical analysis. Pre-test of the research instrument yielded 0.81 of alpha value.

Result and Discussion
Demographic Findings

Referring to Table 4, the number of female respondents is higher than that of male respondents. However, there is no significant difference. A sum of 44% were male students, whilst 56% of the remaining were female students from various studies. The age group began from 21 and above after considering the normal age for entering universities in Malaysia – with the majority clustered at the range of 21 to 23 years old (66%).

The second highest score was at the age range of 23 to 25 years old (30%). As for the racial category, Malay scored the highest at 74%, followed by Chinese (20%), and Indian (6%). Further, the Year of Study yielded highest on *Year Three* (78%), followed by *Year Two* (15%). The rest of this category scored 3.5%.

Table 4. Respondents' Demography

	Demography	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	44	44
	Female	56	56
Age	21 to 23 years old	66	66
	23 to 25 years old	30	30
	25 years old and above	04	04

Race	Malay	74	74
	Chinese	20	20
	Indian	06	06
	Others	0	0
Year of Study	Year One	3.5	3.5
	Year Two	78	78
	Year Three	15	15
	Year Four	3.5	3.5

Reading Preference Among Malaysia's Public University Students During Malaysia's Movement Control Order

Referring to Table 5 on the overleaf, it displayed various responses to the implications of MCO upon the respondents' reading preference. The highest score yielded on a positive statement: *The regulation of MCO has made me read online news due to its easiness in searching for information for my academic purposes* by 61% (mean 3.45). The second highest score (positive statement): *The regulation of MCO has made me read online news due to the freedom of choosing its content* by 48% (mean 3.25). The third highest score (positive statement) was shared by two different statements (1) The regulation of MCO has made me read online news through my smart phone – mean 3.27, and (2) The regulation of MCO has made me comfortable to decide when to read online news, due to its availability at all time (mean 3.30) by 46%. The lowest score resided on: The regulation of MCO has made me comfortable to decide when to read online news, due to its availability at all time by 4%. Findings demonstrated the dependability (Ball-Rokeach, S. & DeFleur, M., 1976) on online news to suffice the respondents' needs, as long as the accessibility of technology is available (Blumler. J.G. & Katz, E., 1974).

Table 5. Reading Preference Among Malaysia's Public University Students During Malaysia's Movement Control Order (MCO)

Statements	Percentage (%)				Mean	Std.dev.
	1	2	3	4		
The regulation of MCO has made me read online news through my smart phone	6	7	41	46	3.27	0.839
The regulation of MCO has brought difficulties to me in accessing online news, and made me not interested to read	23	25	30	22	2.51	1.078
The regulation of MCO has made me attracted to read online news due to its illustration such as photos, videos, and charts	5	7	44	44	3.27	0.802
The regulation of MCO has made me realized that online news were filled with disturbing advertisements, and disturbed my reading focus	10	21	38	31	2.90	0.959
The regulation of MCO has made me read online news due to the freedom of choosing its content	7	9	36	48	3.25	0.892
The regulation of MCO has made me realized that certain online news requires subscription, and this has made me had to pay extra cost	6	23	39	32	2.97	0.893
The regulation of MCO has made me read online news due to its easiness in searching for information for my academic purposes	5	6	28	61	3.45	0.821
The regulation of MCO has made me realized that certain online news are lacking credibility	17	23	36	24	2.67	1.025
The regulation of MCO has made me comfortable to decide when to read online news, due to its availability at all time	4	8	42	46	3.30	0.785

The regulation of MCO has made me realized that online news did not bring significant impact on me	8	19	45	28	2.93	0.891

Note: 1 = Totally Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Totally Agree

Preferred Website of Online News Among Malaysia's Public University Students During Malaysia's Movement Control Order

Data on Table 6 had triggered layers of insights upon preferred website of online news among respondents during the MCO. <u>Firstly,</u> the most preferred website was *Harian Metro*: *I prefer to read Harian Metro online news during the Movement Control Order* by 55% (mean 3.02). The second highest was *Sinar Harian* online news by 53% (*Agree* scale) with mean of 2.72 only. The third highest was *Malaysiakini* online news by 51% (mean 3.08). <u>Secondly,</u> if we refer to the scale of *Totally Agree,* the highest score went to *Berita Harian* online news by 33%, while the second highest went to *Malaysiakini* online news (32%). Both

shared the same mean (3.08). The lowest mean went to *Malay Mail* online news by 2.52 mean. However, if we total up the score for both *Agree* (51%) and *Totally Agree* (32%), the most preferred website were *Malaysiakini* (83%) and *Harian Metro* (82%). Data demonstrated that respondents had varied and diversed preference, depending on individual academic purposes (Ball-Rokeach, S. & DeFleur, M., 1976). Also, the three most preferred websites are exclusively published in Malaysian Language (except for Malaysiakini). Such preference presumably due to 74% of the respondents are Malays.

