

A Generic Assessment of Level of Involvement of Youngsters with Social Networking Sites

Sonica Rautela^{1*} and Tarun Kumar Singhal²

¹Faculty of Management, Symbiosis International University, Pune - 412115, Maharashtra, India; sonica.rautela@scmpune.ac.in

²Symbiosis Institute of Telecom Management, Constituent of Symbiosis International University, Pune - 412115, Maharashtra, India; dr.tarun@rediffmail.com

Abstract

Objective: To explore and compile studies related to SNSs and Youngsters. It also tries to explore various areas which have been of keen interest of different researchers in near past. **Method:** Researchers have adopted a qualitative perspective. References to the articles and trends related to the topic are used. **Findings:** The world has moved from the traditional World Wide Web (WWW) to Web 2.0 state of technologies. One of the key changes which have been experienced by the whole world is the change in communication ways. Social Networking Sites (SNSs) can be referred as the medium of this change. These online virtual spaces provide a platform to the users to interact, collaborate and share the content. Further, the tranche of the whole population which is most affected is the youngsters. The various studies done on SNSs have therefore focused on students as their sample population. The study explores the different area where the work has been done in order to add to the existing body of knowledge. **Application:** The study offers an insight for researchers and marketers in the world of Social Networking Sites.

Keywords: Social Capital, Social Networking Sites (SNSs), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Youngsters

1. Introduction

We are living in a world where information is playing a vital role. There has been gargantuan growth and change in information and communication technology (ICT) and this change in turn has created a whole world of novel ways of communication and interaction of people with their kindred group^{1,2}. We have moved from the traditional World Wide Web to current Web 2.0 or “read/write web”³ state of technology. Web 2.0 provides consumers with greater user collaboration and interaction and has also escalated the number of people using online social networks⁴. It has also amplified the communication option as well as enhanced network connectivity between people from across the globe.

Companies operating and expanding their business in international realm should understand the importance of this Web 2.0 technology. There is a need to make full use of

power of this technology for communicating to the consumer within and across the border⁵. Businesses in order to fabricate competitive advantage have to revamp their strategy with the changing environment⁶. Organizations are also benefitted by social media through greater involvement and trust from consumers, as consumer can communicate their experience and expectation directly to the organization⁷. This also provides opportunity to the organizations to increase the perceived value of their product and service⁸.

It has been observed that the behavior of internet users has also gradually changed. These users of email and search engines are now creating, uploading and sharing the information with their kindred group⁶. Anybody can create his or her profile or account by filling information required by the social networking sites and these interfaces are easy and user friendly in nature⁹. However, the selection of SNSs and the decision to be an active user

*Author for correspondence

depends mainly on four factors i.e. privacy, functionality, usability and content¹⁰.

As per the statistical Portal Statista¹¹, the average penetration rate of internet is 50 percent which is an increase from 35 percent in 2013 and more than half of the global mobile phone user use internet in their phone. This figure is expected to jump to 65 percent by 2019. The portal also gives a very interesting insight about the global social network penetration rate. As on January 2016, this global penetration rate was 31 percent and North America stands first with 59 percent social media penetration rate. Further, the site also revealed that Facebook is the most popular social networking site with 1.5 billion monthly active users.

Social Networking Sites (SNSs) a creation of Web 2.0 technology has changed the way of communication among people. SNSs are the virtual electronic environment which gives individuals a platform to interact with each other. It facilitates people as well as different businesses in creating and building their social networks and enables them to interact with each other^{12,13}. The people with whom the user interacts can be known masses or can also be unknown or not so familiar masses¹⁴, and the interaction are generally casual in nature⁴. These online social networking sites not only encourage the formation of new social connections but also aid in maintaining the old ties¹⁵.

In^{16,17} defined SNSs as “websites that allow building relationship online between persons by means of collecting useful information and sharing it with people. Also they can create groups which allow interacting amongst users with similar interest.” Social networking sites or social media can also be used to refer to all those “web-based tools used to connect, collaborate and create web content and experiences. Websites that allow visitors to send E-Mail, post comments, build web content or take part in live audio or video chats are all considered to be social media sites”¹⁸. SNSs can have different sets of orientation. For e.g. they can be professionally oriented like LinkedIn.com, can be socially oriented like Facebook, may be oriented towards people sharing certain common interest in music, art, politics, social issue etc. like MySpace.com¹⁵ or can be an online dating site such as Tinder.

