

The Influence of Audio-Visual Landscape Content on Emotional Well-Being of FELC Students on Instagram

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ABSTRACT

In today's era of highly developed information technology, social media has become the main platform for university students to consume content. With the booming development of Instagram, audio-visual landscape content has become increasingly popular among many content types. This study investigated the emotional effects of audio-visual content on Instagram among students at the Faculty of Education, Language and Communication (FELC) of University of Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), focusing on the role of background music. Guided by Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), a quantitative questionnaire survey was conducted on 50 undergraduate students. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and Pearson correlation analysis. The results showed that students perceived background music as enhancing their viewing experience, with a moderate and statistically significant positive correlation between this and their sense of relaxation. However, no significant correlation was found between students' preference for content with background music and overall emotional well-being. These results suggest that background music can enhance short-term emotional responses but does not benefit sustained emotional well-being. This study highlights the distinction between immediate emotional gratification and long-term emotional well-being in social media use.

Keywords – Algorithm, Audio-visual Landscape Content, Emotional Well-Being, Instagram, Uses and Gratifications Theory

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

In this information technology era, social media has become a hot topic. With the rise of Internet technology, social media has sprung up. Among the many social media platforms, Instagram plays a vital role in modern content consumption. According to Holak, (2017), Instagram is a free online photo and video sharing social media. It allows users to edit, add captions, upload photos and short videos, and then index these posts using hashtags and location-based geotags so that other users can search for them within the application. In 2013, the video upload time was extended to 15 seconds. After 2015, Instagram modified the square photo ratio, allowing users to upload full-size photos and videos. In 2016, Instagram increased the maximum video length to 60 seconds.

Nowadays, university students often use Instagram to access various visual media, including photos and videos, for relaxation and entertainment. Among them, audio-visual landscape content is becoming an emerging trend. This type of content features natural and urban scenery, accompanied by music, allowing students to appreciate scenery around the world. They can also trigger emotional responses such as calmness, awe, and nostalgia by viewing landscapes from around the world. For university students who often face academic and social pressures, this type of content can provide a digital emotional release.

Chua et al. (2022) found that audio-visual content such as music videos can significantly affect emotional perception. Their study found that auditory information plays a key role in driving emotional arousal, while visual elements contribute more to emotional valence, such as pleasure. Hence, these findings suggest that

the combination of music and scene visual elements in social media content may have a significant impact on users' emotional well-being. As audio-visual content continues to proliferate on Instagram, it has become increasingly important to understand how it shapes emotional states. This is particularly important for students who frequently encounter such content and are susceptible to stress-related mood swings, and FELC students are an interesting sample as they frequently use visual media for academic creation in coursework. Therefore, this study aims to explore the influence of audio-visual landscape content on the emotional well-being of FELC students at UNIMAS.

Problem Statement

The effects of Instagram on young users' mental health remain controversial. While it may promote well-being, excessive use has been linked to anxiety, depression, and self-esteem issues (Balamurugan & Vijayarani, 2025). These mixed results suggest that how Instagram is used, particularly the type of content consumed, may play a key role in its psychological effects.

Nature and urban landscape content on Instagram are often intended to be calming and inspiring. While previous research on exposure to real-world nature has shown that it can provide emotional benefits such as reduced stress and improved mood, little is known about whether "virtual landscapes" on social media platforms can produce similar effects. For example, Owens & Bunce, (2023) found that adolescents felt more relaxed after watching a 6-minute nature video, but few studies have tested this effect among university students. Background music is also an important component of audio-visual content. This is because music that matches the image can enhance immersion, evoke stronger emotions, and elevate overall mood. Klein, Melnyk & Völckner (2021) shown that music can significantly shape emotional responses and attention levels, especially when combined with visual content. Despite the prevalence of background music in Instagram Reels and Stories, its impact on users' emotional experience of watching audio-visual content remains underexplored.

According to Bhatiasavi (2024), Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) suggests that media users gain emotional satisfaction when their content needs are met. UGT provides a useful perspective for exploring students' emotional consequences, such as whether their pursuit of relaxing audio-visual content might influence their emotional outcomes and whether exposure to such content provides short-term emotional relief and lasting well-being benefits. In summary, existing research often treats Instagram use as a single behavioural category without considering multimedia elements such as background music. Furthermore, few studies have applied UGT to understand the emotional outcomes associated with specific content, and most studies are qualitative. This study aims to address these gaps by investigating FELC students' emotional responses and well-being after watching audio-visual landscape content on Instagram, specifically, using UGT-informed quantitative approach to investigate the role of background music and motivation.

Research Questions

Based on the problem statement above, this study will explore these research questions:

- 1) How background music influences emotional responses of FELC students to the audio-visual nature and urban landscape content on Instagram?
- 2) What is the overall impact of audio-visual landscape content on the emotional well-being of FELC students?

Research Objectives

Corresponding to the research questions, the research objectives of the study are:

- 1) To examine how background music influences emotional responses to audio-visual nature and urban landscape content on Instagram.
- 2) To investigate the overall impact of audio-visual landscape content on the emotional well-being of FELC students.

Significant of the Study

This study contributes to theory, empirical research, and practice in the field of communication and new media.

Theoretically, this study furthers Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) by applying it to audio-visual landscape content on Instagram. This is because, according to Bhatiasavi (2024), the broad motivations traditionally identified in the theory are entertainment and information, so this study will shed light on how these motivations apply to audio-visual landscape content. In addition, this study will extend the theory to the field of emotional well-being by linking gratification to measurable emotional outcomes. According to Jaidka (2022), previous research has shown that different Instagram content may have different psychological effects, so this study will build on the finding that viewing landscape photos can improve well-being and test whether this applies to student populations. Empirically, this study fills a gap by providing survey data on media content use and well-being. This is because, according to Bhatiasavi (2024), many studies on media effects focus on negative content such as cyberbullying, while this study will explore potential positive audio-visual landscape content. If specific types of audio-visual content are found to improve mood, they could be incorporated into social media literacy instructional materials Jaidka (2022). For example, instructors could encourage students to follow more positive audio-visual landscape content accounts. Conversely, if no benefits are found, students should be cautious about over-relying on virtual audio-visual landscape content to relieve stress.

Practically, understanding the role of audio-visual landscape content on emotional health is valuable for educators who work with students. This is because the insights from this study can provide references for university wellness programs, such as by integrating media-based relaxation techniques and social media activities. In addition, it also has implications for content creators and platforms. If audio-visual landscape content can effectively enhance mood, promoting such content is also a strategy for social media platforms to focus on user well-being. In summary, the results of this study will help shape healthier social media habits and enrich the dissemination of new media use and mental health research.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

The subjects of this study are university students who are enrolled in Faculty of Education, Language and Communication (FELC) at University of Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) and use Instagram. The research focuses on audio-visual landscape content on Instagram, that is photos and videos of natural and urban landscapes with music. The theoretical framework is Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). The research method is quantitative online survey. The geographical and institutional setting is FELC, UNIMAS in Kota Samarahan, Sarawak where the researcher is located. Ethical considerations are considered; all participants are voluntary and anonymous. The data will capture current cross-sectional attitudes and behaviours, and will not involve longitudinal and experimental manipulations. The limitations of this study are the reliance on self-report data, which may be affected by biases such as social desirability and inaccurate recall of Instagram usage. As this is a cross-sectional study, it can identify correlations but cannot prove a causal relationship between content exposure and well-being. The sample of FELC students may not be representative of all university students, so generalisations beyond this group are limited. As only Instagram was considered, other social media platforms and offline organic exposure were not within the scope of this study. Finally, the definition of “audio-visual landscape content” is broad and can take many different forms. Therefore, this study will attempt to standardise this definition through questionnaire examples, but individual interpretations may vary.

