USAGE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES BY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore the reasons for using social networking sites particularly facebook. The data was collected from 126 university students through a self-administered questionnaire and later on analyzed through basic inferential statistics and factor analysis. The results have shown that students are using these sites to access current affairs, to entertain themselves, to discuss educational matters, to trace friends and family members and for personal chatting. They also use these sites to explore online shopping sources, to express personal feelings, to search life partner and to talk to friends and family members. In addition to this, people are using these sites to tease other people. This research has also highlighted some limitations.

Key Words: Social networking sites, Facebook, Pakistan, Reasons, Factors

Introduction

Social networking sites (SNS hereafter), also called social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, a computer mediated communication technology, have infiltered every aspect of people's life (Correa et al., 2010; Tapscott, 2008). SNS is an online communication method in which computers are used as a tool to generate profiles online and to build personal network which allows them to connect to other people (Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Kang & Lee, 2010; Lipsman, 2007; Subrahmanyam et al., 2008). SNS is a virtual environment which allows users to share images, photos, and texts, and to link with other people available on the same network (Lin & Lu, 2011; Boyd & Ellison, 2010; Tapscott, 2008; Powell, 2009). SNS, particularly Facebook, is one of the fastest growing personal networking tools. Its evidence can be seen from the fact that the users of Facebook have increased from 150 million to 350 million between January to December 2009 (Eldon, 2009) and a large number of them are young people (Subrahmanyam et al., 2008; Lenhart & Madden, 2007). Although, the research on the use of social networking sites by young people is increasing (Ellison et al., 2007; Valkenburg et al., 2006; Subrahmanyam et al., 2008; Roblyer et al., 2010), still a little is known about why and how they use these sites (Pempek et al., 2009). This research is targeted to fill this gap particularly focusing on the reasons

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for using these sites by young people of Pakistan. The specific research question which will be addressed in this research is: what are the reasons for using social networking sites by university students? The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: The next section reviews the literature on the use of social networking sites. After that a section on research methodology has been written. The penultimate section presents the data analysis results. The last section presents the conclusion of this research and highlights avenues for the future researchers.

Literature Review

Evolution of Social Networking Websites

The creation ofSNS is a huge technological development. These sites are widely used by the millions of people across the world. Classmates.com was the first official SNS founded in 1995. Later on, in 1997, SixDegree.com was established. These developments led to the emergence of Cyworld (in 2001), Friendster (in 2002), Skyblog (in 2002), Orkut (in 2004), Myspace (in 2005), Yahoo 360 (in 2005), Twitter (in 2006) and Facebook (in 2006). At the moment, there are over 100 social networking sites connecting millions of people around the World.

Uses of Social Networking Sites

The previous literature has shown that adults are using social networking sites for various reasons. The pertinent reasons are to stay in touch with their friends and family members (Subrahmanyam et al., 2008; Lampe et al., 2007; Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Pempek et al., 2009; Wiley & Sisson, 2006), to spend their free time (Subrahmanyam et al., 2008) and to check whether their friends have accounts on these sites (Subrahmanyam et al., 2008). Sometimes, these sites are used to make plans with their friends and family members (Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Subrahmanyam et al., 2008; Pempek et al., 2009) and to meet new people (Subrahmanyam et al., 2008; Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Pekpek et al., 2009). People are also using these sites to express their opinions, to comment on people's profile, and sometimes to share their favorite music and video clips (Subrahmanyam et al., 2008; Pempek et al., 2009). These sites are also being used for flirting purpose (Subrahmanyam et al., 2008; Lenhart & Madden, 2007). Authors have pointed out that people use social media particularly facebook to maintain existing offline

connections (Ellison et al., 2007; Wiley & Sisson, 2006). It is not the case that people are only using these social networking sites for relationship building rather than using them for academic purposes. Authors have pointed out that people use social media to discuss educational matters such as: school work, assignments, and presentations etc (see Karlin, 2007; Roblyer et al., 2010; Pempek et al., 2009). A study on youth suggests that respondents sometime use social media to let others know about them (Wiley & Sisson, 2006; Pempek et al., 2009) and also to gauge peer opinions about themselves (Valkenburg et al., 2005). Previous research also suggests that people also use social media sites for lurking and to read others posts (Suziki & Calzo, 2004; Pempek et al., 2009). Evidence of reading other people's profile and looking into their photos has also been found by Pempek et al. (2009). In addition, people also perform such activities as reading posts on their walls, viewing posts on others walls, and posting on their walls on the social media (Pempek et al., 2009). Sometimes, these sites are used to share jokes with friends and family members (Pempek et al., 2009).

