

THE USE OF FACEBOOK AMONG UNIVERSITY ACADEMICIANS TO ENHANCE GRATIFICATION LEVEL.

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ABSTRACT

Gratification of Facebook is a central question among Social Networking Users (SNSs) because they need to be constantly connected. It is uncommon for an academician to have a pool of online friends or followers whom are their students, colleagues, friends, and so forth. This paper would like to propose motivation and gratification as key determiners of using Facebook and assess its significance in an empirical setting. Further, examine the gratification level of Facebook use among academicians, the purpose of using Facebook among academicians and provide a holistic view of the casual relationship between the gratification variables and purpose. The study was conducted using a five point survey questionnaire which focused on five motives such as social interaction motive, communication motive, passing time motive, entertainment motive and companionship. Data was collected from 208 academicians at a private university at Selangor. Based on the five motives tested in this study Social Interaction Motives and Communication Motives reported a mean of 2.6 and 2.7 respectively. This significantly implies that academicians of the university use SNSs such as Facebook in a professional and ethical manner when communicating with fellow students and colleagues.

Keywords: Facebook, academicians, SNSs, gratification & level of gratification motives.

Introduction

Humans in nature would prefer using technology that is most accessible and Facebook has catered this requirement well. Facebook created a medium of communication which is interactive and affordable for all walks-of-life. According to Qualman (2011), it took four years for internet to surpass 50 million users and it only took nine months for Facebook to reach 100 million users. Nevertheless, due to the nature of the technology it has gained much popularity in recent years which had led to a social phenomenon. The constant use of Facebook has led to addiction and in Malaysia Facebook users among university students are on the rise (Sofiah, Zobidah, Jusang and Nizam, 2011). In this we added the existing literature by discreetly considering academic staff Facebook usage in order to reduce the gap that exists.

The advancement of communication technology has reduced the digital divide which co-existed for generations. At the same, communication between one individual with others has been simplified and is in real-time mainly due to Social Networking Sites, (SNSs). Friendster, Blogs, Twitter, Facebook and other Social Sites, (SS) instilled the concept of instant connectivity in the minds of its users regardless of age, gender and occupation. The infatuation for virtually being connected has occupied scholars to find the motive for users to be connected. According to Ayu and Abrizah (2011) Malaysian Facebook users from the age of 25 years old to 44 years old make up a total of 43 per cent compared to early adolescents (18 years old to 24 years old) which only make up 33 per cent. There is need to understand the portrayal of adolescents and late adolescents in Malaysian context due to the fact that there is a large pool of Facebook users.

Despite millions of Facebook users worldwide; it is an integral part of student's campus life. In 2009 Burhanna, Seeholzer and Selem collected data for their research on SNSs using focus group discussion found that Facebook plays an important role of a university student's life and is a "must activity" among them. This is a clear indication that university students are constantly connected and have accepted the benevolences of Facebook which has never felt by other SNSs such as Blog, Friendster, Flicker, Twitter, Instagram, and many more. This was also evident based on a study conducted during the early inception of Facebook; university student preferred using Facebook even when communicating formally with academicians and other staff of the university despite the availability of electronic mail (Mack, Behler, Roberts, & Rimland, 2007). In a recent study conducted by Harinarayana and Raju (2010) also found similar findings where academicians are keen on using Facebook when communicating with their students due to the effectiveness of dispersing and receiving information.

Due to the fact that both academicians and students are keen on using Facebook, there is need to conduct research in order to understand the motive which contributes to the acceptance of using Facebook as a medium of communication despite of other SNSs. Moreover, according to (Aziz, Boon, & Loh, 2010) the use of Facebook among academics could have a colossal benefit for all in many ways. The benefit is not only limited to academician's and students, it also creates information sharing with non-student's as well. "When a user become a fan (or likes) a Facebook page, all of his/her friends are informed. It is likewise, when students / lecturers comment on someone else's status update, their network of friends view the comments too" (p.241 Ayu and Abrizah (2011)). It is important to understand what motivates academicians to use Facebook and which motive has the highest influence of gratification. The importance of understanding the motives of using Facebook by academician is the key, which will help justify the reason behind using Facebook.

