

STUDY OF ADVANTAGE FACTORS OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

¹ CHIN-CHIUAN LIN, ² TE-TSAI LU

¹ Professor of Department of Business Administration, Kun Shan University, Taiwan

² Associate Professor of Department of Business Administration, Kun Shan University, Taiwan

E-mail: ¹ cclin@mail.ksu.edu.tw, ² tsair@mail.ksu.edu.tw

ABSTRACT

The purpose of present study is tried to find the advantage factors of the social networking sites (SNS). The questionnaire study 1007 responses of three populations (English, Spanish, and Vietnamese speaking) among Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter users. Results indicated that the Facebook is the most popular SNS and over 59% responses preferred. Touch with friends (79%) is the most prefer function of the SNS users. Play games (26%), find jobs (24%), and read news (23%) are also the prefer functions. Further, the English, Spanish, and Vietnamese responses had difference concern about the security issue of SNS. Vietnamese users had the highly concern about the data security on SNS. The present study also compared the main functions of the SNS, such as search, blog, upload, E-commerce, exchange information, and organize schedule, and so on.

Keywords: *Social Networking Sites, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Just a few years ago, the idea of an online social network was revolutionary. While the Web has always provided a way for people to make connections with one another, social networking sites made it easier than ever to find old friends and make new ones. Today, it's rare to find someone who hasn't at least heard of Facebook, MySpace, Twitter or one of a hundred other social networks.

This research surveyed 1,007 subjects using social network site, through an online questionnaire, to try to find out what SNS they prefer and what features this people prefer and look for when social networking. The 1,007 subjects come from three populations, Vietnamese, English and Spanish, this particular situation helped us to find contrasts between the populations when using and preferring a social network site.

Without a doubt, the best reason to join any social networking site is that it lets you make connections with other people. You can use social networking sites to stay up to speed with what your friends are

doing. If the social network is popular, you may be able to track down old friends and acquaintances and renew long-forgotten friendships. Before we go much farther, lets understand what a social network is.

A social network is a social structure made up of individuals (or organizations) called "nodes" which are tied (connected) by one or more specific type of independency, such as friendship, kinship, common interest, financial exchange, dislike, sexual relationships, or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige [1]. Although social networking is possible in person, especially in the workplace, universities, and high schools, it is most popular online. This is because unlike most high schools, colleges, or workplaces, the Internet is filled with millions of individuals who are looking to meet other people, to gather and share first-hand information and experiences. The topics and interests are as varied and rich as the story of our world.

When it comes to online social networking, websites are commonly used. These websites are known as social sites. Social networking

websites function like an online community of Internet users. Depending on the website in question, many of these online community members share common interests in hobbies, religion, or politics. Once you are granted access to a social networking website you can begin to socialize. This socialization may include reading the profile pages of other members and possibly even contacting them. In this research we focused in three important social network sites, Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter.

1.1. Facebook:

In 2004, Mark Zuckerberg, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes, three Harvard University students, launched a website designed to put students in touch with one another, share their photos and meet new people. They called it thefacebook.com, and before long the site became extremely popular on the Harvard campus. A month after the site launched, the creators expanded it to include students from Stanford, Columbia and Yale. By 2005, students in 800 college networks across the United States could join the network, and its membership grew to more than 5 million active users. In August of that year, the site's name changed to Facebook [2].

Facebook was originally intended for college students, but today anyone can join the network. Although the site's scope has expanded to include more than just students, its purpose remains the same -- giving people a way to share information in an easy and entertaining way. Like MySpace, Facebook is a social networking site. Facebook is the second most popular site in the world according to the three-month Alexa traffic rankings. The site has been online since 1997. The time spent in a typical visit to the site is roughly 32 minutes, with 32 seconds spent on each page view. Visitors to the site view an average of 14.1 unique pages per day [3]. Facebook has impressive statistics. Facebook has more than 500 million active users and 50% of them log on to Facebook in any given day. The average user has around 130 friends. People spend over 700 billion minutes per month on Facebook. There are over 900 million objects that people interact with (pages, groups, events and community pages). More than 30 billion pieces of content (web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photo albums,

etc.) shared each month. There are more than 70 translations available on the site. About 70% of Facebook users are outside the United States. There are more than one million developers and entrepreneurs from more than 180 countries. There are more than 150 million active users currently accessing Facebook through their mobile devices. The people that use Facebook on their mobile devices are twice as active on Facebook as non-mobile users [4].

