An Empirical Investigation on Internet Privacy on Social Network Sites among Malaysian Youths

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ABSTRACT

People have been using Social Network Sites (SNS) to communicate and make friends online. Although SNS offer many benefits to users, information privacy seems to be overlooked. Based on the Protection Motivation Theory, this study investigated the factors that might influence youths to disclose information about themselves on the SNS. Four factors were investigated to determine whether there are significant relationships between them and information disclosure. The factors were perceived vulnerability, perceived severity, perceived benefits and self-efficacy. A self-administered questionnaire was developed to capture useful information pertaining to the subject matter. Using university students as sample, five hundred questionnaires were distributed and four hundred and eighty six were collected for further analysis. The results revealed that perceived vulnerability, perceived benefits and self-efficacy were significantly related to information disclosure, while perceived severity was not significantly related.

Keywords: Information Disclosure Behaviour, Perceived Severity, Perceived Vulnerability, Protection Motivation Theory, Social Network Sites

INTRODUCTION

The Social Network Sites (SNS) such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Friendster, etc. have become an unprecedented phenomenon that transform the way people communicate and interact with others. A growing number of Facebook users over time indicate that people have gained the benefit from using its services. The Facebook statistics (Facebook Newsroom, 2012) show that there are 845 million monthly active users at the end of December 2011 and more than 50% of monthly active users accessed the site from their mobile phone.

In order to use SNS, potential users need to provide their personal information to SNS for registration purpose. After the new account is confirmed through e-mail, users can...
edit their personal details by customizing the information they want to reveal and to whom the information is available. With this practice, users can interact and make friends more easily and conveniently such as sharing information, photos, comments, posting events and update their status on their walls, exchange messages, poke friends, etc.

The objective of this study is to investigate factors contributing to user’s behaviour in disclosing his/her personal information on SNS. The main contribution of this study is to provide a framework that could be used to understand user’s protective behaviour in relation to information disclosure in SNS. For this purpose, we employ the Protection Motivation Theory to help explain why people engage in risky or unhealthy situation.

The remainder paper of this paper is organized as follows: First, we present the theoretical framework of this study. Then we describe the research methodology, followed by the next section, where the findings and discussion are presented. Finally, we conclude our work.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Our study is based on the conceptualized framework on Protection and Motivation Theory (PMT) developed by Rogers (1983) (Figure 1). To some extent, the PMT will be incorporated with other supporting factors that are believed to influence users’ perception of privacy and security awareness in SNS. The Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) postulates that one’s motivation to protect himself/herself from a risky situation is determined by threat and coping appraisals (Rogers & Prentice-Dunn, 1997).

The threat appraisals consist of perceived vulnerability and perceived severity, meanwhile coping appraisals include self-efficacy and response efficacy. Perceived severity refers to one’s perception of the level of damage which may result from engaging in risky situation; meanwhile perceived vulnerability refers to one’s perception of experiencing possible negative consequences from performing risky behaviour.

The PMT has been applied widely in the psychology, health-related and environmental protection research. In the context of Information Systems (IS), the PMT has been used to examine user’s protective behaviour in online transaction (LaRose, Rifon, & Enbody, 2006; Youn, 2009), employee’s awareness to organizational information security policies (Herath & Rao, 2009; Siponen, Pahnila, & Mahmood, 2010) and individual use of security software (Johnston & Warkentin, 2010).

However, only few studies have applied the PMT to explain users’ protective behavior associated with information disclosure online.

Figure 1. Protection motivation theory (adapted from Roger, 1983)
E-Mail as a Strategic Tool in Organizations
www.igi-global.com/chapter/mail-strategic-tool-organizations/14381?camid=4v1a