Conceptual model for Contact making attitude of users in Social Networking Sites: A case study of Facebook users in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract: Social networking applications have been developing speedily throughout the world. In this paper, we examine the knowledge and attitudes of people towards the use of social networking sites in Dammam. A well designed pre-tested questionnaire was used for the collection of the data. The present study involved 106 respondents from Dammam. The results obtained from our study using the factor analysis confirms that there are certain common factors like peer pressure, ease of use, socializing, need of cognition, self-esteem, third person factor and PPM framework which drives contact making behavior of users in SNS. Further, there are mostly six factors that are effective in affecting the attitude of the users positively or negatively while making a decision of adding a new contact to their profile. The study reveals that religion, culture and language are not a hindrance between the users. This can be of great use to various marketers and recruiters who are using SNS as their platform to carry out their operation. It can be also very helpful in reducing the gap that exists among the societies in a state like Saudi.

Key words: Attitude, Information technology; SNS, Internet; Factor Analysis.

INTRODUCTION:

The rapid development and increase of social networking i.e., connecting to other individuals via various social networking platforms has been perceived over the last two to three years is indicative of its entry into mainstream culture and its incorporation into the daily lives of many people. In parallel with this, there has also been substantial media coverage of the growth of social networking, its potential positive outcomes and concerns about the way that some people are engaging with it. Social networking sites offer people with innovative and diverse ways to communicate via the internet. Whether through their PC or their mobile phone, these SNS allow people to easily and simply create their own online page or profile which helps them to construct and display an online network of contacts, often called 'friends'. Users of these sites can communicate via their profile both with their 'friends' and with people outside their list of contacts. This can be on a one-to-one basis (much like an email), or in a more public way such as a comment posted for all to see.

Like other communications tools, social networking sites have certain guidelines, conventions and practices which users have to navigate to make themselves understand and avoid difficulties. These range from the etiquette of commenting on other people's profiles or any post on the users profile wall, to understanding who one does and doesn't add as a 'friend'. Social networking sites also have some potential drawbacks to negotiate, such as the unintended consequences of publicly posting sensitive personal information, confusion over privacy settings, and contact with people one doesn't know and possibly the biggest threat form these SNS are the trolls and gags which are created to ridicule and criticize the others using social media humor, which is turning out to be anything but humorous. Social networks are platforms for virtual social lives created by people over the Internet where various facets of personal life are displayed through posts in form of text, pictures or now live streaming videos. Individuals define themselves in such networks so that they communicate and socialize with other people sharing same or different cultural backgrounds/dimensions through powerful communication opportunities provided by the Internet.

The first known network in this area is considered the Six-Degrees which was constructed in 1997. Particularly after 2003, rapid and important developments were experienced in social networks; consequently the number of users has increased quickly. The worldwide growth of social communication networks gained incredible pace and popularity. Among these networks, the most common one is known as Facebook (Toprak et al., 2009, p.27).

Social networking siteslike Facebook, Linked-In , Snapchat etc. provide a variety of services, such as users' own unique "space," as well as enabling them to share photos and videos, maintain blogs, and encourage group interactions through chat rooms, instant messaging (IM), and e-mail. Some networking sites even offer dating and matchmaking capabilities. Most research examining SNS deals with the consequences of joining social networking sites such as Friendster, Facebook, Classmates.com, or MySpace. For example, Valkenburg, Peter, and Schouten (2006) found that the frequency with which adolescents use the sites influences their social self-esteem and well-being. However, little research investigates the factors that influence SNS adoption, even though understanding SNS adoption is important because the revenue of most sites ties directly to the number of registered users. And very little research is done about the attitude defining the adding of contacts or friends in these social networks and media. This study tries to bridge that gap of finding the core attitudes and

behaviors i.e., shape the decision of adding a known or unknown contact in SNS.

