

Association between Interpersonal Communication and other Drivers of Social Network Sites Use

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Abstract

Social Network sites (SNS) are rapidly becoming one of the most popular media for social communication. These sites provided a new combination of all the communication applications that humans use, including interpersonal conversation and broadcasting extensive information to numerous audiences. This study empirically examined the relationship between daily communication applications of SNS with other drivers for using these sites. The quantitative analysis of gathered data from 360 respondents revealed that communication use of SNS was highly associated with two drivers of SNS use, namely, keeping in touch and presentation of self. Furthermore, the results indicated that communication function of SNS was significantly correlated with several other drivers for SNS use which included 'to make new friends', 'to seek information and knowledge' and 'to stay aware and updated about friends and society popular topics'.

Keywords: Social network site, Facebook, Drivers, Motivations, Online communication

1. Introduction

Communication is inscribed in human nature. It is an essential human need and a fundamental social necessity. While communication practice has improved during its history, the growth of the Internet provided a new combination of all the communication applications that humans used before (Bargh & McKenna, 2004), including interpersonal conversation and broadcasting extensive information to numerous audiences. At the same time, Internet caused a significant transformation of human communication. The introduction of SNS was one of the significant consequences of these changes in communication practice in the online environment (Ross, et al., 2009) and led to a paradigm shift in communication (Barnes, 2009).

Many online tools such as email, blogs and wikis revealed the connective, integrative and transformative power of the medium for communication purposes. However, social network sites more than any other online tools showed the natural extension of the Internet's communicative affordances.

The communicative affordances of SNS can be related to various reasons. First, SNS fostered the connected presence between individuals and it increased and strengthened social ties (Steinfeld, Ellison, & Lampe, 2008; Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009). Second, these sites as computer-mediated communication tools provided cost effective large-volume data storage devices to be deployed and used in transmission of information (Mesch & Beker, 2010). Third, SNS are not bordered by geographic, financial and time constraints. Fourth, SNS offered immense functional potential for transmitting and processing a message or meaning from individuals by providing more alternatives for reprocessability, synchronicity and symbol sets. Fifth, SNS provided diverse functions including interpersonal private or public messaging to broadcast personal or popular issues.

Such a wide range of SNS features makes many alternatives accessible for users in communications, while individuals make use of different features for different reasons (Smock, Ellison, Lampe, & Wohn, 2011). Therefore, SNS are considered to be spaces in which information can be perceived, transmitted and understood in a positive way (Greenhow & Burton, 2011) and even with expanded involvement of individuals in these environments, SNS are becoming one of the most popular and supplemental means of communication (Dogruer, Meneviş, & Eyyam, 2011; Farrow & Yuan, 2011; Ross, et al., 2009).

Growth of SNS and worldwide popularity of Facebook caused many mass communication researchers explored drivers of using these sites (Baek, Holton, Harp, & Yaschur, 2011), however, very few studies have researched the relationship between communication use of SNS and other drivers of SNS use. This is the circumstance that elicited the conduct of this research. Therefore, subsequent to discussing the drivers of SNS use, the empirical study is

conducted to investigate such a relationship.

2. Social network sites drivers

Social network sites as social media which blurred interpersonal and mass media (Ellison, 2007) provided a range of opportunities for users' passive, active and interactive behaviors. This fact gained attentions of many researchers to study drivers and motives for SNS use. Previous research found that SNS can fulfill variety of individual's needs and desires by providing various aspects of use from instrumental to beyond instrumental.

Since different scholars discussed various drivers of SNS in the field studies, a wide range of researches (Balaban & Băltărețu, 2010; Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011; Dogruer, et al., 2011; Hew, 2011; Joinson, 2008; Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2006; Smock, et al., 2011; Stern & Taylor, 2007) focused on exploring motivations and drivers for use of these sites. Reviewing these researches led to identification of fourteen drivers for SNS use which are illustrated in Table 1 and are applied in this study.

3. Method

To obtain results, a paper-based questionnaire was administrated in the target population.

3.1 Participants

The sample of the current study included 360 students of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia who were asked to respond to the questionnaire which was refined during a pilot study. The respondents were selected randomly with a view toward having heterogeneous respondents in the scope of the sample. This study sample consisted of students aged from 18 to 30. It included 173 (48.0%) female respondents and 187 (52.0%) male respondents.