2. Objectives of the study

This study was undertaken with the following objectives:

- I. To compile various research work on Social Networking Sites.
- II. To explore the various areas which have been of keen interest of different researchers

As a result of extensive and ubiquitous use by the youngsters, social networking sites have become an area of great interest for marketers, academicians, educators, researchers and site developers². Various studies have been done in order to explore the relationship between Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and SNSs¹³, factors influencing the use of SNSs and motivation for engaging in SNSs⁵⁻¹⁹, relationship between gender and SNSs², attitude, perception and usage of SNSs²⁰⁻²³, personality and its effect on usage pattern of SNSs^{24,25}, culture and difference in usage of SNSs by the youngsters^{5,16,26}, risk faced by the users while using social networking sites²⁷, academic and learning use of SNSs²⁸⁻²⁹, comparative analysis of usage of technology between two groups for example teachers and student³⁰. Also, a few studies have explored the social capital gain by the youngsters by using various SNSs^{12,31,32}. According to Moun³³ social media can be used in order to organize and implement open innovation in organization.

The literature review was done in order to cover following relevant areas of research for the present study.

3. Youngsters and SNSs

Social networking sites has become more popular over the past few years and the tranche of the whole population which is most affected is young population^{20,21}. SNSs have become an innate part of their day to day life²⁶. Therefore, most of the researchers have used youngsters’ population as sample population for the purpose of their study. Facebook being one of the most popular social networking sites among youngsters has been extensively explored by various researchers. “Feed, share and comment” are the three most important functions of Facebook and by which youngsters tend to unearth when and which information is needed and how to “locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information”²⁸.

Facebook is used by the students bountifully and its use helps them to connect with others and also enhances formal and informal learning among them²⁹. Twitter and Facebook has been found as the most popular among university students. It enhances the connectivity and

involvement of the students in political, social and cultural activities²¹. Facebook gives youngsters a complete solution for social networking and they have countless number of reasons to visit Facebook³⁴. The use of Facebook is influenced by the personality characteristic of the youngsters' as well as the age, gender, education level and perception of the user. The introvert seems to be more involved in online communication and spend more time communicating online²⁴. Personality also affect the way user communicate and the choice of persons whom he/she wants to communicate in social networks²⁵.

The reasons and motivation behind the use of Facebook are also influenced by age and gender²⁰. It has been explored that for female users' relationship maintenance and social interactions seems to be the critical determinant for user satisfaction while for male users entertainment plays a dominating role in predicting user satisfaction². Small family size was also found to be associated with more use of SNSs³⁵.

In a study done by McDonald²⁶, the preferences of SNSs by international and domestic graduate students were explored. It was found that the preferences vary in case of both of these groups of students. The students were not only using these sites for social activities but also for academic purpose for example sharing and gathering information, group work and so on. However, Alkhateeb³⁶ were of the view that majority of the youngsters were using Facebook for social purpose rather than professional or academic purpose. The use of Facebook and other SNSs has also been found to be related to easy gratification gained by the users³⁷.

WhatsApp, a mobile instant messaging service for smartphones founded in 2009 has also gained attention of few researches. This app uses internet for transmission of messages and users can send text, audio, video & image messages. The app is based on low- price subscription model and as on February 2016 it has more than 1 billion monthly active users worldwide and enjoys being ranked as most popular social networking platform across the world¹¹. WhatsApp allow users to socialize within their closed platform and stay connected with their family and friends without paying the network operator the SMS fees³⁸. The attitude and motivation of youngsters to use WhatsApp is more or less same as in case of other SNSs. However, there are some reasons why users prefer WhatsApp. For example it is a cheaper mode of communication, provides user a closed platform where they interact with only known people, simple and easy to use

and so on³⁹. The social capital gain by the youngsters while using WhatsApp is also affected by the attitude and intention to use¹².

4. Social Capital and SNSs

Researchers have also investigated the role of SNSs in the formation and maintenance of social capital. As defined by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) and cited by Ellison social capital is "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationship of mutual acquaintance and recognition"¹⁵. The use of Facebook and social capital are positively related to each other and the use of Facebook enhances and maintains social capital¹⁵⁻³². The use of Facebook is also related to the psychological well-being and has a favorable impact on the students experiencing low self-esteem⁴⁰. The users whose motivation to use Facebook is to socialize with others were associated with more online bridging and bonding i.e. increased social capital⁴¹.

5. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and SNSs

Different theoretical models and proposals have been developed and proposed by various researchers in order to explain the users' acceptance of a particular technology and rejection of the others. One of the most popular and relevant theoretical framework, which explains the behavior (acceptance and rejection) of the users is Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). This model was proposed by Davis in 1989 and attempt to explain the users' intention to use and adopt a technology¹³⁻³⁹.