Keywords Definition

1) Algorithm: The Instagram algorithm is a set of programmed rules and machine learning models that guide how and when to display content to individual users. It curates personalised content by considering hundreds of factors such as user history, location, trends, relevance, and popularity. Based on specific signals, it prioritises the best posts, pushing the most relevant posts to the top and giving them the highest visibility, or vice versa (Saraco, 2024).

2) Audio-visual Landscape Content: In this study, audio-visual landscape content refers to Instagram posts depicting natural and urban scenery, including photos and videos, and is usually accompanied by audio, such as natural sounds, lyrical music, human voices, and so on. The landscapes in this content include mountains, beaches, towns, cities, and so on. This type of content is typically presented through Instagram posts and Reels, excluding plain text and silent posts, and is designed to evoke aesthetic appreciation and emotional resonance.

3) Digital Escapism: Escapism is a coping mechanism by which individuals escape from unpleasant realities in their lives by engaging in activities that provide emotional release. Social media technologies in the digital age have enabled new forms of escapism, including media consumption, which is the distraction of viewing pleasurable media content, such as audio-visual spectacle content, to relieve unpleasant realities. This can provide a temporary refuge, allowing people to immerse themselves in a different world (Grace Counselling, 2024).

4) Emotional Well-Being: According to Sissons (2024), emotional well-being refers to the way a person thinks and feels, in addition to being able to accept and manage their emotions, and could cope with challenges in life. This study will measure emotional well-being through standardised scales that assess positive emotions and stress levels. When the level of emotional health is higher, it indicates a more positive emotional balance and higher life satisfaction.

5) FELC Students: FELC refers to the abbreviation of Faculty of Education, Language and Communication. The focus of this study is the students of the undergraduate programmes of FELC, which includes four programmes, namely Strategic Communication, Linguistics, English for Global Communication, and Islamic Education. These students are active users of Instagram and are the main subjects of the study.

6) Instagram: Instagram is a social media platform focused on photo and video sharing, allowing users to interact with audio-visual content. In addition to liking, commenting, and collecting other people's posts, users can also send private messages to friends through the Instagram Direct function and share photos to other social media sites (Holak, 2017).

7) Media Consumption: Media consumption refers to the process by which individuals interact with various media, including television, movies, social media, news, and digital content. In the digital environment of Instagram, media content is engaged through viewing, listening, and interacting with Posts, Reels, and Story. The term encompasses how audiences interact with, interpret, and derive meaning from media messages, thus influencing their perceptions, behaviours, and understanding of the world around them (Fiveable, 2024).

8) Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT): UGT is a communication theory that assumes that media users are active and goal-oriented, and argues that individuals actively seek content to satisfy specific needs, including emotional well-being, to bring about positive outcomes (Bhatiasevi, 2024). In the context of Instagram, this means that individuals choose audio-visual landscape content to satisfy motivations such as entertainment, relaxation, and obtaining information.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding the Concept of Audio-visual Landscape Content

Audio-visual landscape content refers to media materials that combine visual presentations of natural and urban landscapes with auditory elements such as background music. This type of digital media content is usually presented in the form of short videos on the Instagram social media platform.

This study focuses on the presentation of natural and urban landscape content in an audio-visual environment and how background music affects individuals' emotional and cognitive experiences. This is because audio-visual landscape content, as a multisensory stimulus, can enhance or weaken users' engagement and satisfaction.

Uses and Gratifications Theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals actively select and interact with media to meet specific needs, such as information acquisition, emotion regulation, and entertainment. Therefore, the interaction between the environmental visual elements “natural and urban landscapes” and the auditory elements “background music” significantly affects individuals’ emotional and cognitive experiences.

The Emotional Effects of Nature Landscapes

Natural landscape refers to the untouched natural environments on the earth’s surface, such as mountains, forests, lakes, and so on, characterised by its untouched beauty and reflecting the complexity of natural forms. It often evokes a sense of tranquillity and is used in artistic creation to express themes of exploration, adventure, and the relationship between human and nature. Throughout history, artists have used natural landscapes to depict the vastness of nature and evoke emotional responses from their audiences. Since the depiction of natural landscapes varies greatly from culture to culture, reflecting different relationships with nature and different aesthetic values. Hence, natural landscapes are not only artistic subjects, but also an important source of inspiration for audio-visual landscape content (Fiveable. 2024).

In 1984, Edward Osborne Wilson proposed the Biophilia Hypothesis in his book “Biophilia”. He argued that humans have an instinct to be close to the natural world and defined biophilia as “the desire to be in contact with other life forms” (Barbiero, & Berto, 2021). In recent years, natural landscape has been shown to have restorative benefits for mental health. According to Kaplan’s Attention Restoration Theory (ART), this is because exposure to nature helps replenish cognitive resources depleted by sustained mental work. The theory posits that relaxing environments can rejuvenate the brain, improving focus and mental clarity. For example, a recent study published in *Journal of Environmental Psychology* found that participants who imagined a natural environment experienced a slower heart rate and an increased sense of calm (Ackerman, 2018). This supports Stress Reduction Theory (SRT), which posits that humans have a biologically-based positive response to nature. In short, incorporating natural environments into daily life can improve well-being and productivity.

Urban Landscapes and Their Emotional Impacts

Urban landscape refers to the built environment created by humans, covering the layout, buildings, infrastructure, and green spaces that make up urban areas, such as high-rise buildings, streets, and bridges (Fiveable. 2024). Compared with natural landscapes, urban landscapes present a complex set of stimuli. This is because natural landscapes are often described as restorative environments that can replenish people’s energy, while busy and crowded urban environments are often considered to consume people’s attention and energy (Jin, Lu & Shao, 2024). However, through audio-visual media, magnificent urban landscapes can profoundly influence viewers’ emotions, inspiring their yearning for urban life and serving as a source of inspiration for modern audio-visual creators.

Due to factors such as globalisation, economic transformation, and technological advancement, urban landscapes are constantly evolving, resulting in changes in infrastructure and land use. Public spaces in urban landscapes, such as parks and squares, play a vital role in promoting community interaction and improving the quality of life. Sustainable urban landscape design increasingly adopts green buildings and eco-friendly practices to address environmental issues in urban planning (Fiveable, 2024). A study explored the effects of visual and auditory elements in urban parks on human behaviour and emotional responses (Jin, Lu & Shao, 2024). Their research shows that landscapes that combine pleasant environments with pleasant natural sounds are more beneficial to physical and mental health than environments that stimulate only a single sensory element. Therefore, this synergistic effect highlights the importance of designing urban spaces that integrate multiple sensory experiences to maximise health benefits.

Influence of Background Music

A study found that background music plays a crucial role in shaping emotions and cognitive responses (Fernandez, Trost & Vuilleumier, 2020). This is because pleasant music can enhance attention, thereby

speeding up reaction time and improving task performance. For example, in natural landscapes, background music can enhance the audience's emotional experience, so the combination of soft music and natural landscapes can promote relaxation and restoration. Conversely, in urban landscapes, background music can enhance the audience's immersion and emotional response, so the combination of rhythmic music and urban landscapes can stimulate the audience's excitement and vitality. It seems that the arousal level of music can regulate emotions and affect the performance of cognitive tasks (Nadon, Tillmann, Saj & Gosselin, 2021). In short, these findings highlight the importance of considering musical elements in environments that target cognitive performance and emotion regulation.