This paper reports on a descriptive study of Facebook usage among academician at a private university. Taking into consideration the other SNSs used by the academic staff as well as identifying the gratification level of academic staff using SNSs (Social Interaction Motives, Passing Time Motives, Entertainment Motives, Companionship Motives & Communication Motives) and finally providing proactive suggestions and recommendations.

Use of SNSs by younger generation.

In the context of higher learning institutional, communications made in classroom as well as out of classroom hours by staff or students of the university are regarded as internal communication (Nikola, 2012). It is crucial to understand that educators are required to play an active role in receiving and dispersing information. Hence, educators are required to adapt the medium of communication commonly used by youths for effective communication. According to Trusov, Bodapati, and Bucklin, (2010) SNSs have managed to attract more than 90% of adolescents and young people with over 80 million members. In a separate study, Facebook was found to be world’s most preferred SNSs and was the most successful among other SNSs (Taining, 2012).

Based on Qualman (2011), radio took 38 years for it to be used by 50 million users; television took 13 years; internet 4 years and Facebook took the shortest time within 9 months with over 100 million users. The importance and popularity of Facebook has managed to gain such importance within the shortest time frame compared to other communication tools. This significantly indicates the importance given by users worldwide. With a variety of SNSs to choose from, it has proven to be popular despite of the large selection with young adults aged 18 to 29 whom are 73% of world users (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith & Zickuhr 2010). With many SNSs users between 18 to 29 years it is not common to see users within this age group constantly connected even during class time (Sofiah 2013).

With a large pool of SNSs users which are within the young users age group are easily found on university campus. University campuses are equipped with Wi-Fi. This enables users to retrieve and share information as well as at the same time empower users to maintain communication in the virtual world. Arnett in 2004 explained that Facebook has become a platform where masses make, find and maintain friendship networks for many adolescents. According to Sunil (2008), the trend among young users in Asia found that SNSs users among third world counties as well as developing countries are increasing rapidly. This is due to the fact that users are being exposed to different communication technologies which allows freedom of communication. In a separate study conducted by Sharifah (2013) found that SNSs such as Facebook provides a platform to disseminate ideas, perspectives, photos and videos with love ones; which was once a difficult task to accomplish.

Facebook User’s In Malaysia.

Like any other developing country, Malaysia has always been at par with other developing and developed countries. This is in line with Malaysia’s vision to be a developed nation by the year 2020. In 2005 Pew International Research conducted a study among Asian female Facebook users and it was discovered that users between 18 to 39 years old had a significantly high pattern of using Facebook on a regular basis. In Southeast Asia alone there are approximately 241 million users of Facebook. The acceptance of Facebook by Malaysian has been overwhelming throughout the years. Based on data obtained from a ranking website (Alexa.com); Facebook was the most used SNSs in Malaysian for the year 2010 (Alexa.com, 2010). Moreover, in 2011 Facebook in Malaysia has evolved to pandemic, where in Q1 and Q2 of 2011 Malaysia was in the top ten growing countries for using Facebook (Socialbakers.com, 2011).

Based on Facebook page for the year 2013, the penetration rate of Facebook (Malaysia) was recorded at 83% and male users (54%) were found to be more active using this site compared to female’s users (46%) (“Facebook Statistics by Country”, 2013). Based on table 1, in 2008, there were 378,212 male Facebook users and 427,255 female Facebook users (Malaysia). Over the years male Facebook users have surpass female users with a drastic figure. As of March 2016 there are 10,000,000 male users and 7,700,000 female users in Malaysia. This data is evident enough to instil the importance of conducting this research entirely on Facebook. Moreover, compared to Instagram as of 9 July 2016 Facebook outnumbered Instagram estimated daily reach by 111,000,000 users (“Facebook Statistics by Country”, 2016).

According to a statement given by Nicole Tan (Head of Facebook Malaysia) via NST Online 2016, globally Malaysian have 60 per cent more friends compared to the global average and are likely to watch videos on their mobile devices. This is not surprising based on A. Singh (2013) Malaysian uses 91 per cent of internet in South East Asia. This is a clear indication that Malaysia has a steady growth of Facebook users which are active.