Research Methodology

In this research, the data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire based on the work of previous authors notably Subrahmanyam et al. (2008), Lampe et al. (2007), Lenhart & Madden (2007), Pempek et al. (2009), Wiley & Sisson (2006), Karlin (2007), Roblyer et al. (2010), Valkenburg et al. (2005), and Suziki & Calzo (2004). After the initial development of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted to determine the relevance and the appropriateness of the questions included in the questionnaire. For this purpose, the data was collected from 20 respondents. Based on the analysis of the pilot data, a few items were found irrelevant and were deleted from the final questionnaire. The finalized questionnaire was later distributed among the students of business administration at BZU Sahiwal. Among the 150 questionnaires distributed, 126 questionnaires were collected yielding a response rate of 84%. Among the respondents, 56% are male and 85% of them have age between 20-23 years. 70% of the respondents have master degree, 24% have bachelor degree, and 6% have M. Phil degree. Further, 57% of the respondents are living in urban areas.

Table 1: Sample Description

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	70	55.56
Female	56	44.44
Age		
20-23 Years	118	85.7
24-26 Years	18	14.3
I am a student of		
Bachelor Degree (e.g. BBA)	30	23.8
Master Degree (MBA)	88	69.8
MPhil Degree	8	6.3
I live in		
Urban Area	72	57.1
Rural Area	50	39.7

Data Analysis

Table 2 shows that Pakistani students are using social networking sites for numerous reasons. The main reasons for using social networking sites are to share pictures with friends and family members (t-value = 16.352, p-value = 0.000), to get new ideas (t-value = 13.124 , p-value = 0.000), to access news (t-value = 15.798 , p-value = 0.000), to know what is happening in the world (t-value = 12.939, p-value = 0.000), to talk to friends and family members (t-value = 13.367, p-value = 0.000), to entertain themselves (t-value = 10.048, p-value = 0.000), to share educational activities (t-value = 11.551, p-value = 0.000), and to make free calls (t-value = 8.562, p-value = 0.000). In addition to this, students are using these networking sites to trace out childhood friends (t-value = 9.400, p-value = 0.000), to monitor others' activities (t-value = 8.443, p-value = 0.000), to activate personal profiles (t-value = 8.648, p-value = 0.000), to spend free time (t-value = 6.327, p-value = 0.000), to wish and celebrate birthdays (t-value =6.575, p-value = 0.00), to discuss study related matters (t-value = 7.984, p-value = 0.000), to express opinions about current issues (t-value = 6.388, p-value = 0.000), and due to less costly method of communication (t-value = 5.577, p-value = 0.000). It is

also used for personal chatting (t-value = 6.759, p-value = 0.000), to save money (t-value = 5.620, p-value = 0.000), to become a member of different forums and networks (t-value = 5.937, p-value = 0.000), and to explore new jobs (t-value = 4.956, p-value = 0.000). Sometime students are using these sites to know various sources of online shopping (t-value = 3.752, p-value = 0.000) and to know various products available for sale (t-value = 3.650, p-value = 0.000). In addition to the above, people are using these sites to publish personal achievements or accomplishments e.g. increase in salary, promotion, and acquisition of a house or car (t-value = 3.021, p-value = 0.003). The research has shown that factors such as playing games (t-value = 0.346, p-value = .730), advertising products (t-value = 0.354, p-value = 0.724), shopping online (t-value = -0.570, p-value = 0.570), and attracting people towards themselves (t-value = -0.826, p-value = 0.410) were found insignificant. Moreover, elements such as expressing personal feelings (t-value = -3.068, p-value = 0.003), searching life partner (t-value = -5.495, p-value = 000), and making friends to get rid of family isolation (t-value = -2.578, p-value = 0.011) were found negatively significant.