Since the release of an anime movie directed by Shinkai Makoto in 2016, the music produced by RADWIMPS has achieved great success worldwide. The soundtracks of *Your Name*, such as *First View of Tokyo*, *Theme of Mitsuha*, *Dream Lantern*, and so on have been widely used in audio-visual natural and urban landscape contents on Instagram. Like the movies, RADWIMPS's music plays the role of emotional sublimation in each scene of the audio-visual landscape content, giving the scene depth and highlighting the relationship between natural and urban areas (Abita LLC & Marketing Japan, 2024). Therefore, the high consistency between background music and visual content enhances the audience's emotional experience, making the audience feel happy and immersed when watching these contents. This demonstrates how emotional associations formed through movie viewing can transfer to the social media viewing environment.

Impact of Audio-visual Landscape Content

Audio-visual landscape contents combine visual and auditory elements, allowing users' emotions to influence the perception of the naturalness of the landscape. This is because the combination of natural sounds with urban scenes can significantly improve emotional states compared to traffic noise and silence. For example, a study conducted in China urban park showed that an environment with harmonious soundscape elements, such as birdsong, flowing water, and green landscapes can stimulate feelings of pleasure, relaxation, and vitality in young participants (Zhang, Zhao, Zeng & Qiu, 2019).

In addition to improving mood, soundscapes can also stimulate people's desires. This is because the immersive experience of synchronised soundscapes can attract viewers and inspire them to participate in and imitate the depicted environment (Zhang, Zhao, Zeng & Qiu, 2019). For example, after watching audio-visual landscape content with beautiful and pleasant music on Instagram and gaining a favourable impression, people will also choose the favourite background music when they want to post similar content. Therefore, harmonious audio-visual combinations are more effective in promoting mental health.

Relationship of Audio-visual Landscape Content to the Research Problem

The integration of visual and auditory elements in social media plays a key role in shaping audiences' emotional experiences in the presentation of natural and urban landscapes. Research shows that the combination of audio-visual elements in nature and urban areas is positively correlated with individuals' emotional states, thereby enhancing feelings of calmness, pleasure, and overall satisfaction (Yin, Shao, Meng & Hao, 2023). Such harmonious audio-visual environments have been contributed to improved mental health.

In addition to improving mood, audio-visual landscape contents can also stimulate desire. For example, the music composed by RADWIMPS for Shinkai Makoto's *Your Name* has been widely used in Instagram content featuring natural and urban landscapes. This synergy of music and visual elements enhances the emotional resonance of the content, making it more impactful and memorable to the audience (Abita LLC & Marketing Japan, 2024).

In summary, understanding the interaction between audio-visual elements and their impact on emotions and desires is essential for developing media content that promotes mental health and engagement. Therefore, this study aims to explore how specific combinations of visual and auditory stimuli affect emotional responses, ultimately creating environments that meet users' emotional and desire needs, and provide best practices for media production, urban planning, and environmental design.

Application of Uses and Gratifications Theory in Media Consumption

Based on Vinney (2024)., UGT holds that individuals actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. This is because the theory emphasises the subjectivity of media consumers, indicating that people are aware of their own motivations for media consumption. In the context of audio-visual landscape contents, UGT provides a perspective to understand how users interact with environmental stimuli to achieve the desired psychological effects.

Vinney (2024) points out that people watch audio-visual landscape contents on Instagram to relax, relieve stress, and enhance their mood. This is because that provide a brief window of escapism, allowing people to temporarily escape from the troubles of life. Hence, entertainment and emotional regulation are consistent with UGT, that is, users actively choose these contents to obtain inner peace and pleasure. For some users, watching such landscape content is also a manifestation of aesthetic interest. They will share such content on their Instagram Story to strengthen their identification with the beauty of nature and cities.

In summary, UGT provides a clear theoretical path for studying audio-visual landscape content on Instagram. By identifying users' motivations for actively viewing such content, researcher not only can understand their media usage behaviours, but also further evaluate whether these motivations are statistically correlated with psychological effects such as improved mood, reduced stress, and increased happiness. Therefore, UGT provides a predictive perspective to examine how motivations such as relaxation, inspiration, and escapism influence emotional outcomes.

Framework of the Study

The proposed conceptual framework integrates elements of the following discussions:

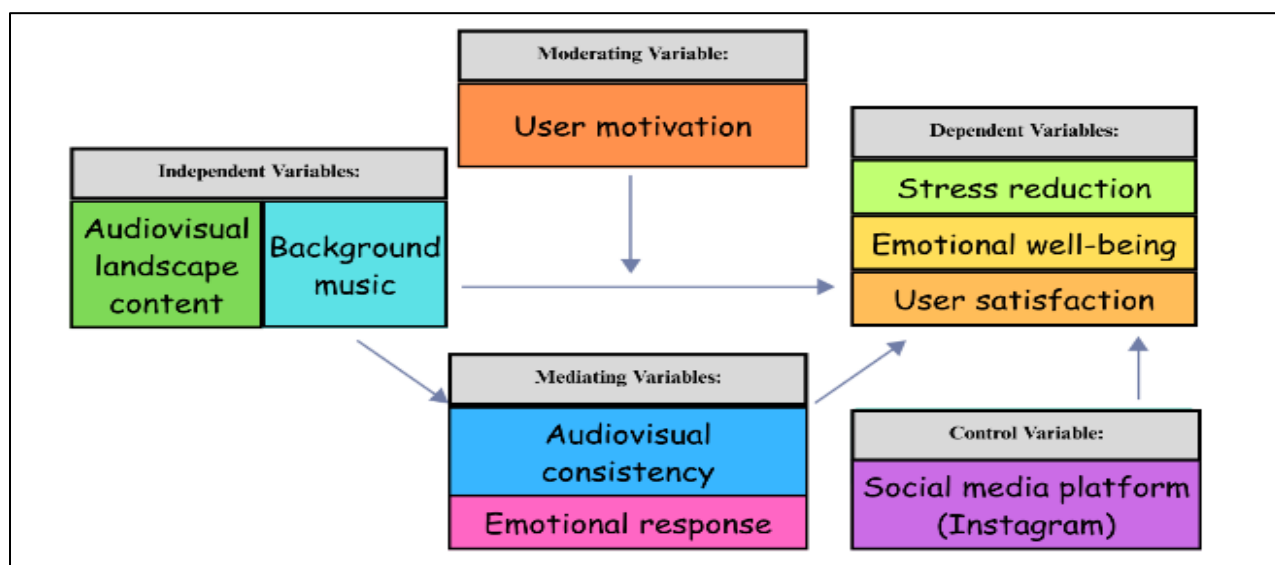


Fig. 1 Conceptual Framework of the Study(Adapted from Scribbr, 2022)

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework for this study, which explores how audio-visual landscape content - comprising natural and urban visuals with background music - impacts emotional well-being. Mediating variables such as audio-visual consistency and emotional response, along with moderating variables like user motivation, influence the relationship between independent and dependent variables. This model is grounded in Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT).

SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

In conclusion, previous studies have extensively explored the psychological effects of natural and urban landscapes, as well as the role of background music in shaping emotional and cognitive responses. Studies

have also demonstrated the value of audio-visual content in influencing emotions and perceived well-being. In addition, UGT has been widely applied to explain users' motivations for engaging with social media platforms.

However, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding the specific emotional effects of audio-visual landscape content on Instagram, especially among university students. Most existing studies focus on either real-world nature encounters and general social media use, without independently exploring the unique effects of audio-visual landscape content in digital environments. In addition, there is limited empirical research that applies UGT to analyse how user motivations interact with emotional responses to such content.