A brief overview of some of the famous Social Networking sites depicts the various features and options and value propositions offered by these networking sites

Facebook: Launched in 2004, Facebook is probably the most used and world's most visited websites. Facebook users join other individuals as "friends." These in turn can chat, send messages, and interact via groups, pages, games and applications. Users may also "like" or "recommend" businesses or organizations. As of February 2011, Facebook had more than 500 million users around the world. Fifty percent of total users actively login the site every day. Users spend a total of 700 billion minutes per month on Facebook. More than 200 million users have mobile connection to Facebook. There are about a billion of locations (pages, groups, activities etc.) in Facebook where users interact with each other. An ordinary user is connected to 80 groups, activities or society pages and shares an average of 90 contents per month. More than 30 billions of contents per month are shared by users (http://www.facebook.com). When over 500 million people worldwide started to spend a substantial part of their daily lives in Facebook, this social network also attracted interest of sociologists and psychologists and understanding the potential of this platform, these social networking sites can be easily and inexpensively used without substantial support from universities and can be successfully integrated into educational processes using its messaging and video bulletins. And after seeing the trend across the world, it appears that this type of use rapidly becomes widespread all around the world (Gulbahar et al., 2010, p.2).

Twitter

Launched in 2006, Twitter is a microblogging plus social networking service that allows its Users to send and receive "tweets," which are messages with a 140 character limit. Users follow each other using @ symbol. The "@" symbol indicates a Twitter user. A tweet posted in reply to another user's tweet, replies always begin with @username

LinkedIn: Launched in May 2003, LinkedIn focuses on professional social networking. As of March 31, 2012, LinkedIn gains two new users every second. LinkedIn is also the only social networking service that has more male users than female users. LinkedIn places the user's professional history and experience at the center of the platform and mostly is used by business and corporate professionals to join various groups of professionals. Features: social networking, micro blogging, job-seeking, group and private messaging

Pinterest: Launched in 2010 and has over 10 million registered users. An online pin-board, Pinterest allows users to "pin" interesting content and images from around the Web, share those "pins" with their friends, and collaborate on shared "pinboards." Although all of these sites are used by both men and women, research studies like by pewinternet.org confirm there are differences. Women maintain a foothold on social networking sites. Women have been significantly more likely to use social networking sites than men since 2009. As of May 2011, nearly seven in ten online women are users of social networking sites (69%), compared with six in ten online men (60%). Women are also more active in their use of these sites, with almost half of female internet users using social networking sites on a typical day (48%), compared with 38% of male internet users.

Young adult women ages 18-29 are the power users of social networking; fully 89% of those who are online use the sites overall and 69% do so on an average day. As of May 2011, there are no significant differences in use of social networking sites based on race and ethnicity, household income, education level, or whether the internet user lives in an urban, suburban, or rural environment.

Other SNS which are prominent are Snapchat, Hike, Whatsapp,Instagram etc. have become an integral part of the social lives of an individual. These SNS are creating new social and cultural dynamics around the world and entering into an era where these can prove to be beneficial for the users and creating new micro chasm of information exchange. As SNS is growing by the minute in our lives, there is need to understand the dimension of users adding others as their 'Friends' on these social networking platforms and what makes one user choose one as a friend and reject another.

SAUDI ARABIA AND INTERNET

Saudi Arabia is the most populated and oil rich country of the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries. The Kingdom is ruled by strict government and religious laws, and the society is primarily conservative. The internet was first introduced in the country in 1993, in the country's prestigious university, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (Al Shahrani, 2016).The author, Al Sharani, further states that the delay in introducing Internet in Saudi Arabia came from the government's concerns and reservations about the effects of such a new service on their conservative culture. In Saudi Arabia, academic institutions were the first sectors to use the Internet before it was available to the public.The users mainly used Facebook in 2011 (90.42%) and 2012 (61.17%) but in 2013 the trend shifted and Twitter dominated the market (60.4%). Twitter was having a meagre share in 2011 (2.85%) and 2012 (20.46%) but it gained a huge market in 2013 with a 39.94% jump during 2012-2013. Facebook has lost its market share considerably from 61.17% in 2012 to 35.68% in 2013. YouTube gained some market in 2012 (16.7%) in comparison with its little market share in 2011 (4.66%) but declined in 2013 (2.74%), yet retained 3rd place. StumbleUpon and Now Publichave also lost their market share since 2011, while the former is still used by a few people; the latter is out of the market in 2013. However, some other SNSs like Tumblr and Google+ have shown their presence in 2013 which were not in the market in 2011 (Rayee& Ahmed, 2015).