1.2. MySpace:

MySpace is a social networking website. MySpace became the most popular social networking site in the United States in June 2006. According to comScore, MySpace was overtaken internationally by its main competitor, Facebook, in April 2008, based on monthly unique visitors [5]. MySpace allows any individual to quickly and easily post a web page that serves as a digital representation of one's self – their interests, personal style, affiliations, likes and dislikes – and then connect with (link to) “friends” who have done the same. Multimedia enhancements enable users to post and link to pictures, videos, and audio with relative ease. Moreover, the communication features within the site facilitate easy interaction among a population that wants to receive or send information quickly and while engaged in multiple other online tasks. On their profile page, participants can post periodic blogs or journal entries (viewable to the public or restricted to only those approved as friends). They can also leave public “comments” on other profile pages or send private “messages” to other users. All of these activities are done with the purpose of creating a profile page and interpersonal network that is socially appealing but also unique to the individual and representative of his or her likes and dislikes, inclinations, activities, and friendships.

1.3. Twitter:

Many social networking websites have lots of bells and whistles. Sites like MySpace and Facebook let users build profiles, upload pictures, incorporate multimedia, keep a blog and integrate useful or bizarre programs into homepages. But one Web company with a very simple service is rapidly becoming one of the most talked about social

networking service providers: Twitter.

So what does Twitter do? When you sign up with Twitter, you can use the service to post and receive messages to a network of contacts. Instead of sending a dozen e-mails or text messages, you send one message to your Twitter account, and the service distributes it to all your friends. Members use Twitter to organize impromptu gatherings, carry on a group conversation or just send a quick update to let people know what's going on. Twitter enables its users to send and read other users' messages called *tweets*. Tweets are text based posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the profile page. Tweets are publicly visible by default, however, senders can restrict message delivered to their friends list [6].

2. METHODOLOGY:

To figure out what are the preferences of people when using certain social network site, we used a survey as our instrument. To create the questionnaire for the survey, we made a focus group to study and get a feedback of them when using the three selected social network sites, Facebook, MySpace and Twitter. We studied how our focus group reacted when using a social network site, beginning from opening a new account and moving and exploring all the different functions that each site has.

From the study and feedback got from the focus group we started designing the questionnaire for the survey. This questionnaire was divided in different sections. General Behavior, to understand which sites the population prefer, for how long they have been part of a social network site, how active they are with their accounts, the purpose of why they are part of a social network site. Another section is Interface and Privacy, to study what type of interface people like and what privacy settings they configure. The next section is communication tools, to see how people communicate with their friends through the site. The other sections are online games, browser and upload, E-commerce, Twitter, organizer and finally demographic questions.

This questionnaire was published online using Google docs in English [7] and translated then to Spanish [8] and Vietnamese [9] and published

online. The questionnaire was spread using the help of the focus group sending it to their friends in their social network sites. At the end we got 1007 responses, 296 from English speaking population, 338 from Spanish speaking population, and 373 from Vietnamese speaking population. After tabulating and classifying the data we started with the analysis of the data.

3. RESULTS:

Of the 1,007 (554 males and 453 females) prefer using Facebook or My Space. 76% of the 971 users prefer Facebook to MySpace. From the 296 English speaking subjects (136 males and 160 females) 87% prefer Facebook. From the 338 Spanish speaking subjects (210 males and 128 females) 74% prefer Facebook. Finally, from the 373 Vietnamese speaking subjects (208 males and 165 females) 75% prefer Facebook.

Facebook's target audience during the time of the survey was college students. Shortly after the survey was completed, Facebook announced it would no longer restrict membership to individuals affiliated with institutions of higher education. MySpace is a more general interest social networking site, with a focus on music and popular culture. Between other occupations, 401 subjects, 60% of Facebook subjects are related to a school or education, compared to 91 subjects, 30% of MySpace subjects.

The most popular purposes of using social network sites are to stay in touch with friends you see a lot, stand with 76% in Facebook population and 86% in MySpace population, and stay in touch with friends you rarely see in person 75% in Facebook, 86% in MySpace.

Regarding to the preference of interface, Facebook and MySpace users show a lot different. 477 (72%) Facebook users prefer simple and clear interface, just 172 (26%) of them prefer to customize layout and theme, while 231 (76%) MySpace users prefer to customize their own profile, 174 (57%) users like the standard profile and just 86 (28%) users prefer simple and clear interface.

Regarding to privacy, the statistic chosen to

compare is the people that chose “a little” and “not at all” about the security of the site they are using. Spanish population shows a big discrepancy in relation to other populations with just 11% people worry about their personal information, 19% people concern of gossip, 19% of lifestyle related, and 11% of political and religious views. In English population, those numbers are 42% of personal information concern, 67% of gossip between friends concern, 73% of lifestyle related concern, 60% of political and religious views concern and in Vietnamese population, 43% of personal information concern, 61% of gossip between friends concern, 49% of lifestyle related concern and 25% of political and religious views concern.

Regarding occupation, 362 (54%) Facebook users are student, 162 (24%) users are engineer, other occupations just stand a small percentage; MySpace shows others ratio with 84 (28%) users relate to business, 80 (26%) users are student, 77 (25%) users work relating art and others stand a few percent.