This study aims to address these gaps by exploring how FELC students interact with audio-visual landscape content on Instagram and whether such content contributes to their emotional well-being. By combining UGT and a structured survey design, this study aims to provide new insights into the psychological value of digital landscape experiences on social media.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological framework used to investigate the impact of Instagram audio-visual landscape content on the emotional well-being of undergraduate students at Faculty of Education, Language and Communication (FELC), University of Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). This section covers the research design, researcher roles, research location, participants, sampling techniques, and criteria for respondent selection. This structured approach ensures the methodological rigor and validity of the findings.

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design and collects data through a questionnaire survey. According to Bhandari (2020), the quantitative design aims to obtain measurable and statistically analytic results on the frequency, type, and emotional impact of audio-visual landscape content on Instagram. This approach is consistent with Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which emphasises the active role that audiences play in media consumption based on their own needs and motivations.

In quantitative research, the integrity of data depends largely on the design and implementation of structured measurement instruments (Bhandari, 2020). Hence, this study uses a self-administered questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire is carefully designed to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability in capturing students' emotional and behavioural responses to audio-visual landscape content on Instagram.

The Researcher as an Instrument

In quantitative research, the researcher is the designer and manager of the research instrument. In this study, the researcher designs the questionnaire and ensures that it is consistent with the research objectives and questions. The questionnaire consists of five sections. The first is demographic information, which includes gender, age, programme of study, and year of study. The second is Instagram usage patterns, which explores duration of use and the types of content typically exposed. The third is the role of background music, which assesses students' preferences for background music and their perceived emotional impact. The fourth is the emotional response to audio-visual landscape content, which measures psychological and emotional outcomes such as relaxation, improved mood, and mental health using a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The last section is user motivation, which includes multiple options to select why users typically watch audio-visual landscape content videos on Instagram.

Experience of the Researcher

The researcher is a student at FELC and is familiar with the Instagram usage patterns of the peers and the common emotional expressions in digital media consumption. The researcher has a background in media studies, with a particular focus on the effects of multimedia content on emotional states. This expertise

provides valuable insights into the development of the research questionnaire, the interpretation of the collected data, and the engagement of the respondents, while maintaining academic neutrality. This study strictly follows the research instrument and does not interfere with the respondents' responses, thus maintaining objectivity. Although respondents are familiar with the research topic, the researcher maintains objectivity through standardised coding and descriptive statistical analysis (Bhandari, 2022).

Location and Subject of the Study

The study is conducted at UNIMAS and focused on students from FELC. The subjects of the study are audio-visual landscape content on Instagram, specifically natural and urban landscapes accompanied by background music.

Selection of the informants / Respondents

The researcher adopts purposive sampling method to select the respondents. The questionnaire is distributed electronically through class WhatsApp groups and student networks. A total of 50 respondents participates in this study who will fill in the form after data collection and meet the following inclusion criteria, which include being enrolled in FELC of UNIMAS, being an active Instagram user, aged between 19 and 30 years old, and having watched audio-visual landscape content with background music on Instagram.

Criteria of informant / Respondents

To ensure the relevance and reliability of the data, the respondents participating in this study must meet these criteria, which included being undergraduate students currently studying at FELC of UNIMAS, being active users of Instagram, having experience in viewing audio-visual natural and urban landscape content on Instagram, and voluntarily agreeing to participate in this study.

Population and Sampling Procedures

This study covered all undergraduate students at FELC, UNIMAS. The target sample size is determined by feasibility and the goal of obtaining enough data for meaningful analysis, so a sample size of 50 students is sufficient for the purpose of the study. Participants are contacted digitally and invited to complete a structured questionnaire designed to measure their emotional responses to audio-visual content (Bhandari, 2022). All responses will be kept confidential and used for academic purposes only.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study, focusing on the influence of Instagram audio-visual landscape content on the emotional well-being of FELC students at UNIMAS. The analyses aim not only to report statistical outcomes, but also to interpret these findings through existing literature and Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), thereby situating the results within a broader academic and theoretical context. The study specifically examines how audio-visual landscape content affects students' emotional states, encompassing short-term relaxation and broader well-being perceptions.

Prior research has demonstrated that aesthetic digital content can produce emotional effects like real-world nature exposure, including stress reduction, mood enhancement, and attention restoration (Forti & Humphreys, 2008). Integrating these perspectives, this study seeks to bridge digital media research with psychological and emotional theories, contributing to the growing understanding of social media's affective impact.

Data were analysed using Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP), a robust statistical software supporting both classical and Bayesian approaches. It has gained traction in social sciences due to its transparency, reproducibility, and accessibility for non-specialist researchers [18]. Analyses include descriptive statistics, reliability testing, and Pearson correlation analyses. By contextualising empirical results within UGT, elucidates how students actively seek and use Instagram content to fulfil emotional and

cognitive needs, highlighting the interaction between content characteristics, user motivations, and psychological outcomes. The subsequent sections discuss respondents' demographic and behavioural profiles, reliability of measurement instruments, and correlations between content features and emotional outcomes.

Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

TABLE 1 Descriptive Statistics Of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	9	18
	Female	41	82
Age	19-21	23	46
	22-24	25	50
	25-27	2	4
	28-30	0	0
Programme of Study	English for Global Communication	17	34
	Islamic Education	1	2
	Linguistics	10	20
	Strategic Communication	22	44
Year of Study	Year 1	15	30
	Year 2	15	30
	Year 3	3	6
	Year 4	17	34

A total of 50 undergraduate students from FELC participated in this study. Female students constituted the majority (82%), while males represented 18%. The respondents' ages ranged predominantly between 19 and 24 years, reflecting typical undergraduate demographics. Academic programmes were represented as follows: Strategic Communication (44%), followed by English for Global Communication (34%), Linguistics (20%), and Islamic Education (2%). Year of study distribution was relatively balanced, with a slight overrepresentation of Year 4.

This demographic pattern aligns with previous Malaysian studies on university student engagement with digital media, which report higher female participation in survey-based research, particularly in social and communication studies (Balamurugan, & Vijayarani, 2025). Gender differences in media consumption and emotional response are well documented; women often report higher affective engagement and emotional sensitivity when interacting with digital content, including audio-visual media (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013).

From a UGT perspective, these demographic attributes are important, as gender, age, and academic discipline may influence motivations for social media use, choice of content, and subsequent emotional gratification (Bhatiasevi, 2024). Although this study does not focus on subgroup comparisons, understanding demographic context allows for a more nuanced interpretation of overall trends in emotional engagement with audio-visual landscape content.