Table 1: Growth of Facebook users in Malaysia

Year	No. of Male users	No. of female users	Total
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2008	378,212	427,255	805,467
2014 (March)	8,600,000	7,200,000	15,800,000
2014 (December)	9,000,000	7,400,000	16,400,000
2015 (November)	9,300,000	7,300,000	17,000,000
2016 (March)	10,000,000	7,700,000	17,700,000

Source: Facebook.com “Advertise on Facebook”, March ,2016

It would be thought-provoking to understand what motivated such gratification and is there any other motive which has led to such phenomena. Since, it is unclear what induced the decrease of female Facebook users in Malaysia over the years and a speedy increase among male Facebook users in Malaysia. Scholars have conducted many studies in the area of Facebook and social media; but scholars have not clearly identified the level of gratification and motives (Sofiah, Zobidah, Jusang & Nizam, 2011; Falahah and Rosmalah, 2011 and Murugesan, 2008).

Academicians And Facebook

Adolescents are swift in adopting SNSs in order to extend their social relationship in physical world as well as virtual world. The preferred SNSs by adolescents are Facebook and this has made adolescents to be among the fastest age group to use SNSs (Chakraborty, Vishik & Raghav 2013). It is the opposite for adults whereby, a lower rate of adoption is recorded when it comes to adopting new and advance technologies Phang, Sutanto, Kankanhalli, Li, Tan, & Teo, 2006). Facebook is a SNSs that heavily encourages sharing which cognitively generates a trust mechanism due to the reciprocal altruism (Castelfranchi and Falcone, 2010; Ostrom and Walker, 2005). Due to the nature of the technology, it has created a sense of belonging and trust among the users. Academicians view Facebook as a place where they can interact with all and within their own comfort. In the long run, academicians, feel rejuvenated when using Facebook without the sense of fear.

There is more than one reason for academicians to use SNSs such as Facebook which makes them gratified as well. Such sites help to reinforce communication between fellow colleagues. According to Maden (2010) adults and older adults embrace Facebook mainly due to the “meaningful contact purpose” which Facebook provides seamlessly. Since, communication motives are also a purpose for academicians to use SNSs (Burton, 2007). By identifying the degree of gratification exhibited by academicians; it can enhance the communication, collaboration and resource sharing between academicians as well as external publics.

There has to be a legitimate reason on what inspires SNSs users to constantly sign in to Facebook during office hours. According to Barron, (2010) SNSs are an excellent mechanism to distract human from their daily activities despite spending a couple of minutes. Having said that, scholars have discovered one of the primary causes of distractions is triggered by SNSs was due to the extreme craving for socialising and engaging with others (Murugesan, 2008). Academicians view Facebook as a means of getting away from their long working hours at office with just a few clicks.

The number of friends an individual has via SNSs varies according to country. According to Van Belleghem (2010) as cited by Goodrich and De Mooij (2013) found that in Asian countries on average the number of friends on their SNSs would be approximately 29 in Japan and 63 in China compared to Western countries such as USA and France where on average a single SNSs user would have approximately few hundred friends on their SNSs. This directly suggests, in every country there are different motives which influences individuals in using SNSs. The difference in motive will derive different gratification needs. It is curial to understand the motive of using SNSs among academicians of a university because they will need to communicate with colleges and students whom are from different countries as well. An important question is whether SNSs motivates academicians as a source of information similar to traditional media or source of entertainment.

Research conducted by several scholars on SNSs users worldwide; it was reported that SNSs is used to maintain communication with friends and family (Albarran and Hutton 2010). Whereas in another study conducted by Vasalou, Joinson, and Courvoisier (2010) found that SNSs users from France and Italy prefer social browsing compared to users from the United States of America. On the other hand, SNSs users from USA place importance on updating their status and photograph posting. An important difference among culture which is predictable is the function of the SNSs on user’s decision to continue using it.

Due to the existents of difference in usage, it is of high importance to understand the fundamental benefits of using Facebook because of it has altered the existing communication method. According to Breeding, (2010) only Facebook has the rudiments of efficacious SNSs which are not found in other social networking sites such as Flickr, Friendster, and Twitter. Breeding further explains academicians and their students have improvised the usage of Facebook in their activities which has been made a must have technology such as mobile phone.

