The Influence of Social Presence, Social Exchange and Feedback Features on SNS Continuous Use: The Facebook Context

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ABSTRACT

Social network sites (SNS) are venues for information sharing that provide a variety of communication features capable of stirring emotions, attitudes and beliefs. This paper highlights the role of SNS feedback features and the meanings they communicate to their users, as design elements capable of enhancing the SNS experience. Based on the theories of Social Presence and Social Exchange, the study suggests and empirically validates a research model where Feedback, Perceived Social Presence, Attitude, Enjoyment and Perceived Usefulness are hypothesized to explain intentions to continue to use an SNS. The results of an online survey of 262 Facebook users found that feedback features were central SNS components that influenced perceptions of social presence and enjoyment, which in turn, along with attitude and perceived usefulness, influenced intentions to continue using Facebook, explaining 55% of its variance. The theoretical and practical implications of these results are discussed.

KEYWORDS

Adoption, Facebook, Feedback, IS Features, Post-Adoption, Social Exchange, Social Network Sites, Social Presence, Use

INTRODUCTION

Social network sites (SNS) such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Google Plus have become tremendously popular in the last decade. SNS are now widely used technologies (Gao, Dai, Fan, & Kang, 2010) that have fostered novel communication and information sharing venues while becoming deeply integrated into the everyday lives of their users (Cheikh-Ammar & Barki, 2012, 2013; Yoo, 2010). Many popular SNS are often viewed as indispensable by their users who visit these social venues regularly as part of their daily routines (Patterson, 2012; Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). SNS have also enabled both electronic and traditional companies to cultivate novel business opportunities (Roosendaal, 2011) and to interact with their customers, partners, and potential suppliers by leveraging the direct communication stream afforded by SNS (C. Xu, Ryan, Prybutok, & Wen, 2012). Organizations have also acknowledged the benefits of such social platforms with some of them even implementing their own SNS for internal use by their employees (DiMicco et al., 2008).

Moreover, the extensive diffusion and adoption of social media platforms is also expected to help organizations in the incoming years generate greater business value by enhancing their operational efficiency and revenue flows (Fosso Wamba & Carter, 2014). While organizations have only recently...
started tapping into the potential benefits of SNS (Kane, Alavi, Labianca, & Borgatti, 2014), managers generally believe that social businesses based on SNS tools will be crucial to business survival in the near future (Kiron, Palmer, Phillips, & Kruschwitz, 2012). Even though SNS differ in their business models and in the value they deliver to their users, in order to be considered successful, they all rely on regular contributions from, and continuous interactions of their members (C. Xu et al., 2012). As such, there is a need to better understand the reasons that motivate individuals to use SNS, especially since the IS literature presently lacks empirically validated theories that examine the adoption and continuous use of such platforms (Ryan & Xenos, 2011).

By drawing from the literature on post-adoption and e-commerce, the present paper examines factors that influence individuals’ intentions to continue the use of SNS. Similar to other social technologies, SNS have certain distinguishable features which can have significant implications for users and organizations (Roosendaal, 2011, 2012). For example, as venues for information sharing, SNS are typical communication platforms where the transmission of messages between users can take different forms, ranging from written texts, pictures and videos to symbols (i.e. thumbs-up), while concurrently providing several interactivity features (Hsu, Chen, Huang, & Huang, 2012). SNS are communication and information sharing platforms where individuals can interact with each other and where fun and human contact are often at the forefront (B. Kim, 2011). As a result, SNS features that can amplify feelings of enjoyment and sociability are also able to mold the online social experience of SNS users. Hence, we argue that the different meanings individuals associate with SNS feedback features can also reinforce their feelings of social presence and enjoyment during their use of SNS (Gefen & Straub, 2004; Hassanein & Head, 2007; Hess, Fuller, & Campbell, 2009; N. Kumar & Benbasat, 2006), which in turn can shape their online social experience, as well as their intention to continue using the SNS.

While many SNS are currently available, we selected Facebook as our study context for several related reasons. Facebook is the most widely used SNS (so-Cheung et al. 2011) and it has significant implications for organizations of different sizes (Fosso Wamba & Carter, 2014). It had 890 million daily active users and 1.39 billion monthly active users as of December 31, 2014 (Facebook, 2015). This popularity has resulted in extensive online user-generated content which is attracting growing attention from business (Goh, Heng, & Lin, 2013). Today, many firms have set-up fan pages on Facebook in order to take advantage of the direct communication channel it provides (Website-Monitoring 2010), thereby allowing them to harness the social capital of the people who like their products, share them with their friends and eventually buy their merchandise (Fosso Wamba & Carter, 2014). Moreover, Facebook is thought to provide its users with more resources than other SNS, and is used for a variety of purposes that include education, entertainment, work, and political activism (Golder, Wilkinson, & Huberman, 2007). As such, Facebook was deemed to provide an appropriate platform for the study of continuous SNS use.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. We begin by presenting a conceptual model based on the Theory of Social Presence, the Theory of Social Exchange, existing research on SNS, as well as previous work that examined the role of perceived social presence in e-services and online shopping contexts. We then present and discuss the constructs of the research model and elaborate on their inter-relations based on theoretical arguments from the relevant literature. Next we discuss the study methodology and highlight its results. Finally, the theoretical and practical implications of the study and its findings are discussed.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Social Presence Theory

Social Presence Theory posits that individuals seek a certain level of fit between a task and a chosen communication medium (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976). Further, the effectiveness of a communication tool is thought to depend on its capability to transmit interpersonal cues required for
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