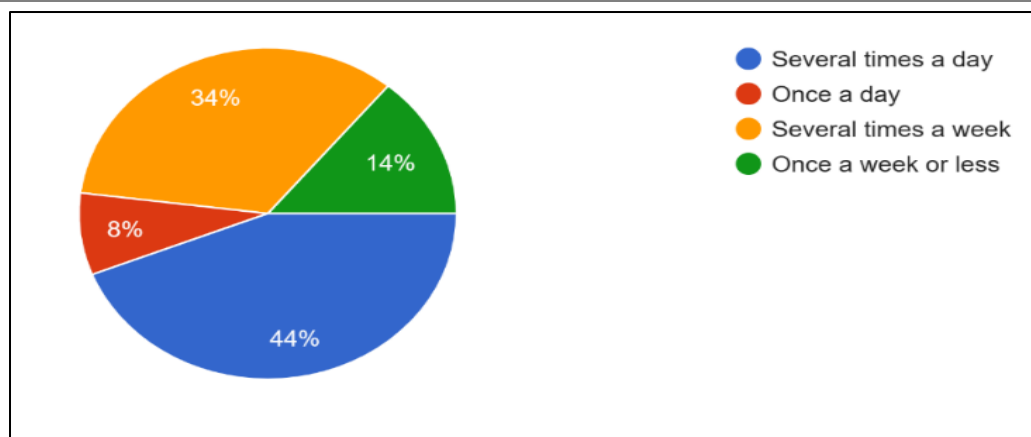


Fig. 2 Frequency of using Instagram

Figure 2 illustrates respondents' frequency of Instagram use. Nearly half of the students (44%) reported using Instagram several times a day, indicating high engagement with the platform. Another 34% use the platform several times a week, reflecting consistent but less intensive usage. Meanwhile, 14% access Instagram once a week or less, and only 8% use it once a day. This observation is consistent with prior research highlighting Instagram as a deeply integrated element of students' daily digital routines (Jaidka, 2022). High usage frequency often reflects intentional, goal-directed engagement rather than passive scrolling, resonating with the UGT principle that users actively select media to satisfy specific needs such as entertainment, relaxation, and emotional regulation (Ruggiero, 2000). However, frequency alone does not guarantee positive and meaningful outcomes. Owens & Bunce (2023) emphasise that the emotional impact of social media depends more on content quality, thematic relevance, and user motivation than mere exposure duration. Therefore, frequent Instagram usage among respondents sets the context for exploring how audio-visual landscape content contributes to emotional well-being.

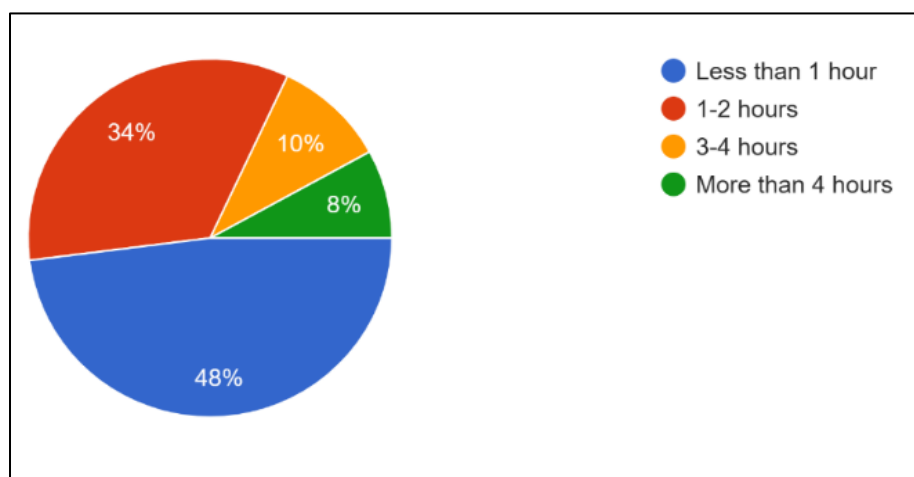


Fig. 3 Frequent time spend on Instagram daily

Figure 3 presents the average daily time spent on Instagram. Nearly half of the respondents (48%) reported using the platform for less than one hour per day, suggesting low dependence on Instagram in their daily routines. Additionally, 34% spend one to two hours daily, indicating moderate but regular usage. Only a small proportion of students use Instagram more heavily, with 10% spending three to four hours and 8% spending more than four hours. This pattern suggests a prevalent behaviour of short, repeated interactions rather than prolonged, continuous engagement, which mirrors findings from digital media research indicating that modern social media use is often fragmented into brief micro-sessions (Jaidka, 2022). From a psychological perspective, this usage pattern is conducive to brief mood modulation rather than deep, sustained emotional transformation. Short-duration exposure to aesthetically pleasing content, such as

landscape videos, may trigger temporary stress relief or attentional restoration, aligning with Kaplan's Attention Restoration Theory and Ulrich's stress recovery frameworks. Consequently, the study posits that Instagram audio-visual landscape content primarily facilitates situational emotional regulation rather than long-term emotional well-being.

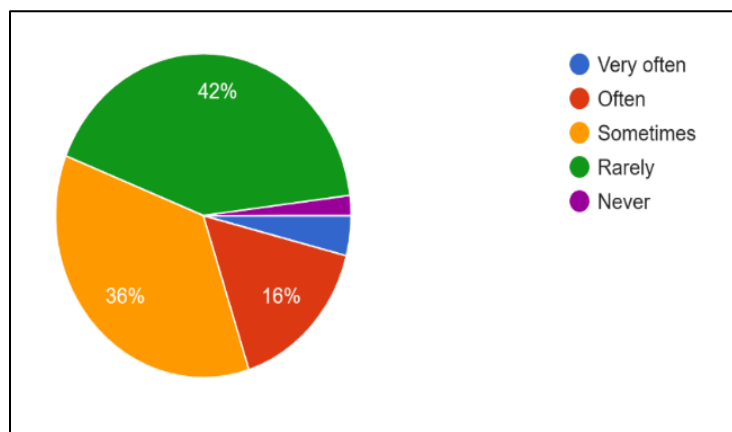


Fig. 4 Frequency of watching nature and urban landscape-related video on Instagram

Figure 4 shows respondents' viewing frequency of landscape-related videos on Instagram. A considerable proportion (42%) reported rarely watching such videos, while 36% indicated that they sometimes view them. A smaller number watch them more frequently, with 16% selecting "often" and 4% "very often". Only 2% stated that they never watch them. This finding reinforces the notion that landscape content represents a niche and supplementary category within students' Instagram feeds rather than a primary consumption type. According to UGT, users selectively consume media that aligns with momentary needs and situational contexts Vinney (2024), so students may turn to nature and urban landscape videos for relaxation during periods of stress, boredom, and emotional fatigue, reflecting a conscious, goal-directed media choice. Hence, studying these occasional engagements remains valuable for understanding the mechanisms of digital emotional regulation.

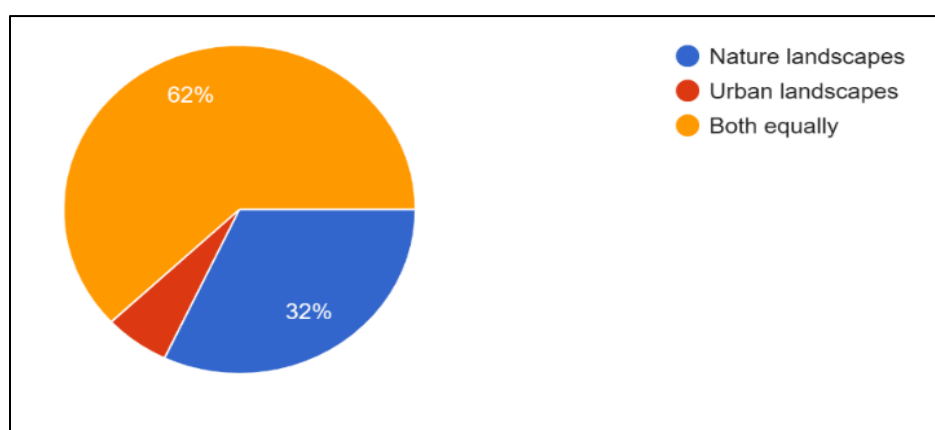


Fig. 5 Preferred types of landscape content on Instagram

Figure 5 illustrates respondents' preferred types of landscape content on Instagram. The majority (62%) reported that they enjoy both nature and urban landscapes equally. Meanwhile, 32% prefer nature landscapes specifically, and only 6% expressed a preference for urban landscapes. This pattern reflects a balanced appreciation for diverse aesthetic experiences, echoing literature demonstrating that natural environments elicit calming, restorative effects, whereas urban landscapes, when aesthetically curated, can evoke excitement, curiosity, or inspiration (Jin, Lu & Shao, 2024). From a UGT standpoint, students may select content according to situational emotional goals, choosing natural landscapes for stress relief while urban

landscapes for stimulation and motivation. The coexistence of these preferences underscores the multifaceted nature of emotional gratification derived from digital content, emphasising the interplay between individual needs, content characteristics, and context (Bhatiasavi, 2024).