Past Research Findings

In relation with education and Facebook three common dimensions (communication, collaboration and resources of material sharing) are often focused by scholars (Mazman & Uslues 2010) this is because the three dimensions have a strong relationship with Facebook is paired with education. Students and educators use Facebook as a channel to communicate and disperse

information due to the acceptance of the younger generation including students; it is not surprising that it is the medium educators use since it is the common virtual hangout ground for students. Since, it is where youth are easily contacted; it is not surprising based on the qualitative study conducted by Bosch in 2009 found that students use SNSs for a number of reasons such as to keep in touch with individual they knew offline; for academic purposes (e.g., brainstorming, events, study notes and announcements) ; topic selection for next class and etc. Bosch added that Facebook was used to ask questions mainly by student that are passive in class.

There is more than one reason for academicians to use SNSs such as Facebook which concurrently makes them gratified as well. Such sites help to reinforce communication between fellow colleagues. Since, communication motives are also a purpose for academicians to use SNSs (Burton, 2007). By identifying the degree of gratification exhibited by academicians; it can enhance the communication, collaboration and resource sharing between academicians as well as external publics. There has to be a legitimate reason on what inspires SNSs users to constantly sign in to Facebook during office hours. According to Barron, (2010) SNSs are an excellent mechanism to distract human from their daily activities despite spending a couple of minutes. Having said that, scholars have discovered one of the primary causes of distractions is triggered by SNSs was due to the extreme craving for socialising and engaging with others (Murugesan, 2008). Academicians view Facebook as a means of getting away from their long working hours at office with just a few clicks.

According to Walker (2006) academicians who uses blog can be categorised into three categories. Public intellectuals who have a large pool of audience which constitutes the reputation of the blogger based on similar interest. The second categories are those constantly keep an eye on their productivity, for example research publication. And in the third category it is a dissertation blog where a mix of different audience can be observed. There is a high level of significant for academicians to use SNSs since they are also willing to learn based on the three categories. Alternatively, some higher learning institutions forbid their academic staffs from using SNSs on campus (Gregg, 2006 p.471). This is to protect the reputation and interest of the university as well as at the same time optimizing the performance of academic staffs.

Higher learning institutions at Austria are embracing social media such as Facebook to their outmost by incorporating it in their classrooms (Zehrer and Grabmu"ller, 2012). Students and academicians are altering the usage of Facebook according to their needs, wants and motives which creates a sense of gratification in their mind based on their day-to-day usage (Danciu and Grosseck, 2011). SNSs enables users to dispense information in real-time. The gratification obtained by users of Facebook has triggered a wide spread of interest by scholars to better understand this phenomena due to the lack of research focused in the area (Dabner, 2012; Subrahmanyama, Reich, Waechter, Espinoza 2008). There is need to understand what gratifies users since this is a new phenomenal culture. Facebook as so managed to revolutionise communication from person to person as well as person to masses.

SNSs have managed to increase the amount of prevalence in education among young users (Arnold and Paulus, 2010; Schwartz, 2009). The impact of SNSs on education can be seen according to the constant need to login to their SNSs accounts. Moreover, some individuals have multiple SNSs accounts based on their personal preferences. According to a study conducted in 2012 by Zehrer and Grabmu"ller, which looked into the motive of respondents using SNSs. Based on the finding it was reported that 67% of respondents main motive was to be part of SNSs in order to obtain flamboyant and appropriate information. This is the common function of any SNSs, which is to enable users to share and find information swiftly.

Users And Gratification Theory

According to Blumler and Katz (1974), Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), helps to provide an in-depth explanation on the human psychological needs which provides reasons for media usage, access and attitude towards a particular medium. Moreover, users are viewed as active participants when it comes to using media. Blumler and Katz further explain that the desire to gratify multiple needs actually motivates users in using a technology.

This study can be examined via Users and Gratification Theory (UGT). This is mainly because the theory examines the audience as an active audience that decides the selection of media and types of content they are happy to use; based on the level of satisfaction, experience offered for their social and psychological needs (Ruggiero, 2000; Clark, Lee, & Boyer, 2007). UGT helps to identify the gratification received as well as obtained by the users.