The acceptance of a particular technology is based on two important variables-perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU). Perceived usefulness can be defined as "the degree to which a person believe that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance" while perceived ease of use can be defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system is free from effort". In simple words, if the user feels that the particular technology has more benefits and is easy to use it will be readily accepted by him or her⁴².

The TAM model was also used by Mala-del-Carmen Alarcon-del-Amo¹⁶ in their study, which explored the role

played by culture in the adoption of SNSs. They added two more variables i.e. trust and perceived risk and came to the conclusion that culture effects the adoption and interaction with the SNSs. The extended version of TAM was used by Daihani⁴³ in his study to discover the factors that effects the adoption of Twitter by the youngsters and it was concluded that the perceived enjoyment and social factors plays a major role in adoption rather than perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness⁴³.

6. Conclusion

Social Networking Sites have definitely touched our lives and have altered the way of communication. These sites provide a wonderful platform to the users by not only allowing them to read but also upload and share the content they want to. These virtual spaces have overcome the gap of distance, time and relationship. These sites are easy to operate and use and therefore are growing at a tremendous rate. Marketers, educators, researchers and other stakeholders are also witnessing the changes in the communication behaviors of their consumers and youngsters. The need of the hour is to meticulously design certain program where these platforms can be used to enhance the interaction between the marketer and their consumers. This will definitely help in better communication, collaboration and exchange of knowledge and views between people of various interest groups.

7. References

1. Bhatt KR, Kumar A. Student opinion on the use of social networking tools by libraries: A case study of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. *The Electronic Library*. 2014 Sep; 32(5):594-602. Crossref.
2. Chan TK, Cheung CM, Shi N, Lee MK. Gender differences in satisfaction with Facebook users. *Industrial Management and Data Systems*. 2015 Feb; 115(1):182-206. Crossref.
3. Farkas MG. Information Today, Inc.: Social software in libraries, building collaboration, communication, and community online. 2007; 18(4):482-3.
4. Li DC. Online social network acceptance: a social perspective. *Internet Research*. 2011 Aug; 21(5):562-80. Crossref.
5. Shin DH. Analysis of online social networks: a cross-national study. *Online Information Review*. 2010 Jun; 34(3):473-95. Crossref.
6. Wattanasupachoke T. Success factors of online social networks. *Journal of Global Business Issues*. 2011 Oct; 5(2):11-21.
7. Singhal TK. Impact of Social Media Expressions on Engagement and Trust of Customers. *Amity Business Review*. 2016 Jul; 17(2):96-103.
8. Singh AK, Singhal TK. Impact of Social Media Expressions on Value Perceptions and Purchase Intentions. *Amity Business Review*. 2015 Jul; 16(2):32-40.
9. Singh KP, Gill MS. Role and users' approach to social networking sites (SNSs), a study of Universities of North India. *The Electronic Library*. 2015 Feb; 33(1):19-34. Crossref.
10. Tang CM. How do students select social networking sites? An analytic hierarchy process (AHP) model. *International Journal of Cyber Society and Education*. 2015 Dec; 8(2):81-98. Crossref.
11. Statista. Retrieved 1 Friday, 2017, Available from: www.statista.com. Date Accessed: 03/01/2017.
12. Aharony N. What's App, a social capital perspective. *Online Information Review*. 2015 Feb; 39(1):26-42. Crossref.
13. Romero LC, Chiappa DG. Adoption of social networking sites by Italian. *Information Systems and E-Business Management*. 2014 May; 12(2):165-87. Crossref.
14. Gupta R. An Empirical Study Examining Attitude of Youth Towards Social Networking Sites. *Global Management Review*. 2013; 8(1):42-54.
15. Ellison NB, Steinfield C, Lampe C. The benefits of Facebook friends. Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. 2007 Jul; 12(4):1143-68. Crossref.
16. Del Amo MD, Romero CL, Borja MA. Cultural influence on the adoption of social networking sites. *International Journal of Market Research*. 2016; 58(2):277-300. Crossref.
17. Kwon O, Wen Y. An empirical study of the factors affecting social network service use. *Computers in Human Behavior*. 2010 Mar; 26(2):254-63. Crossref.
18. YALSA. Teens and Social Media in School and Public Libraries: A Toolkit for Librarians and Library Workers. 2011; p. 1-13.
19. Sultana S, Momen A. Determinants of the use of social networking sites: Example of a South Asian state. *Middle East Journal of Business*. 2017 Jan; 12(1):38-46.
20. Koles B, Nagy P. Facebook usage patterns and school attitudes. *Multicultural Education and Technology Journal*. 2012 Apr; 6(1):4-17. Crossref.
21. Hamade SN. Perception and use of social networking sites among university students. *Library Review*. 2013 Sep; 62(6/7):388-97. Crossref.
22. Yazdanparast A, Joseph M, Qureshi A. An investigation of Facebook boredom phenomenon among college students. *Young Consumers*. 2015 Nov; 16(4):468-80. Crossref.
23. Krishnan A, Hunt DS. Influence of a multidimensional measure of attitudes on motives to use social networking sites. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*. 2015 Mar 1; 18(3):165-72. Crossref. PMID:25751048