Reliability Analysis

TABLE 2 Frequentist Scale Reliability Statistics

Coefficient	Estimate	Std. Error	95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
Coefficient α	0.690	0.080	0.534	0.847
Average interitem correlation	0.286	-	-	-
Mean	25.740	0.423	24.912	26.568
SD	2.988	0.216	2.496	3.725

Table 2 presents the frequentist scale reliability statistics for Section C, including Cronbach's Alpha and inter-item correlation values, which measures students' perceptions of background music in audio-visual landscape content on Instagram. The results indicate that the scale demonstrates an acceptable level of internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of $\alpha = 0.690$. This value meets the minimum acceptable threshold for exploratory research. The average inter-item correlation was 0.286, which falls within the recommended range, indicating a reasonable level of consistency among the items.

Reliability coefficients exceeding 0.60 are generally considered adequate for studies involving subjective constructs such as emotional perception (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt & Ringle, 2019). Similar levels of internal consistency have been reported in research examining emotional responses to audio-visual content, where individual differences in musical preference, emotional sensitivity, and cultural background introduce variability (Fernandez, Trost & Vuilleumier, 2020). Within the UGT framework, this result suggests that music-related emotional gratification is a coherent construct shaped by both individual interpretation and content characteristics. The moderate alpha reflects the inherently subjective nature of emotional experiences rather than a methodological limitation.

TABLE 3 Frequentist Individual Item Reliability Statistics

Item	Item-rest correlation		
	Estimate	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI
I enjoy watching Instagram Reels or videos with background music.	0.518	0.280	0.696
The music used in landscape videos enhances my emotional experience.	0.520	0.282	0.697
I feel more relaxed when background music matches the scenery.	0.441	0.185	0.641
Fast-tempo music makes me feel excited when viewing urban scenery.	0.193	-0.090	0.447

Slow and soft music helps me feel calm when viewing nature scenery.	0.397	0.134	0.608
I prefer landscape content with music rather than without music.	0.550	0.320	0.718

Table 3 presents the item-rest correlation values for each item in Section C. Most items demonstrated moderate to strong correlations with the overall scale, with coefficients ranging from 0.397 to 0.550. These results indicate that most items contribute positively to the internal consistency of the scale.

However, Item 12 (Fast-tempo music makes me feel excited when viewing urban scenery) showed a relatively lower item-rest correlation ($r = 0.193$). This may be due to the item measuring a slightly different emotional response (excitement) compared to the predominantly calming and relaxing effects assessed by the other items. Despite this, the item was retained as it reflects a theoretically relevant aspect of background music perception in urban landscape content.

This discrepancy is theoretically defensible. Emotional responses to arousal-oriented stimuli, such as energetic music, often operate independently from relaxation-focused emotions, highlighting multidimensionality in affective processing (Nadon, Tillmann, Saj & Gosselin, 2021). Retaining this item enables examination of both calming and stimulating emotional reactions to audio-visual landscape content, consistent with the study's aim to capture the diversity of emotional gratifications sought by students. From a UGT perspective, it reflects the differentiated ways users engage with content to fulfil situational needs, encompassing both stress relief and excitement.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

TABLE 4 Pearson's Correlations

Item	Pearson's r	p
The music used in landscape videos enhances my emotional experience. - Watching audio-visual landscape content helps me relax.	0.443	.001

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between students' perceptions of background music in Instagram audio-visual landscape content (Q10: The music used in landscape videos enhances my emotional experience) and their emotional response, specifically the feeling of relaxation (Q15: Watching audio-visual landscape content helps me relax). The results revealed a positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlation, $r = 0.443$, $p = .001$. This indicates that students who perceive background music in landscape videos as enhancing their emotional experience are more likely to report feeling relaxed when viewing audio-visual content.

This finding indicates that background music functions as a facilitator of immediate emotional responses. Research demonstrates that congruent music can intensify emotional immersion and affective evaluation of visual stimuli, enhancing relaxation and mood regulation (Klein, Melnyk & Völckner, 2021). Within the UGT framework, students actively select content with music to satisfy short-term needs for stress relief, relaxation, and cognitive detachment from academic pressures (Bhatiasevi, 2024). However, it is important to note that these effects reflect situational mood regulation rather than long-term improvements in well-being, supporting by Owens & Bunce (2023). assertion that emotional gratification from digital content is often transient.

In short, these findings suggest that the emotional impact of audio-visual content on students' well-being is partly influenced by the presence and perceived effect of background music, supporting the study's research objective of examining the relationship between Instagram audio-visual content and emotional well-being.

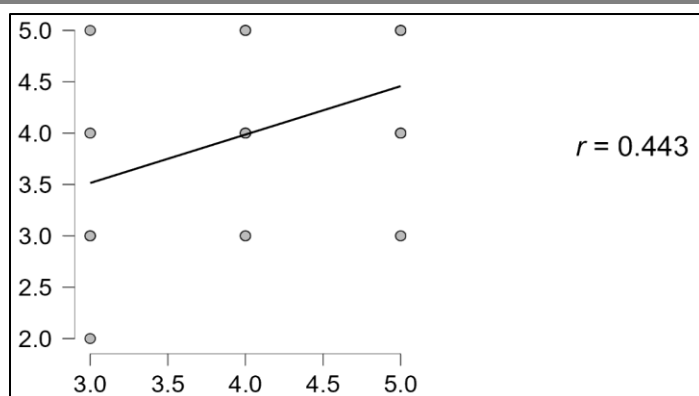


Fig. 6 Scatter plots show the relationship between the use of music in landscape videos (x) and the extent to which watching audio-visual landscape content helps participants relax (y)

Figure 6 presents a scatter plot illustrating the relationship between students' perceptions of background music in Instagram audio-visual content (Q10: The music used in landscape videos enhances my emotional experience) and their emotional response, specifically the feeling of relaxation (Q15: Watching audio-visual landscape content helps me relax).

The scatter plot shows a positive trend, with most data points clustering along the upward-sloping line, indicating that higher ratings of music enhancing emotional experience are associated with higher ratings of relaxation. This visual representation complements the Pearson correlation result ($r = 0.443$, $p = .001$), confirming a moderate and statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables. Overall, the figure provides a clear visual confirmation that students who perceive background music as enhancing their emotional experience tend to report greater relaxation when viewing audio-visual landscape content.

TABLE 5 Pearson's Correlations

Item	Pearson's r	p
I prefer landscape content with music rather than without music. - Watching such content improves my overall emotional well-being.	0.025	.865

Table 5 presents the Pearson correlation analysis between respondents' preference for landscape content with background music (Q14: I prefer landscape content with music rather than without music) and their perceived overall emotional well-being improvement (Q21: Watching such content improves my overall emotional well-being). The results indicate a very weak and non-significant relationship between the two variables ($r = 0.025$, $p = .865$). This suggests that respondents' preference for having music in landscape content is not associated with their overall emotional well-being improvement when watching such content on Instagram.