According to the Arab social media report (2015), More than half the users in the Arab World use social media primarily to connect with people. While gaining information, watching videos, listening to music and sharing photos came as the second top main reason for using social media. Chatting was the most common activity among users in the Arab world, followed by reading posts added by other people.

Considering the literature and history of Saudi Arabia, it was decided to construct an instrument for establishing as to what was the main purpose to use Social media connections by the people. The authors have also predicted a model which can be validated in the future.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Pre-testing: The questionnaire was first subject to a pretesting, where respondents were asked to identify if the respondents had a clear understanding of the statements. The problems can be in the design, understanding or the instructions of the questionnaire (Sekran, 2003). Statements like using for dating purpose and having same sexual orientations were removed on the suggestion of the respondents.

Pilot Testing: The data for refinement of the questionnaire was collected from social networking site users of facebook through a standard questionnaire. People living in the eastern province of KSA, concentrated mainly on Dammam, and Alkhobar were targeted. The sampling technique used was convenience sampling. A total of 106 responses were collected out of which only 98 were found to be useful.

EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS (EFA)

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed on data collected on likert scale, In order toreduce the measured variables in smaller number of uncorrelated factors. To test the suitability of the data for factor analysis, the rotated component matrix was computed and examined. The results indicated that there were enough correlations to justify the application of factor analysis.The present analysis was performed relying on Principal Component Analysis (PCA)with varimax rotation. The three factors identified were chosen in terms of Bartlett's test of sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy. As the items get deleted from the scale, it affects all the other items remaining in the scale.

A very careful approach of deleting only one item per run was thus adopted. As a result several items got dropped due to cross or poor loadings and the remaining items converged to a single factor (sub construct) Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) for individual variables was found to be sufficiently high for all variables and to be 0.603 which is acceptable. There were 21 statements in performance scale, every statement related to the attitudinal factors of adding the users in SNS. The results from the factor analysis are shown below;

Table. 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.603
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1.435E3
	Df	231
	Sig.	.000

EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS (EFA)

Overall Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling Adequacy was found to be 0.603 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was also significant ($\chi2$= 1.435, d=231, Significance =.000) indicating the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Thus, all of these investigations revealed that data was fit for factor analysis. As per KMO table KMO value is 0.603 which depicts the factors shown in the factor analysis are reliable and can be taken as part of result and the statements could be used to derive the proper conclusion and results.

Orthogonal Rotation with Varimax was performed using SPSS 16. Rotation converged in 25 iterations in the data. In orthogonal rotation, each factor is independent of, or orthogonal from, all other factors. The correlation between the factors is determined to be factors. All factor loadings greater than .50 (ignoring signs) have been considered for further analysis.

Reliability estimates were calculated using the Cronbach's alpha. Values of 0.600 were considered.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Table. 2. Rotated Component Matrixa and Chrombach's alpha

Rotated Component Matrix^{a}and Chrombach's alpha							
	Component						Chronbach's alpha
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Religous_beliefs	.749						.606
Political_views	.583						
Same_culture	.657						
Same_language	.526						
Unkown_life		.654					.603
Attractive_profile		.633					
open_profile		.540					
social_strata							
Academic_work			.731				.689
Social_imprvement			.661				
career_help			.581				
vast_reach			.568				
Same_hobbies				.675			.600
Same_organisation				.641			
Same_academic				.505			
Known_to_friends					.788		.701
Known_personally					.785		
Active_participation						.783	
Open_learning						.685	

Principal components are linearly uncorrelated variables obtained from the set of observations which care correlated variables. The number of components derived from the factor analysis which are related to attitudinal dimension of users in adding friend in SNS.

The variables obtained from the study are six in number as under:
- Personal trait/behavioral factor
- Profile inactivity/ lifestyle factor
- Career improvement factors
- Reliant factors
- Recognition factor
- Participative learning factor

1) Personal trait/behavioral factors :

As per rotated matrix table, the 5 statements that are considered by the users for adding new contacts to their profile, which are related to users personal decision of adding the new contacts in SNS with same Religious beliefs 0.749, Same culture 0.657, Same language 0.526, thus making personal factors like culture and religious beliefs as important variables. As these are mostly internal to the user they are most likely to affect largely and considered the most by the users. Users in these SNS tend to add friends belonging to same culture and societal norms providing a set of expected behavior and reducing the cultural discrepancy. But most of the users on SNS, contacts are added with different cultural background and social setup with the intention of learning about new cultures and the variety of new information that will be exchanged creating new exciting and interesting relations to break the monotony of the obvious.