Table 6. Preferred Website of Online News Among Malaysia's Public University Students During Malaysia's Movement Control Order (MCO)

Statements	Percentage (%)				Mean	Std. dev.
	1	2	3	4		
I prefer to read *Sinar Harian* online news during the Movement Control Order	11	21	53	15	2.72	0.854
I prefer to read *News Straits Times* online news during the Movement Control Order	12	31	29	28	2.73	1.004
I prefer to read *Bernama* online news during the Movement Control Order	14	18	47	21	2.75	0.947
I prefer to read *The Star* online news during the Movement Control Order	19	21	37	23	2.64	1.040
I prefer to read *Berita Harian* online news during the Movement Control Order	5	15	47	33	3.08	0.825
I prefer to read *Utusan Malaysia* online news during the Movement Control Order	12	33	37	18	2.61	0.920
I prefer to read *Harian Metro* online news during the Movement Control Order	7	11	55	27	3.02	0.816
I prefer to read *Malay Mail* online news during the Movement Control Order	17	31	35	17	2.52	0.969
I prefer to read *Kosmo* online news during the Movement Control Order	14	31	40	15	2.56	0.914
I prefer to read *Malaysiakini* online news during the Movement Control Order	7	10	51	32	3.08	0.837

Note: 1 = Totally Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Totally Agree

Satisfaction Level from Reading Online News Among Malaysia's Public University Students During Malaysia's Movement Control Order

The highest score on Table 7 resided upon positive statement: *I am satisfied with online news because they can be accessed quickly and easily* by 71% on the score of *Totally Agree* (mean 3.62). It was followed by two other positive statements which shared the same score of 53%: (1) I am satisfied with

online news because I can share any links with my friends and family members – mean 3.38, and (2) I am satisfied with online news because I may read any news, either local, reginal, or international news freely – mean 3.36, respectively. These data conformed with the Uses and Gratifications Theory of which: when

someone is comfortable with a certain media source, it would be hard to change as long as the gratified feeling upon the contents prevail (Wimmer, R.D. & Dominick, J.R., 1997). Another angle is the scores on two negative statements that yielded the highest. They were (1) I am not satisfied with online news because the internet coverage oftenly very weak, and made me difficult to read – 3.03 mean, and (2) I am not satisfied with online news because they published many recycled or old news – 2.92 mean. If we total up the score for *Agree* (41%) and *Totally Agree* (34%) on both negative statements, we may find that the first

statement yielded 75%, while the second statement yielded 69%. That means, despite the majority of respondents were satisfied with online news reading (ibid.), respondents had experienced troublesome internet coverage throughout the MCO period. These findings had strengthened both of the theories in this study – i.e. Media Dependency, and Uses and Gratifications. Of which, media behaviour is variably purposeful and goal directed, and eventually levels of utility, intention, selectivity, and involvement vary when media are experienced by people under different circumstances (Kim, Y., 2015).

Table 7. Satisfaction Level from Reading Online News Among Malaysia's Public University Students During Malaysia's Movement Control Order (MCO)

Statements	Percentage (%)				Mean	Std. dev.
	1	2	3	4		
I am satisfied with online news because they can be accessed quickly and easily	3	3	23	71	3.62	0.693
I am not satisfied with online news because they represented too many controversial issues compared to factual issues	25	23	31	21	2.48	1.087
I am satisfied with online news because I can freely share my opinions or feedbacks about the published news	4	9	38	49	3.32	0.803
I am not satisfied with online news because they contained too many typo errors	14	25	39	22	2.69	0.971
I am satisfied with online news because I can share any links with my friends and family members	4	7	36	53	3.38	0.789
I am not satisfied with online news because the internet coverage oftenly very weak, and made me difficult to read them	6	19	41	34	3.03	0.881
I am satisfied with online news because I may read any news, either local, reginal, or international news freely	4	9	34	53	3.36	0.811
I am not satisfied with online news because they published many recycled or old news	13	18	33	36	2.92	1.032
I am satisfied with online news because I may easily search for old news accurately, for my academic purposes	2	7	40	51	3.40	0.711
I am not satisfied with online news because I personally having doubts on the online news credibility	28	15	41	16	2.45	1.067

Note: 1 = Totally Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Totally Agree

Conclusions

This study yielded three significant findings. First, it concluded that change is inevitable in all avenues, regardless of you're prepared for otherwise (Abdul Rahman, S.N., et. al., 2022). The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic had forced every nation to swallow this reality. Hitherto, all strategies and phases regulated via Malaysia's MCO, comprised of tedious efforts in maneuvering the cliché of

global outbreak challenges. Second, the findings confirmed on the need of change in conventional learning process among the higher learning institutions. Evidently, the availability of wide internet coverage in Malaysia had enabled the required change, as well as fulfilled the needs for academic referencing among the respondents. Internet had been the catalyst for the success of this study. It had further assisted in strengthening the two applied theories,

Media Dependency Theory (Ball-Rokeach, S. & DeFleur, M., 1976) and, Uses and Gratifications Theory (Blumler. J.G. & Katz, E., 1974).

Third, findings had also demonstrated a high satisfaction level among the respondents from reading online news. However, gratifications could easily be diminished if consistent efforts in upgrading the quality of internet coverage and online news content were forsaken in this era of online news' escalation (Zainudin, S.S.S., et. al., 2021). This phenomenon was demonstrated through *Share of respondents in Malaysia who receive news from the following sources in 2022*, published in June 2022 (Retrieved 8 August 2022). From the total of 2,004 respondents, 89% preferred online news, 75% for social media, 51% for television, and only 17% for print media (ibid.). In conclusion, most of digital promises are the paragon of fatal blossom of graceful jimsoonweeds – they may entice anyone with its fragrance sillage, alas provide no succor. As the second quarter of this millennium is dawning, being cautious is imperative – for, not every cinder would borne phoenixes.

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