24. Aharony N. Emerald Group Publishing Limited: Facebook use by Library and Information Science students. *Aslib Proceedings*. 2013 Jan; 65(1):19-39. Crossref.
25. Godoy DL, Balmaceda JM, Schiaffino SN. How do personality traits affect communication among users in online social networks? *Online Information Review*. 2014; 38(1):136-53. Crossref.
26. Saw G, Abbott W, Donaghey J, McDonald C. Social media for international students-it's not all about Facebook. *Library Management*. 2013 Feb 22; 34(3):156-74. Crossref.
27. Haynes D, Robinson L. Defining user risk in social networking services. *Aslib Journal of Information Management*. 2015 Jan 19; 67(1):94-115. Crossref.
28. Witek D, Gretano T. Information literacy on Facebook: an analysis. *Reference Services Review*. 2012 May 11; 40(2):242-57. Crossref.
29. Garcia E, Elbeltagi IM, Dungay K, Hardaker G. Student use of Facebook for informal learning and peer support. *The International Journal of Information and Learning Technology*. 2015 Nov 2; 32(5):286-99. Crossref.
30. Ruleman AB. Comparison of student and faculty technology use. *Library Hi Tech News*. 2012 Apr 27; 29(3):16-9. Crossref.
31. Kucukemiroglu S, Kara A. Online word-of-mouth communication on social networking sites: An empirical study of Facebook users. *International Journal of Commerce and Management*. 2015 Mar 2; 25(1):2-20.
32. Valenzuela S, Park N, Kee KF. Is there social capital in a social network site? Facebook use and college students' life satisfaction, trust, and participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. 2009 Jul 1; 14(4):875-901. Crossref.
33. Mount M, Martinez MG. Social Media. *California Management Review*. 2014 Aug 1; 56(4):124-43. Crossref.
34. Loving M, Ochoa M. Facebook as a classroom management solution. *New Library World*. 2011 Mar 29; 112(3/4):121-30. Crossref.
35. Karuppasamy G, Anwar A, Bhartiya A, Sajjad S, Rashid M, Mathew E, Saikh RB, Al Sharbatti S, Sreedharan J. Use of Social Networking Sites among University Students in Ajman, United Arab Emirates. *Nepal Journal of Epidemiology*. 2013 Jun 26; 3(2):245-50. Crossref.
36. Alkhateeb FM, Alameddine S, Attarabeen O, Latif DA, Osolin S, Khanfar N, Al-Rousan R. Pharmacy students' use of social media sites and perception toward Facebook use. *Archives of Pharmacy Practice*. 2015 Oct 1; 6(4):77-84. Crossref.
37. Williams D. So why do people use Facebook and Twitter? Uses and gratifications of social media use. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*. 2013; 16(6):362-9.
38. Aharony N, Gazit T. The importance of the WhatsApp family group, an exploratory analysis. *Aslib Journal of Information Management*. 2016 Mar 21; 68(2):174-92. Crossref.
39. Aharony N. Why do students use WhatsApp? - An exploratory study. *Aslib Journal of Information Management*. 2015 Mar 16; 67(2):136-58. Crossref.
40. Johnston K, Tanner M, Lalla N, Kawalski D. Social capital, the benefit of Facebook friends. *Behaviour and Information Technology*. 2013 Jan 1; 32(1):24-36. Crossref.
41. Aubrey JS, Rill L. Investigating relations between Facebook use and social capitals among college undergraduates. *Communication Quarterly*. 2013 Sep 1; 61(4):479-96. Crossref.
42. Davis FD. Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. *MIS Quarterly*. 1989 Sep 13; p.19-40. Crossref.
43. Al-Daihani SM. Students' adoption of Twitter as an information source. An exploratory study using the Technology Acceptance Model. *Malaysian Journal of Library and Information Science*. 2016 Jan 1; 21(3):57-69. Crossref.