Born Fast, Die Young?
A Study of the User’s Social Network Site Continuance

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ABSTRACT
How to keep users has become the most desirable knowledge to social network site (SNS) managers. In the current study, the author proposes a user’s SNS continuance model by incorporating the information system continuance model and the impression management theory. The author finds that a user’s actualization of the hoped for possible self and perceived informativeness of an SNS are two critical factors that can significantly positively influence the user’s perceived usefulness of the SNS, perceived enjoyment on the Web site, and his or her SNS continuance intention. The author suggests that these findings provide several practical implications to SNS management and development.

Keywords: Continuance Intention, Facebook, Impression Management Theory, Information Systems Continuance Model, Online Social Networking, Social Media Management, Social Network Site, Virtual Communities

INTRODUCTION
The online social networking industry has seen a bizarre development pattern. Except for a small number of Web sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, many social network sites (SNS) are “born” fast and then rapidly “die”: Boyd and Ellison (2007) argue that Friendster was dominating the online social networking market in the late 1990s. However, the Web site experienced a dramatic user loss after a short five year growth (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Currently, Friendster has changed to an online gaming site to survive in the market. Substituting Friendster, MySpace was the most visited and the most valuable SNS in the U.S. in the early 2000s (Thelwall, 2008). However, the number of active users on MySpace has experienced a dramatic decline since 2006. Wilkinson and Thelwall (2010) argue that only 1 out 10 users would still use MySpace after joining in the site one year later. It is reported that the number of active users on MySpace is merely 20 million, which results in an 80% user decrease from its pinnacle (Evans, 2012). The strange “born fast, die young” phenomenon among SNS raises an important research question: What factors can influence the user’s SNS continuance after their initial adoption of the Web service? Answers to this question are not only useful for information systems (IS) research to further understand the user’s intention and behaviors on SNS, but will

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also provide practical implications to SNS managers, supporting them to create effective strategies to keep valuable user resources and reach a continuous success.

In this study, we propose a new SNS continuance model to explore answers to this question. This paper is organized in the following manner: First, we have a literature review on the two theoretical foundations of our proposed model, including the IS continuous model (Bhattacherjee, 2001) and the impression management theory (Ellison et al., 2006; Park, 2011; Zhao et al., 2008). Second, we hypothesize the relationships between the user’s SNS continuance intention and its antecedent factors. Third, we have a brief discussion on the methodology used for data collections. Data analyses, contributions to SNS research, and practical implications from this study will be presented in the last three sections.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Our research model is built on two theoretical foundations, including the IS continuance model and the impression management theory. We adopt these two collections of research for the following reasons: First, an SNS is primarily a service based information system (Wellman, 2001). Thus, factors investigated by the general IS continuance model (Bhattacherjee, 2001) should be taken into account, when we study the user’s SNS continuance intention. Second, an SNS is essentially a social medium (Ellison et al., 2007). When a user shares information with others on SNS, his or her social image will be represented by the information (such as photos, videos, status updates) shared in the cyber space (Mehdizadeh, 2010). Thus, factors from impression management studies should also be considered, when we investigate the user’s intention to stay in a virtual gregarious community and an online social networking system.

IS Continuance Model

A user’s continuance has received a great deal of attention from the IS research. The success of an information system is not only dependent on the user’s initial acceptance, but also is strongly associated with the user’s continuance in the system (Jasperson et al., 2005; Limayem et al., 2007). According to the expectation-confirmation theory, Bhattacherjee (2001) proposes an IS continuance model, and argues that three factors (i.e., the user’s satisfaction, confirmation of pre-adoption expectation, and post-adoption expectation) can strongly influence the user’s intention and behaviors after the system adoption. Furthermore, Bhattacherjee (2001) adopts the user’s perceived usefulness to measure the post-adoption expectation. Validating the IS continuance model in an online banking system, Bhattacherjee (2001) argues that the user’s satisfaction, confirmation, and perceived usefulness all have significant positive effects on the user’s continuance intention. Applying the IS continuance model into the SNS context, Kim et al. (2011) argue that a user’s perceived enjoyment is also a critical factor of the user’s continuance. Even though the user’s perceived enjoyment has no significant effect on his or her satisfaction toward an SNS, the perceived enjoyment can strongly positively influence the user’s continuance on the Web site (Kim et al., 2011). Chang and Zhu (2012) argue that bonding social capitals (e.g., increasing the intimacy with known individuals) and bridging social capitals (e.g., creating connections with unknown individuals) are two motivations for a user to adopt an SNS. In the post-adoptive stage, the user’s perceived bridging social capital can significantly positively influence the users’ satisfaction and continuance intention, while perceived bonding social capital does not have such effects (Chang & Zhu, 2012). Similarly, Lin and Lu (2011) find that the number of peers on an SNS can only significantly affect the female user’s continuance on
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