Table 2: Usage of Social Networking Sites by Pakistani Students

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig-value
To share pictures with friends and family members	114	4.281	.836	16.352	.000
To get new ideas	126	4.175	1.005	13.124	.000
To access news	112	4.161	.778	15.798	.000
To know what is happening in the world	114	4.158	.955	12.939	.000
To talk to friends and family members	114	4.140	.911	13.367	.000
To know about friends and family members	114	4.123	.997	12.027	.000
For entertainment purpose (e.g. Music, videos etc.)	126	4.000	1.117	10.048	.000
To share educational activities	126	3.873	.848	11.551	.000
Because it allows me free calls	118	3.848	1.075	8.562	.000
To trace out child hood friends/ classmates /relatives etc.	112	3.839	.945	9.400	.000
Due to less costly method of communication	124	3.742	.918	8.996	.000

People use social media to monitor others' activities	114	3.737	.932	8.443	.000
To update personal activities/status	114	3.684	.845	8.648	.000
To spend free time	126	3.683	1.211	6.327	.000
To wish/celebrate birthdays	112	3.679	1.092	6.575	.000
For personal chatting	114	3.667	1.053	6.759	.000
To discuss study related matters	126	3.651	.915	7.984	.000
To express my opinion about issues/topics	114	3.614	1.026	6.388	.000
To save money for talking to friends and family members	124	3.613	1.214	5.620	.000
To get knowledge by becoming a member of a forum	122	3.557	1.037	5.937	.000
To know available jobs	124	3.548	1.232	4.956	.000
To discuss academic matters	124	3.532	.825	7.221	.000
Due to cost effective medium of communication	126	3.460	.927	5.577	.000
To know sources of online shopping	126	3.413	1.235	3.752	.000
To discuss current issues (e.g. Imran Khan's marriage, earth quake, terrorist attack)	114	3.404	1.274	3.381	.001
To know about products available for sale	126	3.397	1.220	3.650	.000
To share information (e.g. Birth day, salary, promotion)	112	3.357	1.251	3.021	.003
To play games (e.g. Candy crush)	126	3.048	1.543	.346	.730
To advertise my products	126	3.048	1.512	.354	.724
For online shopping purpose	126	2.937	1.251	-.570	.570
To attract people towards me	114	2.912	1.133	-.826	.410
To make friends to get rid of family isolation	110	2.746	1.035	-2.578	.011
To express personal feelings	112	2.679	1.109	-3.068	.003

To search life partner	112	2.304	1.341	-5.495	.000

Consequences of Social Networking Sites

Table 3 presents the consequences for using social networking sites. The result shows that respondents have the opinion that people use fake identities on the social media sites (t-value = 13.661 p-value = 0.000) and they use them to tease other people (t-value = 10.085, p-value = 0.000). Further they have the opinion that social media sites hurt the privacy of the users (t-value = 11.431, p-value = 0.000). The respondents have further argued that social media sites have resulted in decline in physical interaction among people (t-value = 9.934, p-value = 0.000) and increase in divorce rate (t-value = 6.651, p-value = 0.000).

Table 3: Consequences of Social Networking Sites

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig-value
People use fake ids on the social media	114	4.351	1.056	13.661	.000
Social media hurts privacy of people	114	4.123	1.049	11.431	.000
Due to social media physical interaction is declining	114	4.035	1.112	9.934	.000
People use social media to tease others	114	3.947	1.003	10.085	.000
Social media is causing increase in divorce rate	114	3.737	1.183	6.651	.000
To monitor activities of friends and family members	114	3.175	1.131	1.657	.100