2) Profile inactivity/lifestyle factor:

In this second factor as per the rotation table there are statements Unknown in life 0.654, having Attractive profile 0.633, Open profile 0.540 as these statements are related to the profile of the user and the presentation of the profile and running of profile; with rotated matrix scores above 0.5, thus having considerable amount of impact on decision on adding new contacts in SNS. Users with attractive and open profiles are much more likely to be added by others, where user can check the various posts and comments on others profiles creating a positive or negative perception of the user.

3) Career improvement factors:

Under this factor there are statements with rotated matrix score above 0.5 and they are as; helpful in academic work 0.731, Social improvement 0.661 Career help 0.581, vast network reach 0.568 all contributing to the factors of contact making in SNS. Thus creating a factor of career improvement and development. Thus users add new contacts that are most likely and perceived to be helpful in their academic and career front. Users try to improve their chances of making a career by adding those users as friend who can provide advice and expand their chances of meeting professional and providing the users insights on their career. As per the trend, it is observed many professionals, writers and intellectuals added to users of the SNS through which they interact and discuss various career problems and chances considering them to be a reliable source.

4) Reliant factors:

In the contingent factors there are three statements like same hobbies 0.675, belonging to same organization 0.641, with same academic background 0.505 in rotated matrix table which are having positive effect on contact adding of users in SNS. As per this factor, users may also find it interesting to add new contacts that share same hobbies or are from same organization, which would help them in opening up to them and may even on personal front share some ideas about their hobbies and academic background creating a common base to interact and share information. Thus giving users chance to interact with those who they feel can better understand them through their hobbies and academic background, but these are secondary in nature and are considered after personal and career factors in making the adding decision.

5) Recognition/known entity factor:

As per this entity or recognition factor we have only two statements under this particular factor as Known to the users friends 0.788, Known to the user personally 0.785, where in personal knowledge of the other contacts is important while adding the new contacts. User generally are apprehensive and pessimistic about adding those as their friends who they don't know personally or don't have any friend in common. Thus creating a sense of security and privacy among the user, this is true in real world also where people socialize based on prior knowledge of the other person so as to create the sense of trust and affirmation among these users.

6) Participative Learning factors:

Under the learning factors the two statements are Active participation in discussion 0.783, Open to learning new ideas and views 0.685 both having matrix score above 0.50 and depicting users have proper and more inclination towards learning new and sharing new ideas with other users and contacts of different social and cultural background. And forms major a consideration while adding new contacts by the users in today's virtual world of social networking. Users do not use SNS for just socializing and recreation purposes and add contacts for that purpose only, they are also looking for some learning outcomes too that will help them on professional and personal front too thus forming a considerable amount of decision criteria.

The aboverefined questionnaire can be used for further analysis for a full blown study to understand the behavior of the people.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR CONTACT MAKING IN SNS

As per the data analysis of collected through the study, six major factors were determined that affect the contact adding or making friends on SNS in general and Facebook in particular. The factor analysis on the data provided six factors namely a) personal b) profile activity c) career improvement d) personal interest e) known entity f) participative learning. All these factors are important for user to add new contacts to their profile.

The complex interaction between these factors form the basis of attitude mainly in three different aspects a) Affect b) behavior c) Cognition and these six factors are extension of these three attitude dimensions which in turn tend to form the negative or positive decision making variable. These factors stimulate users to add certain contacts and friend requests from other users or to remove some from their friend list.This particular insight to the behavior of the users through our research has led to creation of PEL-conceptual framework, which will provide insights towards understanding the attitude factors which stimulate their decision making about adding the new contacts. In figure 1, it depicts the PEL framework denoting the factors and their effect on framing the attitude of the user.