For other functions: organize purpose, 46% of the population use Facebook to set up events, 14% prefer MySpace and 3% for other; performance of the browser, Facebook has the best browser with 47% of votes, then MySpace with 23% and Twitter 7%; and 69% responses prefer Facebook, 27% prefer MySpace to upload and share photos, videos or links. E-commerce, 77% don't use E-commerce in their social network sites and 23% make use of the E-commerce.

Regarding to Twitter, 50% of the populations had account and 50% don't use Twitter. The Spanish population uses more Twitter than the other populations and the Vietnamese population is the one that doesn't use it that much in relation to the others.

Analyzing result in comparison between 3 populations and 2 main sites, we come to some main conclusions: Facebook has a big prestige from users, almost SNSs users are youngster from 15 to 30 years old, and Spanish population show a low level of privacy concern while almost users from the other 2 populations feel their SNS barely protect their privacy. All these statistics and data are

included in Tables 1 and 2 (appendix) annexed to this paper.

4. CONCLUSION:

Since the focus group consigned, we found out that Twitter is not in the same type with Facebook and MySpace. Twitter doesn't provide upload, chat, and comment, so it doesn't allow friends to communicate with each other like a entertainment SNS. Simply, Twitter is a platform for people to public ideas and update information from the people that you are following. You can text messages to cellphone through the site with restriction of 140 characters. People like Twitter because of its simple and clear interface.

The study shows more about the discrepancy between Facebook and MySpace in features and interface. Even though, Facebook was founded after MySpace, Facebook with their functions, interface and services achieved a high prestige from users and became the most popular SNS.

Numbers shows the population of SNS society is young (15 to 30 years old) and sharing is a vital demand in the new century.

SNS replaced messenger, blog, photo bucket, youtube, mailbox, etc in concept of many Internet users. But privacy rose up a wave of concern that most of people from English speaking population and Vietnamese population feel dangerous about their private information. But out of the rule, Spanish speaking population shows a low level of privacy concern. That might open another study of how culture factors affect the way they communicate in SNS.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

This study was supported by a Research Grant from the National Sciences Council of the R.O.C., Grant no. NSC 99-2213-E-168-002. We also thank Doblado, R. and Tran, G. for questionnaire survey.

REFERENCES:

1. Wikipedia (Sep 7, 2010). Retrieved August 29, 2010, from Wikipedia.org:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_network.
2. Strickland, J. (n.d.). Retrieved August 29, 2010, fromHowstuffworks.com:
<http://computer.howstuffworks.com/internet/socialnetworking/networks/facebook.htm>.
3. Alexa. (n.d.). Retrieved August 29, 2010, from Alexa.com:
<http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/facebook.com>.
4. Facebook. (n.d.). Retrieved August 29, 2010, from Facebook.com:
<http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>.
5. Wikipedia (Sep 5, 2010). Retrieved August 29, 2010, from Wikipedia.org:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_space.
6. Wikipedia. (n.d.). Retrieved August 29, 2010, from Wikipedia.org:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter>
7. Doblado, R., & Tran, G. (2010). *Social Network Questionnaire (English)*. Retrieved from:
<https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dEo0NXBNQWF6c3JERFV2Sk9JeEhOQ3c6MQ>.
8. Doblado, R., & Tran, G. (2010). *Social Network Questionnaire (Spanish)*. Retrieved from
<https://spreadsheets0.google.com/viewform?formkey=dDg1aFBaVmMwY2ZYUEtZUUhGZVA0NIE6MQ>.
9. Doblado, R., & Tran, G. (2010). *Social Network Questionnaire (Vietnamese)*. Retrieved from:
<https://spreadsheets0.google.com/viewform?formkey=dFVMVWQ1N1E2WWh2dmFkYmdUcGFIZ0E6MQ>.