Gratification research helps to provide details based on the motivation which is used continuously within the selected medium (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). UGT helps to provide information according to the specified gratification with a medium without disrupting the nature of the users. According to Urista, Dong and Day (2009), Facebook users are able to satisfy their every need on one SNS which is controlled by multiple users. This has never been the case compared to other SNSs before Facebook such as Friendster, Flickr and Twitter. Facebook users are able to fulfil their needs constantly and instantly with the various functions such as, posting on their own wall as well of others; liking a post; sharing a post; messaging, playing games, and many other gratifying features.

Method

Location And Respondents

The private university, situated at Cyberjaya, Malaysia was selected for this research. The private university which is also listed on Bursa Malaysia is located at the heart of Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor, (MSC). The participants of this study are the

academic staff of the university. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed using the simple random sampling method. The questionnaire was adopted from Foregger (2008) and a total of 208 questionnaires were dim fit to be used for this study. A questionnaire survey was chosen as the research instrument and individual self-administered questionnaire was employed as a technique to gather responses from the selected respondents. The personal Facebook experience, formally and informally is important in order to prepare students for the real world experience.

Population Of Subject And Sampling Procedures

This study intends to understand the perspective of academicians on their gratification of SNSs usage mainly Facebook. Studies conducted by Falaha & Rosmala, (2011) focused on the student’s perspective of using Facebook. The sample size was determined based on Taro Yamane’s formula before using purposive sampling. According to Yamane (1976), this formula helps to provide a simple yet specific calculation of the required sample size.

Previous study on Facebook focuses on student’s perspective of using Facebook. The phenomenon of using Facebook is also well adverse at tertiary institutions among academic staffs as well since this sites help to support communication among academicians and also with students (Falahah and Rosmala, 2011).

Results And Discussion.

This section discussed on the data collected. Demographic characteristics of the respondents selected for this study. The researcher will also discuss the research questions which was discussed earlier such as, 1) what are the other SNSs used by the academic staff? 2) what is the gratification level of academic staff using SNSs (Social Interaction Motives, Passing Time Motives, Entertainment Motives, Companionship Motives & Communication Motives)?

Demographic Characteristics Of The Respondents

A total of 208 questionnaire were received and worth using for this study. At a p value of 0.05, 51 per cent of the respondents would login to their Facebook account several times in a day. 61 per cent of the respondents were female, and in terms of race both Malay and Chinese were the main participants with 31 per cent and 22 per cent were Indian. 31 per cent of the respondents were aged between 26 – 30 years old. The second highest age group were between 31 -35 years old with a percentage of 25 per cent. There were also respondents whom were above 41 years of age which made up of 10 per cent. In terms of highest education level, a large majority of the respondents obtained a master degree, with a total of 47 per cent and those who obtained PhD were the least among the respondents which only made 18 per cent from the total respondents.

Despite of 47 per cent of the respondents were Master degree graduates, 43 per cent of the respondents fall under assistant lecturer position. Only one respondent was with a Professor position. 65 per cent of the respondents were married. The first research question what are the other SNSs used by the academic staff? This has managed to reveal that academicians do use a variety of other SNSs. LinkedIn and Twitter was the second preferred SNS followed by Twitter with 36 per cent and 35 per cent respectively. This vividly shows that academicians are not just dependent one SNS and are well adverse with different SNSs. It is also interesting to know that academicians are also fascinated with photo sharing SNS like Instagram where 27 per cent of the respondents are using Instagram. Personal experience using a particular medium would help to provide better perspectives mainly for passive users Blumer (1979). This is significant based on the findings of this study where academicians are willing to use and learn updated communication platforms.

In previous studies it was also found that the use of a particular communication technology is entirely based on the individual using the technology as well as social pressure experienced by the users (Davis, Bagozzi, Warshaw, 1992; Davis, 1989; Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, Davis, 2003). This statement supports RQ2 of the study where the motivation of using Facebook should be based on individual innate perceived motives.