The diagram has three parts firstly the factors, secondly attitude and thirdly the contact making attitude of the users. In The factors, there are the six main factors derived from the study which have impact on the attitude or help in forming the attitude, these factors form part of the three aspects of the attitude and are derived from those only through standard questionnaire. All the six factors form and integral part of the decisionmaking and attitude of the users some of them are primary and some are secondary in nature. User on analyzing the personal factor or profile activity will add a friend on SNS. If the users profile is seen filled with negative activity like, rude and offensive posts, comments and personal information which was not true, then it will create a negative attitude form the user and will lead to rejecting the friend request. As per the data gathered from the research six factors that evoke either affect, belief or cognition part of the attitude and make them positive or negative towards adding the new contacts. These factors can perform 4 types of functions namely utilitarian, knowledge, value expression and ego-defensive (Babbin, 2011). These factors can be clubbed to the three attitudinal dimensions and also can be studied individually for that matter, simply because of the individual and collective effect on the decision making of the users about adding the other new friend.
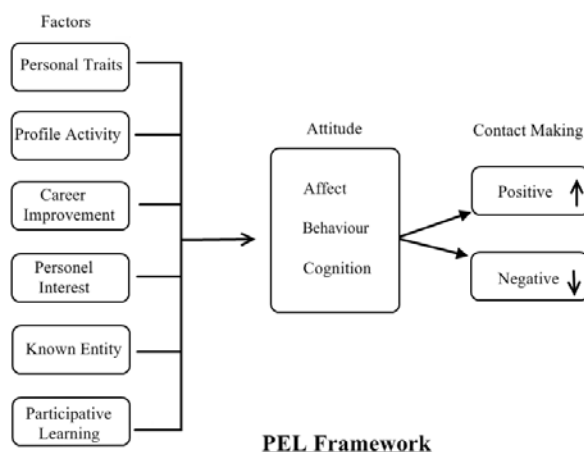
PEL Framework

Fig. 1.

CONCLUSION

In social networking world not every move or activity is motivated or forced by recreation or entertainment purpose. Individuals using these SNS are very much concerned about the contacts added on by them and what impact they will have on their personal and professional life. As the study confirms there are certain common factors like peer pressure, ease of use, socializing, need of cognition, self-esteem, third person factor and PPM framework which drives contact making behavior of users in SNS.Further we came to know users of these SNS usually value security, interface of sites, attention to detail, trust and most of all privacy of the various sites before adding any new friend or contact to their profile.

With changing scenario of SNS and the dependence of population today on these platform sis undeniable, more and more individual; with different perception, behaviors, backgrounds and opinion are joining in due to which some new factors are viable and created, that prove to be very effective in stimulating the users to add certain contact or new friend and having positive or negative effect on their attitude towards them. The research concluded that there are mostly 6 factors that are effective in affecting the attitude of the users positively or negatively while making a decision of adding a new contact to their profile. These factors are as entity known factor, personal behavioral factor, contingent factor, career improvement factor etc. all can affect both positively and negatively in shaping the attitude of the users of SNS. But the challenge for the companies and researchers is to understand and study the behavior of these users around diverse set of variables and situations.

The factors determined by the study has put forth certain factors that depict the different behaviors and attitudes of the users towards the use of SNS, where in this research it shows that Facebook can be and is used by the users for the academic and career development purposes and they add users for that same purpose, and those who are helpful in their career development. Also as per common beliefs, religion, culture and language can be a hindrance between the users, but the study shows otherwise, where in the users are adding and most likely to add those new contacts to their profile who are from different background and speak totally different language. Thus contradicting the usual perception of the people, this can be of great use to various marketers and recruiters who are using SNS as their platform to carry out their operation. And also it can be very helpful in reducing the gap that exists among the societies in a country like Saudi Arabia. It is also assumed that many use Facebook for the socializing with the opposite sex,

but as per the study, it is not the case; users least prefer to use this as dating platform and are least likely to add those new contacts who use SNS as their dating platform, thus making dating or socialising it as least preferable factor among the users.

Future research should be devoted to the further understanding of reportsabout different factors and Influencers, and in-depth analysis of attitude and decision making of various users in adding these contacts and are these factors feasible in real life too. In brief, the strategy should be to understand these factors in order to create various opportunities for businesses, educational institutions, NGO's, NPO's and industries who are now using e-channels and social platforms for their promotions, creating new value models, and channels of distribution. These insights can be helpful in tweaking their offerings and business models for an effective and efficient way of conducting business since there is a surge in the micro blogging sites and social media in today's technologically coherent world.

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