User’s Social Network Site Loyalty

Bo Han, Texas A&M University Commerce, Commerce, Texas, USA

ABSTRACT

The answers to the question of how to build a user’s loyalty have become the most desirable knowledge to academics and practitioners, when the competitions turn drastic among social network sites. This article proposes a new model to investigate the influential factors of the user's cognitive loyalty and affective loyalty to a social network site. The authors find that the user’s actualization of hoped for self and the informativeness of a social network site both have significant positive effects on the user’s perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment, thereby positively influencing the user’s loyalties to the Web site.

KEYWORDS

Affective Loyalty, Cognitive Loyalty, Commitment, Information Systems Continuance Model, Social Network Site Loyalty, Taste Performance Theory

INTRODUCTION

Users are the most valuable resources to a social network site (SNS) (Han, 2016; Ku et al., 2013; Lin et al. 2014; Zhou et al., 2010). However, it seems that many SNS managers do not to fully understand how to keep their users in a long run. Therefore, several once-popular SNS have faded away from the online networking scene because of severe user loss. For instance, Friendster was a popular SNS in the late 1990s (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). It had over 115 million registered users, but only 4 million accounts are still active (MOL, 2012). The Web site has shrunken from a global SNS leader to a regional online gaming site (MOL, 2012). Myspace was the most visited SNS in the U.S. in the early 2000s (Thelwall, 2008). However, the number of active Myspace users plummeted from 180 million in 2008 to only 60 million in 2013 (Boffard, 2014). The Web site has changed from a mainstream SNS to an online music discovery site (Myspace, 2016). These real-world examples do not only indicate the importance of SNS users, but also show an urgent need for the knowledge of building an SNS user’s loyalty. We design the current research to have a further understanding of the user’s SNS loyalty factor. This study is organized in the following manner: First, we introduce the concept of a user’s SNS loyalty, and then review the extant literature of the two theoretical foundations of this study, including the information systems continuance model and the taste performance theory. Second, we introduce our new research model and hypotheses. Third, we present the methodology used for data collection. Data analyses, research findings, contributions and implications will be presented in the last three sections of this paper.

DOI: 10.4018/IJVCSN.2017070101

Copyright © 2017, IGI Global. Copying or distributing in print or electronic forms without written permission of IGI Global is prohibited.
LITERATURE REVIEW

SNS Loyalty

Building a user’s loyalty is important to a continuous success of an information technology (IT) service (Chiu et al., 2013; Gefen et al., 2006; Han, 2014; Lin, 2008; Shen et al., 2010). A user with a higher degree of loyalty is more likely to subscribe and repeat subscription to an IT service, pay for extra features of the service, and recommend the service to her social contacts (Han and Windsor, 2011; Han, 2012; Han, 2014; Hsiao, 2011). Although a user’s loyalty is critical to an SNS, to our best knowledge, there have not been many studies looking into this factor. Thus, before we explore its influential factors, we need to establish a clear definition of a user’s SNS loyalty. Extending prior studies (Oliver, 1997; Shen et al., 2010; Zhou et al., 2010), we define a user’s SNS loyalty as the user’s deeply held commitment to consistently using an SNS after her initial adoption, even though she is facing external influences such as a competing SNS’ user switch marketing efforts. Furthermore, according to Dick and Basu (1994)’s framework, we classify this general term into a user’s cognitive and affective loyalty to an SNS. Dick and Basu (1994)’s framework was first proposed to study a consumer’s loyalty to a product or service. The framework does not only look at the influence of a consumer’s loyalty on a business’ success as a whole, but also investigates how different aspects of loyalty can impact the consumer’s re-patronage. It is a useful lens of research to study a user’s SNS loyalty. According to Dick and Basu (1994), cognitive loyalty refers to a consumer’s commitment to a product or service in the preliminary loyalty building stage. In this stage, a consumer compares one option to another by evaluating each option’s costs, properties, and outcomes. If the consumer believes that one option’s values surpass the others’, she is likely to establish a habitual tendency of using the same product or service for a long term, in order to pursue the premium values. Accordingly, we define a user’s cognitive loyalty to an SNS as the degree to which the user is committed to using an SNS according to her estimations of benefits of using the Web site. Affective loyalty refers to an emotional tie between a consumer and a product or service (Dick & Basu, 1994). In the IT market, the values or functionalities of IT services or systems from different providers tend to be similar with the diffusion of innovations. Thus, a user’s affective loyalty to an IT service plays a fundamental role in her ultimate choice among a variety of options available in the market (Hsu & Wu, 2011; Koh & Kim, 2003; Shen et al., 2010). Bandyopadhyay and Martell (2007) argue that a user’s attitudinal preference reflects her emotional attachment to a product or service. One can use this preference to measure the user’s affective loyalty. Thus, we define a user’s affective loyalty to an SNS as the degree to which the user is committed to using an SNS as an attitudinal preference after her adoption of the SNS.

Information System Continuance Perspective

We use two theoretical models, including the information system (IS) continuance model and the taste performance theory, to study the influential factors of a user’s cognitive and affective loyalty to an SNS. The IS continuance model has been broadly adopted as a theoretical foundation for investigating a user’s long-term usage of an SNS. According to the IS continuance model (Bhattacherjee, 2001), a user’s perceived usefulness, satisfaction, and confirmation of her post-adoption expectation are three critical factors that have significant positive effects on the user’s continuance. An SNS is a computer system facilitating a user’s interpersonal communications. Thus, an SNS is different from a task-oriented system such as an online banking system or an e-commerce Web site. Besides a user’s perceived usefulness, the user’s perceived enjoyment also has a significant positive effect on her SNS continuance (Chen, 2013). In addition, an SNS provides a possibility for a user to create social connections with individuals, who have similar personalities (Ellison et al., 2007; Steinfield et al., 2008). These users offer social support and encouragement to each other. Therefore, a user’s social identity, perceived altruism, and perceived encouragement all have significant positive effects on her perceived usefulness of an SNS, thereby increasing her continuance intention (Ellison et al., 2007; Kwon & Wen, 2010). Several studies have extended the IS continuance model with multiple
Related Content

A Social Network Strategy for the Social Marketing of Online Courses and Learning Resources in Higher Education
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/a-social-network-strategy-for-the-social-marketing-of-online-courses-and-learning-resources-in-higher-education/90821?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/a-social-network-strategy-for-the-social-marketing-of-online-courses-and-learning-resources-in-higher-education/90821?camid=4v1a)

Tracking Comet ISON through the Twittersphere: Visualizing Science Communication in Social Media
[www.igi-global.com/article/tracking-comet-ison-through-the-twwittersphere/153557?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/tracking-comet-ison-through-the-twwittersphere/153557?camid=4v1a)

The Cultural Factors in Electronic Monitoring
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/cultural-factors-electronic-monitoring/29182?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/cultural-factors-electronic-monitoring/29182?camid=4v1a)
Social Networks and Semantics
www.igi-global.com/chapter/social-networks-semantics/48855?camid=4v1a