Outcome Of Statistical Analysis

Table 2: Mean for gratification based on class interval

Items of Gratification Motives	Mean
Social Interaction Motives	2.6
Passing Time Motives	2.0
Entertainment Motives	1.7
Companionship Motives	2.4
Communication Motives	2.7

Based on table 2, it is a clear indication based on the mean for each class interval based on the five (5) motives. In order to clearly pinpoint which motive has the highest level of gratification among the academic staff of the university; the mean from the class interval was used to identify it. This is useful to answer the research question what is the gratification level of academic staff using SNSs (Social Interaction Motives, Passing Time Motives, Entertainment Motives, Companionship Motives & Communication Motives)?

The highest mean was recorded by the communication motive with a mean of 2.7. This is possibly due to the working environment of the respondents whom are in a learning environment. Moreover, the campus is connected with free Wi-Fi facility which ensures a strong and stable communication when using Facebook. Computer mediated communication (CMC) has proven to preserve existing friendship even when face-to-face communication is not available (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Valkenburg & Peter, 2007).

The second motive with the highest level was social interaction motives with a total mean of 2.6. This is evident by the fact that academicians would constantly communicate with their students and fellow colleagues around the clock. Based on this motive it is also proven that not only the younger generation are keen communicating using Facebook, academicians whom are at the end of adolescent age also prefer Facebook at a mean of interacting with others (Madden, 2010).

At a mean of 1.7 the lowest level of gratification was recorded for the entertainment motive. This is a clear indication that academic staffs of this private university do not use Facebook as a source of entertainment. Based on the data obtained, 84 per cent of the respondents are between 26 years old – 41 years old. Due to the level of maturity of the respondents based on their age is a clear indication that the respondents do not use Facebook as a source of entertainment. Based on the different level of motivation received for this study, it is in accordance with U&G theory where it focuses on the psychological communication where it focuses on how different people use the same media but for diverse purpose in order to fulfil their needs Severin & Taknard (2007).

Conclusion

The need to better improve and simplify communication and to do better than other has led to where we stand today. The advancement of communication technology has changed the way human communicate. There is a sheer need to understand what really gratifies us human when it comes to communication. There is a need to understand and develop intense understanding on how do human choose the correct channel of communication in order to make sure their message is passed on from one person to the other and from one person to the mass society.

According to Bagozzi (2007) “much of human behavior is not best characterized by an individual acting in isolation. (p. 247)”. With the born of social media such as MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, and many others it has made people to be reachable at any point of time. Using the right tools for example, smartphones, tablet computer, broadband, Wi-Fi and etc., it has made communication more sophisticated beyond ones wilders dreams. In a similar research, Cheung and Lee (2010) the use of SNSs (e.g. Facebook) is dependent on the interaction of the users. The willingness to continue using the SNSs is a collective decision among users based on their gratification level as well as provided by the SNSs.

In conclusion social interaction motive and communication motive were highly significant among the academic staff of the university. The other five motives tested in this study were also significant but they were not as glaring as social iteration motive and communication motive. This proof Facebook is being used responsibly by the academic staff of the usiversity. The respondents are also keen on exploring other SNSs The findings of this study are in line with the finding of Selwyn 2004 & Chakraborty, Vishik & Raghav, 2013 that SNSs such as Facebook enhances knowledge, interaction and social connections. This is also illustrates the perspectives of using other SNSs by academicians.

Recommendations And Implications

A mix method would be beneficial in analysing the data. This is mainly because the researcher was not able to understand the reasoning behind each response. It has led to a week perspective and knowledge for the researcher to develop a personal perspective. Despite of the significantly positive motives there are some higher learning institutions in Malaysia that does not encourage staff using Facebook during office hours. This study will benefit policy makers as well as management of higher learning institution when making prolific decisions.

Suggestions For Further Research

It is hoped that future researchers would include a larger number of respondents so that the results can be generalised to the population. Future researchers could also compare between private higher leaning institution as well as public higher learning institutions and could compare the other motives. Researchers could also compare between Users and Gratification theory with Technology Acceptance Modal, (TAM) in order to understand how SNSs influence device usage.

Further studies may discuss the characteristics of influential communicators in terms of SNSs. According to Taining (2012) only 22 per cent of influential communicators are present among SNSs users. Despite this, there is still inadequate understanding. Further studies should also be conducted on messaging applications such as Line, WhatsApp and Kokao due to their popularity.

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