Factor Analysis

After analyzing the reasons for using social networking sites, a factor analysis was performed through varimax rotation and is presented in Table 4. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (i.e. 0.452) and the Bartlett's Test of sphericity (Approx. Chi-Square = 1333.68, df = 351, p-value = 0.000) supports the factorability of the items included in the analysis. The results revealed the presence of nine factors and these nine factors explain a cumulative variance of 71.57%. The first three factors have four significant loadings, the fourth factor has three significant loadings, and the last four factors have two significant loadings. The loading scores vary from 0.515 to 0.880. The factors

extracted through the factor analysis are: current affairs, entertainment, discussion of educational matters, trace friends and family members, personal chatting, exploration of online shopping sources, express personal feelings and search life partner, teasing people, and to talk to friends and family members.

Table 4: Factors considered important in using social media

Items	Current Affairs	Entertainment	Educational matters	To trace friends and family members	Personal Chatting	Shopping sources	Express personal feelings and search life partners	To tease others	Less costly method to talk to friends and family members	Commonality Score
To know what is happening in the world	.842									.813
To discuss current issues	.802									.772
To access news	.778									.757
To express my opinion about issues/topics	.649									.757
For entertainment purpose (e.g. Music, videos etc.)		.767								.751
To update personal activities/status		.764								.708
To make friends to get rid of family isolation		.564								.591
To share information (e.g. Birth day, salary, promotion)		.544								.667
To discuss academic matters			.833							.731
To discuss study related matters			.660							.730
Due to cost effective medium of communication			.564							.702
To share educational activities			.510							.515
To trace out child hood friends/ classmates /relatives etc.				.732						.681
To spend free time				.676						.698
To talk to friends and family members				.621						.718
For personal chatting					.757					.634

To share pictures with friends and family members						.741				.688
To know about products available for sale						.834				.812
To know sources of online shopping						.720				.653
To express personal feelings							.813			.752
To search life partner							.749			.717
People use social media to tease others								.918		.880
People use fake ids on social media								.799		.830
To save money for talking to friends and family members									.798	.726
To know about friends and family members									.670	.647
Eigen-Values	2.74	2.54	2.24	2.22	2.07	2.04	1.95	1.83	1.68	
Percent of Variance	10.15	9.42	8.31	8.23	7.65	7.54	7.21	6.78	6.23	
Cumulative	10.15	19.58	27.89	16.13	43.78	51.32	58.54	65.33	71.56	

Conclusion

Analysis of the collected data through basic inferential statistics and factor analysis techniques has highlighted numerous reasons that can be grouped into nine main factors. The resultant factors are current affairs, entertainment, discussion of educational matters, trace friends and family members, personal chatting, exploration of online shopping sources, express personal feelings, search life partner, and to talk to friends and family members. The findings of this research are consistent with the findings of existing literature (see Subrahmanyam et al., 2008; Lampe et

al., 2007; Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Pempek et al., 2009; Wiley & Sisson, 2006). The result shows that students are using social networking sites to explore online sources, to access current affairs, and for entertainment purpose. These findings have implications for the companies and require them to advertise their products through social media along with the traditional advertising media. This study also shows that people are using social networking sites to discuss educational matters and this finding highlights the need for the use of social media for educational institutions. In addition to this, people are using these sites to tease other people. This finding has implications for the policy makers and requires them to develop laws to control the misuse of social media. The findings of this study also bring implications for the parents as this research shows that social media is used to trace friends and family members, to express personal feelings and to search life partner. This kind of behaviors seems to be less acceptable for developing countries' societies in general and the Pakistani society in particular. Therefore, the parents need to monitor the activities of their kids on social media.

This research is not free from limitations. In this research only one social networking site was assessed. Other sites may be used in different ways. Therefore, future researchers are required to assess the use of other sites such as twitter, myspace etc. Further, this research took the opinions of university students only and non-university adults may use these sites in a slightly different ways. Therefore, incorporation of the opinions of non-university adults may provide other insights. This research focuses on the reasons for using social networking sites and used a survey method only. The use of other research methods particularly diary method may provide an insight about the amount of time spent on social media.

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