This non-significant finding suggests that preference for background music alone may not be sufficient to influence broader emotional well-being outcomes. This aligns with [17], who noted that different types of Instagram content may produce varying psychological effects, and that momentary enjoyment does not always translate into long-term well-being improvements. Additionally, Owens & Bunce (2023) argued that while brief exposure to visually pleasant content can improve immediate mood, sustained emotional well-being may depend on factors such as viewing duration, personal relevance, and user motivation. Therefore, while background music enhances immediate emotional experience, its impact on overall emotional well-being may be more complex and mediated by other psychological factors. In other words, although students may prefer landscape videos with background music, this preference alone does not necessarily translate into a perceived improvement in their overall emotional well-being.

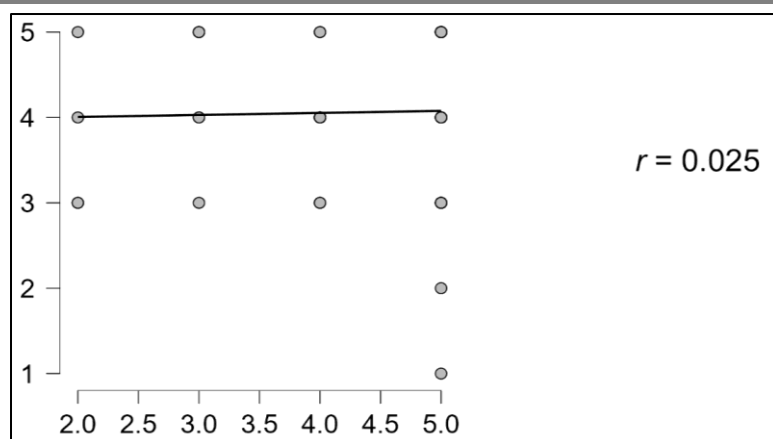


Fig. 7 Scatter plots show the relationship between preference for landscape content with music (x) and perceived improvement in overall emotional well-being (y)

Figure 7 illustrates the scatter plot depicting the relationship between respondents' preference for landscape content with background music (Q14: I prefer landscape content with music rather than without music) and their perceived improvement in overall emotional well-being (Q21: Watching such content improves my overall emotional well-being). The distribution of data points shows no clear linear pattern, with the fitted regression line appearing almost horizontal. This visual pattern indicates a very weak relationship between the two variables, which is consistent with the Pearson correlation result ($r = 0.025$, $p = .865$). Overall, the scatter plot confirms that respondents' preference for the presence of background music in landscape content is not associated with a meaningful change in their overall emotional well-being. This suggests that while background music may enhance immediate viewing enjoyment, it does not necessarily contribute to broader emotional well-being outcomes.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In summary, the findings indicate that Instagram audio-visual landscape content, particularly when complemented by background music, is associated with immediate emotional benefits such as relaxation, attentional restoration, and situational stress relief. However, these effects do not extend to long-term emotional well-being. By integrating empirical results with prior literature and Uses and Gratifications Theory, this section demonstrates that students engage with digital content purposefully to meet specific emotional needs, while highlighting the transient nature of these gratifications. Overall, the study reinforces the theoretical distinction between short-term emotional regulation and sustained well-being in digital media contexts, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of how aesthetic and musical features of social media content influence affective outcomes. The results also underscore the importance of considering content characteristics, user motivations, and situational factors when designing interventions or recommendations for promoting mental health and emotional resilience through social media.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section concludes the study by providing a comprehensive synthesis of the research purpose, methodological approach, key findings, and their broader implications. Building upon the empirical results and discussions presented by interprets the findings in relation to the stated research objectives and situates them within existing scholarly discourse on social media use, audio-visual content, and emotional well-being. This section also extends beyond a summary by offering theoretically grounded conclusions, detailed implications, and informed recommendations for future research. Specifically, reconnects the findings to the research objectives: (1) to examine how background music influences emotional responses to audio-visual nature and urban landscape content on Instagram, and (2) to investigate the overall impact of audio-visual landscape content on the emotional well-being of FELC students. By integrating Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and relevant literature throughout each section demonstrates how the present findings

contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical insights in the field of media and emotional well-being research.

Summary of Findings

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the emotional effects of Instagram audio-visual landscape content among FELC students at UNIMAS, with particular attention to the role of background music. The study adopted a quantitative research design and employed a self-administered questionnaire to collect data from 50 undergraduate students. The questionnaire measured Instagram usage patterns, exposure to audio-visual landscape content, perceptions of background music, and self-reported emotional responses. The analytical framework of the study was guided by Uses and Gratifications Theory, which conceptualises media users as active agents who selectively engage with media content to fulfil specific psychological and emotional needs (Viney, 2024). This theoretical orientation was particularly suitable given the study's focus on emotional responses and well-being, as UGT has been widely applied in research examining motivations for social media use and associated emotional outcomes (Bhatiasevi, 2024).

Descriptive analyses revealed that Instagram is deeply embedded in the daily routines of FELC students, with frequent but moderate-duration usage patterns. Reliability analysis indicated acceptable internal consistency for the background music perception scale, supporting its suitability for exploratory research. Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to address the research objectives, focusing on relationships between background music, emotional responses, and overall emotional well-being. Overall, the study provides empirical evidence that audio-visual landscape content on Instagram, particularly when accompanied by background music, is associated with immediate emotional benefits such as relaxation. However, these effects do not appear to extend to broader or long-term emotional well-being outcomes. This distinction between short-term emotional regulation and sustained well-being is a central contribution of the study.

Discussion of Key Findings

Background Music and Emotional Responses

The first research objective sought to examine how background music influences emotional responses to Instagram audio-visual nature and urban landscape content. The findings demonstrated a statistically significant and moderate positive relationship between perceptions of background music enhancing the viewing experience and reported feelings of relaxation. This result is consistent with prior studies that emphasise the role of music in shaping emotional interpretation of visual stimuli. Klein et al. (2021) found that congruent background music enhances emotional immersion while scholars reported that music influences emotional appraisal in audio-visual contexts (Fernandez, Trost & Vuilleumier, 2020). The present findings extend this body of work to the Instagram platform, highlighting that even short-form landscape videos can elicit measurable emotional responses when accompanied by suitable music.

From Uses and Gratifications Theory perspective, the findings suggest that students actively engage with audio-visual landscape content as a means of fulfilling emotional needs such as relaxation and stress relief. Scholars noted that users increasingly turn to visually and aurally soothing content on social media to cope with academic pressure and emotional fatigue (Bhatiasevi, 2024). Thus, background music functions as a key gratification-enhancing element that intensifies the emotional utility of audio-visual content. Importantly, the emotional responses identified in this study are immediate and situational rather than enduring. This aligns with Owens & Bunce (2023) who argue that virtual aesthetic experiences primarily influence transient mood states. Therefore, while background music significantly enhances emotional responses during content consumption, it should be understood as facilitating short-term emotional regulation rather than long-term psychological change.