3.2 Materials

All study materials were developed based on the review on drivers of SNS which led to identification of 14 drivers. Such identification was with the purpose of determining and developing the relevant items of the questionnaire that can contribute to understanding the relationship between SNS drivers and communication application of these sites. The questionnaire also included one item which was representative for communication usage of SNS and served as a criterion. Response alternatives were Likert scale options which ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The instructions requested the users to circle the response which best described their view of Facebook. Facebook was used as the main SNS to collect data for the sampling frame since most of the target population was members of this site.

3.2 Data Analysis

The analysis of data was conducted in three stages included: 1) analysis of reliability and validity of the study, 2) analysis of descriptive statistics and demographic statistics, and 3) analysis of correlations between communication use and other drivers of SNS.

4. Results

To ensure the reliability of the study, coefficient alpha of gathered data was calculated. The achieved value for this calculation was 0.853 which showed consistency of the results. On the other side, to confirm the validity of the study, factor analysis was performed on the gathered data. The results (Table 2) indicated that the entire items were loaded sufficiently in the factor structure which implied the validity of the study.

The demographics analysis of data showed that respondents of this study use social network sites on average of one hour per day and on average they had 200-300 peers on their contact list. The descriptive statistics of data (see Table 3) revealed that daily communication is one of the most frequently used measures (Mean=4.13, SD= 0.88) and there is high tendency for daily communicating via SNS among respondents. Furthermore, two other item which were

representative of 'staying in touch with friends' and 'entertaining self' also we found to be two of the most frequent drivers of SNS use.

The result of analysis of correlations between item which represented communication application of SNS with other drivers of SNS revealed that two drivers of SNS were highly positively associated ($r > 0.4$, $p < 0.001$) with communication. These two drivers consisted of 'keeping in touch' and 'presenting self'. At the same time three other drivers of SNS use were positively correlated to communication at significant level ($r > 0.3$, $p < 0.01$) which comprised of 'to make new friends', 'to seek information and knowledge' and 'to stay aware and updated about friends and society popular topics'.

4. Discussion

This paper explored the communication use of SNS and in particular its relation with other drivers of using these sites. The results implied a theoretical conclusion from the literature review and the empirical findings from conduction of quantitative analysis.

The theoretical conclusion signified that SNS are new paradigm on online communication because of various reasons: 1) SNS strengthen social and community ties, 2) SNS provide cost effective media, 3) SNS offer wide range of alternatives for reprocessability, synchronicity and symbol sets, 4) SNS are not bordered by geographic, financial and time constraints, and 5) SNS provided diverse functions including interpersonal private or public messaging to broadcast personal or popular issues.

The result of empirical analysis indicated that the more users use Facebook for self-presentation, the more they use Facebook for daily communication purposes. It can be relied on the fact that even interpersonal communication process consists of gradual self-disclosure of personal information (Mesch & Beker, 2010). On the other side, communication use of SNS was highly associated with 'keeping in touch with friends'. It can be argued that feeling of being in touch with peers can be seen as a communication cue in the SNS environment which led to such an association.

Significant positive correlations also were found between three other drivers and communication use which implied the fact that communication features of Facebook are more likelihood to be used for making new relationship, seeking information and knowledge and also to stay aware and updated about friends and society popular topics

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Table 1. Drivers of social network site use

Labels	Motivators
C1	To make new friends
C2	To stay and keep in touch with friends
C3	To communicate with friends on daily issues
C4	To seek information and capture knowledge
C5	To stay aware and updated about friends and society popular topics
C6	To know oneself better during the time
C7	To express or present one's life, opinions and feelings
C8	To feel attractive, worthy and respected
C9	To feel and act in a way like others people do
C10	To be member of groups and be fan of pages which one's is interested in them
C11	To learn new things from others by observing people activities or shared content
C12	To join and be part of some online and real life group activities
C13	To have variety of option and do variety of activities which are not possible in real life.
C14	To entertain one self and pass time

Table 2. Items loading in factor analysis

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	C11	C12	C13	C14
Loading	0.712	0.688	0.706	0.623	0.574	0.894	0.769	0.893	0.706	0.822	0.736	0.735	0.742	0.759

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	C11	C12	C13	C14
Mean	3.75	4.34	4.13	3.81	3.91	3.29	3.56	3.24	3.70	3.51	0.76	3.51	3.61	4.03
SD	0.99	0.69	0.88	0.75	0.834	1.10	0.93	1.03	0.98	0.87	3.93	0.95	0.83	0.79
Correlation (C3, Ci)	0.338	0.546	1	0.319	0.341	0.237	0.401	0.258	0.291	0.299	0.128	0.177	0.143	0.209