Driving Forces Behind Participation and Satisfaction with Social Networking Sites

Sandra Maria Correia Loureiro, Marketing Professor (ISCTE-IUL), Department of Marketing, Operations and General Management, ISCTE-IUL Business School, Lisbon, Portugal

F. Javier Miranda, Associate Professor (Universidad de Extremadura), Business Management and Sociology Department, Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales, Badajoz, Spain.

Ana R. Pires, Master in Science (University of Aveiro), Department of Economy, Management and Industrial Engineering, University of Aveiro, Portugal, Aveiro, Portugal

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the antecedents of participation in and satisfaction with social networking sites (SNS) based on extension of the Technology Acceptance Model. The model is tested on a group of 336 young adults who use Facebook frequently. The findings reveal that identification with the SNS and the degree of influence are two important drivers of the usefulness of the SNS, and in turn, lead to using it more frequently and encouraging others to join. Interaction preference can influence favourably the belief that the SNS is easy to use, however, ease of use does not seem to contribute significantly to individuals participating actively in SNS.

Keywords: Degree of Influence, Identification, Interaction Preference, Participation, Satisfaction, SNS, TAM, Word-of-Mouth.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of community emerges from the sociological perspective as a group of people linked by social ties, sharing common values and interests and having common meanings and expectations. In the context of consumer-brand relationships, Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001, p. 412) define brand community as a “specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand”. The online community is seen as a social relationship aggregation, in which members communicate and interact through the Internet (Rheingold, 2000) and share a specific objective (Blanchard & Markus, 2004). Members of such communities engage in knowledge sharing, problem solving and learning through posting and responding to questions, narrating personal experiences and

DOI: 10.4018/jvcsn.2012100103
Social networking sites (SNS) are online communities with specific characteristics. Boyd and Ellison (2007) argue that SNS allow individuals to build a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, interact and share a connection with other users on a list, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. Unlike the Web, which is largely organized around content, online social networks are organized around users. The resulting social network provides a basis for maintaining social relationships, finding users with similar interests and locating content and knowledge that has been contributed or endorsed by other users. Hence, users' behaviour should be influenced not only by their own motivations, but also by other members within their online SNS (Li, 2011).

However, research into social media, and specifically SNS, is still at an embryonic stage (Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011). Due to the complexity and dynamics of SNS in terms of the number of antecedents and the interactions among them, a single research method/model can neither provide a comprehensive view in academia, nor provide the best solution to even a single problem in practice (Lee & Chen, 2011). Indeed, the driving forces behind SNS member participate, interact, and find new friends, as well as, the overall satisfaction toward usage SNS, are not yet well known and established. In order to contribute to fulfil this gap in literature, the major goal of this study is to analyze antecedents and outcomes of satisfaction and participation in social networking sites. The proposed model integrates technology acceptance variables with relational and personality variables.

Following this introduction, we provide a theoretical foundation for the present study based on an extension of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and we characterize SNS. Then, section 3 presents a research model and proposes hypotheses to be tested. The next section describes the research methodology of the empirical study, which is followed by the report on the testing of the hypotheses and discussion. Finally, we present conclusions, implications, limitations and suggestions for future research.

LITERATURE BACKGROUND

Social Networking Sites

According to Lesser, Fontaine and Slusher (2000), the concept of an online community has been at the core of the Internet since its birth. Initially, only scientists used the Internet to share knowledge, collaborate on research and exchange messages, but today people have many electronic tools for making contact through the Internet (Toral et al., 2009). Therefore, online communities enable people to engage in joint activities and discussion, help each other and share information (Raban & Rafaeli, 2007) beyond the boundaries of geography or time.

In recent decades, we have seen an explosion in popular interest in social networks, due to the popularization of new social networking sites (SNS), or web-based services that help people build a public profile, choose a list of users with whom they share a connection and view the public profiles of their list of connections (Lewis et al., 2008; Kwon & Wen, 2010). Consequently, SNS such as MySpace, Facebook, Hi5 or Twitter allow their users to link or make groups where they interact with other users who have analogous interests. These interests can be various: to maintain contact with friends and family, meet new people, share contents or media, summarize or acquire social capital (Kwon & Wen, 2010).

In the European Union (EU 27), in 2010, 80 percent of young Internet users are active on social media. Particularly, while the vast majority of Internet users (more than 80 percent) aged between 16 and 74 use e-mail, with regard to posting messages to chat sites, blogs and social networks, it is the youngest age-group (16-24), 80 percent, who do so, followed by 42 percent of individuals aged 25-54 years and only 18 percent of older people (55-74) (Seybert &