Audio-visual Landscape Content and Emotional Well-Being

The second research objective aimed to investigate the overall impact of audio-visual landscape content on

the emotional well-being of FELC students. The findings revealed a weak and non-significant relationship between preference for landscape content with background music and perceived improvement in overall emotional well-being. This outcome is consistent with existing literature suggesting that positive emotional experiences on social media do not necessarily translate into sustained emotional well-being. Jaidka (2022) emphasised that while Instagram content can generate enjoyment and momentary relief, long-term well-being is influenced by a broader range of factors, including offline social support, personal resilience, and life circumstances. Similarly, Owens & Bunce (2023) highlighted that repeated exposure and personal relevance are necessary conditions for digital content to exert lasting emotional effects.

Within the Uses and Gratifications framework, this finding suggests that gratification derived from audio-visual landscape content is need-specific and context-dependent. Students may turn to such content during moments of stress and fatigue, but these interactions do not accumulate sufficiently to influence overall emotional well-being. This reinforces the theoretical distinction between mood management and holistic well-being, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of social media's emotional impact.

Implications of Findings

Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the application of Uses and Gratifications Theory in contemporary social media research. The findings support the core assumption of UGT that media users are active participants who intentionally select content to satisfy specific emotional needs. In this study, Instagram users were found to engage with audio-visual landscape content primarily for immediate emotional gratification, particularly relaxation.

The distinction between short-term emotional responses and long-term emotional well-being extends existing UGT-based research by clarifying the boundaries of media gratification. While many studies focus on positive or negative outcomes of social media use in general terms, the present study demonstrates that emotional gratification does not necessarily equate to sustained well-being. This insight supports calls by scholars to refine UGT applications by differentiating between transient and enduring psychological outcomes (Vinney, 2024). Furthermore, by focusing on a specific content type - audio-visual landscape videos - this study adds content-level specificity to theoretical discussions. It suggests that future theoretical models of social media use should account not only for platform usage, but also for the emotional affordances of distinct content genres.

Methodological Implications

Methodologically, this study demonstrates the viability of using a quantitative survey approach to examine emotional responses to social media content in a university context. The acceptable reliability of the background music perception scale supports its use in exploratory research involving subjective emotional constructs, consistent with recommendations by (Hair et al., 2019).

The use of Pearson correlation analysis allowed for a clear examination of relationships between emotional variables. However, the findings also highlight the limitations of cross-sectional self-report data in capturing long-term emotional well-being. Scholars such as [9] note that emotional responses to media are often dynamic and context-dependent, suggesting that longitudinal or mixed-method approaches may yield deeper insights.

This study also underscores the importance of aligning measurement instruments with theoretical constructs. By grounding questionnaire items in Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study ensured conceptual coherence between research objectives, data collection, and interpretation.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study have several practical implications for students, content creators, and educators.

For students, the results suggest that engaging with audio-visual landscape content on Instagram may serve as a healthy and accessible form of short-term emotional regulation, particularly during periods of academic stress. However, reliance on such content should not replace offline coping strategies and social support systems.

For content creators, the significant role of background music highlights the importance of audio-visual congruence in designing emotionally engaging content. Prior research indicates that carefully selected music enhances viewers' emotional immersion and satisfaction (Klein et al., 2021). Thus, creators aiming to promote calming and restorative experiences should prioritise harmonious integration of sound and visuals.

From an educational perspective, the findings may inform digital well-being initiatives within universities. Educators and student support services can acknowledge the role of social media as a supplementary emotional resource while encouraging balanced media consumption. As Owens & Bunce (2023). suggest, promoting mindful engagement with digital content can help students maximise benefits while minimising potential drawbacks.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to several limitations that should be carefully considered when interpreting the findings. First and foremost, the sample size was relatively small and limited to FELC students at a single university. While this sample was appropriate for exploratory research, it restricts the generalisability of the findings to other faculties, institutions, and student populations. Previous scholars have noted that emotional responses to social media content may vary across academic disciplines and sociocultural contexts (Zhang et al., 2019). Besides that, the study relied exclusively on self-reported questionnaire data, which may be influenced by social desirability bias and respondents' subjective interpretations of their emotional experiences. Emotional well-being is a complex and multifaceted construct, and self-report measures may not fully capture subtle or unconscious emotional changes (Fernandez et al., 2020). Although the questionnaire demonstrated acceptable reliability, the inherent subjectivity of emotional perception remains a methodological challenge.

In addition, the cross-sectional research design limits the ability to draw conclusions about causality and long-term emotional effects. As the data were collected at a single point in time, the study captures immediate and recent emotional responses rather than changes in emotional well-being over an extended period. Owens & Bunce (2023). emphasised that sustained emotional well-being is often shaped by cumulative experiences and longitudinal patterns rather than isolated media interactions. Last but not the least, this study focused solely on Instagram as the platform of analysis. While Instagram is a highly relevant platform for audio-visual content consumption among students, other platforms such as Facebook and TikTok may offer different content dynamics, interaction features, and emotional affordances. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the specific context of Instagram's visual-centric and short-form content environment.

Recommendations for Future Research

Building upon the limitations identified above, several recommendations are proposed for future research. First and foremost, future studies should consider employing larger and more diverse samples across multiple faculties and universities to enhance the external validity of findings. Comparative studies across cultural and institutional contexts may provide deeper insights into how sociocultural factors influence emotional engagement with audio-visual content Bhatiasavi, V. (2024). Besides that, longitudinal research designs are strongly recommended to examine how repeated exposure to audio-visual landscape content influences emotional well-being over time. Such designs would allow researchers to distinguish between short-term emotional regulation and longer-term emotional outcomes, addressing a key limitation of cross-sectional studies (Owens & Bunce,2023).

Furthermore, future research may benefit from adopting mixed-method approaches that combine quantitative surveys with qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, and diary studies. Qualitative

data could provide richer insights into users' subjective interpretations, motivations, and emotional meanings associated with audio-visual landscape content, complementing statistical findings (Fernandez et al., 2020). Last but not the least, future studies could explore individual difference variables, such as personality traits, stress levels, and prior exposure to nature, to better understand differential emotional responses to audio-visual content. Examining content-specific features, including music genre, tempo, and visual composition, may also help refine understanding of how specific audio-visual elements contribute to emotional experiences.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study set out to examine the emotional effects of Instagram audio-visual landscape content among FELC students, with particular emphasis on the role of background music and its relationship to emotional well-being. Guided by Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study demonstrated that students are active media users who selectively engage with specific content types to satisfy immediate emotional needs. The findings clearly indicate that background music significantly enhances short-term emotional responses, particularly relaxation, when students consume audio-visual nature and urban landscape content on Instagram. This outcome directly addresses Research Objective 1 and aligns with prior studies emphasising the role of music as an emotional amplifier in audio-visual media experiences (Klein et al., 2021). At the same time, the absence of a significant relationship between content preference and overall emotional well-being addresses Research Objective 2, highlighting that momentary emotional gratification does not necessarily translate into sustained emotional well-being.

This distinction between short-term emotional regulation and long-term emotional well-being represents a key contribution of the study. Rather than portraying social media as inherently beneficial or detrimental, the findings position Instagram audio-visual landscape content as a supplementary emotional resource whose effects are situational, temporary, and context-dependent. This perspective supports arguments by Owens & Bunce (2023); and Jaidka (2022), who caution against overgeneralising the emotional impact of digital media. By integrating empirical findings with Uses and Gratifications Theory and existing literature, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how specific content features - particularly background music - shape emotional experiences in social media environments. The study underscores the importance of content-level analysis in social media research and highlights the need for future investigations to move beyond platform-level generalisations. Overall, this research offers meaningful theoretical, methodological, and practical insights into the emotional dimensions of social media use among university students. It provides a foundation for future studies to further explore the complex interplay between audio-visual content, emotional experience, and well-being in an increasingly digital media landscape.

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