Table 1: Relation between factors and the Social Network Sites

Factor		Facebook	%	MySpace	%
N	971	667	31%	304	69%
Population	English	22	3%	133	44%
	Spanish	69	10%	231	76%
	Vietnamese	177	27%	232	76%
Gender	Male	342	51%	172	57%
	Female	325	49%	132	43%
Age	Less than 15	10	1%	5	2%
	15 to 20	246	37%	73	24%
	21 to 30	342	51%	78	26%
	31 to 40	69	10%	148	49%
	More 40	0	0%	0	0%
Occupation	Student	362	54%	80	26%
	Business	35	5%	84	28%
	Manufacturing	10	1%	10	3%
	Engineering	162	24%	11	4%
	Education	39	6%	11	4%
	Agriculture	5	1%	0	0%
	Services	24	4%	19	6%
	House Keeper	14	2%	0	0%
	Arts	10	1%	77	25%
	Entertainment	10	1%	5	2%
Unemployed	6	1%	10	3%	
Purpose	Make new friends	195	29%	210	69%
	Stay in touch with friends you see a lot	508	76%	261	86%
	Stay in touch with friends you rarely see in person	501	75%	260	86%
	Make plans with your friends	404	61%	163	54%
	Play online games	261	39%	77	25%
	Make new business or professional contacts	108	16%	155	51%
	Promote yourself or your work	92	14%	60	20%
	Find some information	142	21%	42	14%
	Share Videos / Pictures	274	41%	232	76%
Log in Device	Personal Computer	240	36%	152	50%
	Laptop	542	81%	207	68%
	Smartphone	398	60%	117	38%
Interface Preference	Simple and clear	477	72%	86	28%
	Be able to customize my profile's layout and theme.	172	26%	231	76%
	Simple and standard format for your profile's theme and layout.	178	27%	174	57%
	Easy to find and surf around the functions.	237	36%	76	25%
	Can be translated to different languages	144	22%	67	22%
Prefered Communication Tool	Post message to a friend page or wall.	554	83%	214	70%
	Send a bulletin or group message to all your friends	337	51%	213	70%
	Send private messages to a friend within a social networking system.	471	71%	136	45%
	Wink or poke your friends.	52	8%	62	20%
	Post comments to a friend's blog.	414	62%	146	48%
	Chat	430	64%	118	39%
	Send group messages	260	39%	130	43%
Privacy Settings	Personal Information	173	26%	63	21%
	Gossip between friends	226	34%	127	42%
	Lifestyle related (eg. Photos, Videos, Blogs, Posts, e	237	36%	127	42%
	Political and Religious Views	112	17%	57	19%

Table 2: Relation between factors and Populations

Factor		English	%	Spanish	%	Vietnamese	%
N	1007	296	29%	338	34%	373	37%
Prefered SNS	MySpace	20	7%	107	32%	177	47%
	Facebook	134	45%	301	89%	232	62%
	Twitter	35	12%	37	11%	78	21%
Gender	Male	136	46%	210	62%	208	56%
	Female	160	54%	128	38%	165	44%
Age	Less than 15	0	0%	1	0%	10	3%
	15 to 20	141	48%	143	42%	97	26%
	21 to 30	148	50%	125	37%	174	47%
	31 to 40	7	2%	69	20%	92	25%
	More 40	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Occupation	Student	228	77%	124	37%	143	38%
	Business	5	2%	36	11%	44	12%
	Manufacturing	0	0%	0	0%	10	3%
	Engineering	12	4%	88	26%	47	13%
	Education	5	2%	8	2%	43	12%
	Agriculture	2	1%	0	0%	5	1%
	Services	20	7%	9	3%	20	5%
	House Keeper	0	0%	10	3%	29	8%
	Arts	24	8%	33	10%	1	0%
	Entertainment	0	0%	30	9%	10	3%
Unemployed	0	0%	0	0%	11	3%	
Purpose	Make new friends	51	17%	145	43%	158	42%
	Stay in touch with friends you see a lot	99	33%	242	72%	287	77%
	Stay in touch with friends you rarely see in person	107	36%	243	72%	273	73%
	Make plans with your friends	57	19%	196	58%	191	51%
	Play online games	42	14%	106	31%	115	31%
	Make new business or professional contacts	35	12%	69	20%	88	24%
	Promote yourself or your work	37	13%	30	9%	105	28%
	Find some information	70	24%	48	14%	79	21%
Share Videos / Pictures	83	28%	37	11%	232	62%	
Log in Device	Personal Computer	55	19%	75	22%	207	55%
	Laptop	101	34%	263	78%	257	69%
	Smartphone	39	13%	231	68%	166	45%
Interface Preference	Simple and clear	213	72%	218	64%	171	46%
	Be able to customize my profile's layout and theme.	90	30%	99	29%	201	54%
	Simple and standard format for your profile's theme and layout.	82	28%	38	11%	0	0%
	Easy to find and surf around the functions.	139	47%	114	34%	83	22%
	Can be translated to different languages	104	35%	10	3%	93	25%
Prefered Communication Tool	Post message to a friend page or wall.	290	98%	317	94%	289	77%
	Send a bulletin or group message to all your friends	112	38%	143	42%	277	74%
	Send private messages to a friend within a social networking system.	150	51%	196	58%	262	70%
	Wink or poke your friends.	38	13%	7	2%	94	25%
	Post comments to a friend's blog.	191	65%	153	45%	179	48%
	Chat	113	38%	183	54%	195	52%
	Send group messages	37	13%	124	37%	136	36%
Privacy Settings	Personal Information	125	42%	38	11%	160	43%
	Gossip between friends	197	67%	63	19%	226	61%
	Lifestyle related (eg. Photos, Videos, Blogs, Posts, etc.)	215	73%	65	19%	184	49%
	Political and Religious Views	179	60%	72	21%	95	25%