

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES ADOPTION: AN EXTENDED
THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR PERSPECTIVE

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To my beloved family members

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, social networking sites have become the major media by which people develop their personal network online. The purpose of this study is to examine empirically the factors that affect the adoption of social networking site by Google Plus Users. As base model, this study applies an extended Theory of Planned Behavior model (TPB), incorporating the additions of perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment to explore factors affecting user's intention to use social networking sites and actual use. A total of 249 valid responses collected from a web-based questionnaire. The data obtained by the survey was analyzed and commented upon using the SPSS program. In this study, the findings indicate that the extended TPB variables of attitude, perceived behavioral control, perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment have significant effects on user's intention to use social networking site, which in turn positively affect actual usage. In addition, the findings also indicate the insignificant effect of subjective norm on user's intention to use social networking site. Overall, the findings show that the model provides a good understanding of factors that influence intention to use social networking sites and actual use. Approximately 63 percent of the total variance on the user's intention was explained. Based on the findings, this study allows social networking service providers to develop strategies that can encourage the adoption of social networking site. Implications and recommendations are discussed.

ABSTRAK

Pada masa kini, laman web rangkaian social telah menjadi media utama yang membolehkan para pengguna meluaskan rangkaian rakan-rakan dengan cepat di alam maya. Tujuan kajian ini dijalankan adalah untuk mengenalpasti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi niat pengguna Google Plus dan penggunaan sebenar. Kajian ini menggunakan theory of planned behavior (TPB) yang diperpanjang dengan menggabungkan penambahan kegunaan dirasakan dan kenikmatan yang dirasakan untuk mengenalpasti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi niat pengguna untuk menggunakan laman web rangkaian social dan penggunaan sebenar. Data kajian ini telah dikumpulkan dari 249 orang responden melalui soal selidik berasaskan web. Data dianalisis dan dikomentari menggunakan program SPSS. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa ada hubungan yang kuat antara pembolehubah (sikap, kontrol perilaku yang dirasakan, kegunaan yang dirasakan dan kenikmatan yang dirasakan) dengan niat pengguna untuk menggunakan laman web rangkaian sosial. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan positif yang signifikan antara niat pengguna dengan penggunaan sebenar. Selain itu, norma subjektif didapati tidak mempunyai hubungan signifikan dengan niat pengguna untuk menggunakan laman web rangkaian sosial. Secara keseluruhan, hasil dapatan kajian mendapati bahawa model kajian ini memberikan pemahaman yang baik tentang faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi niat pengguna untuk menggunakan laman web rangkaian sosial. Sebanyak 63 peratus dari jumlah variance pada niat pengguna dijelaskan. Berdasarkan dapatan, kajian ini memungkinkan penyedia layanan laman web rangkaian sosial untuk mengembangkan strategi yang dapat menambahkan pengguna laman web rangkaian sosial. Implikasi kajian dan rekomendasi dibahas.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research which included background, problem statement, research objectives, research questions and scope of the research. Following this, the significance of the research and operational definitions are identified and explained.

1.1 Background of the Study

In today's world, everything is more convenient and accessible due to advances in Internet technologies. Although people have been using the Internet to connect with others since the early 1980s, it is only in the last decade that social networking services

have proliferated and their use has become a widespread practice. Technologies have significantly changed the way in which people interact with one another and the world around them. The majority of people use the Internet to source information, engage and maintain social networks. Technologies have dramatically transformed people's relationships with one another, their families and communities.

Social networking services can be defined as web-based services that enable users to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) integrate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). With the advance of technology, social networking site allows people to maintain their existing social relationship (e.g. family, friends and colleagues) and establish new relationships with others even the strangers. (Boyd and Ellison, 2008; Kim, Sohn and Choi, 2011).

The use of social networking services has become a popular and integral part of everyday communication regardless of geographical location, background and age. They include services such as plus.google.com, Facebook.com, Twitter.com, LinkedIn.com and Myspace.com which have many millions of members each. The world's largest social networking site with nearly a billion users worldwide is Facebook (The New York Times, 2012). In May 2012, Facebook raised \$16 billion in its initial public offering, at \$38 a share that valued the company at \$104 billion (The New York Times, 2012).

Meanwhile, Google's one year old social networking site is now the fastest growing social network ever. Google Plus (Google+) first introduced by the end of June 2011 and has currently hit 25 million users in a month (Wasserman, 2011). Google+ integrates social services (i.e. Google Profiles and Google Buzz) and introduces new services (Google+, 2011). "Circles" is one of the new services that allow users to

organize everyone according to their real-life social connections (e.g. family, friends, colleague, and alumni) (Google+, 2011). Then, users can share relevant content with the right people, and follow content posted by people they find interesting (Google+, 2011). Second, “Hangouts” is another new service of Google+ that used to facilitate group video chat, which is bring up to nine people participating in a single Hangout (Google+, 2011). Finally, “Search” is also a part of the new services, which enables users to identify topics they might be interested in sharing with others (Google+, 2011).

Given the relatively recent introduction of online social networks, however, there exists relatively little research on users’ decision-making related to frequent engagement with online social networks.

1.2 Problem Statement

As reported by comScore (2011), social networking sites now reach 82 percent of the world’s online population, representing 1.2 billion users around the world. As a percentage of all the time people spend online, social networking activity has more than tripled in the last few years (comScore, 2011). According to Nielsen (2010), global consumers spent more than five and half hours on social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter in December 2009, an 82% increase from the December 2008 when users were spending just over three hours on social networking sites. In October 2011, Social Networking ranked as the most popular content category in worldwide engagement, accounting for 19 percent of all time spent online (comScore, 2011). Meanwhile, Alexa (2012) found that three of the top fifteen most visited websites are occupied by online social networking sites, which include Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Social networking sites succeed not only in Western countries, but also in developing countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia, where achieving nearly 90 percent of the online population use social networks (comScore, 2010). However, many people commonly associate social networking sites with Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, MySpace, Google Plus or a handful of others. In reality, there are many other online social networks that do not fall under the broader category of “social networking site”. As social networking service providers in a highly competitive world, social networking sites need to pay attention to the user’s needs and wants in order to achieve and maintain successful business relationships. In fact, the success of social networking sites is very much dependent on the number of users (Trusov, Bodapati and Bucklin, 2010). In order to develop long lasting social networking sites, it is important to know that why so many people become a member of certain social networking site. That is, what factors influence users’ decision-making related to social networking site use?

A review of the literature indicated that one well-known social psychology model proposed to understand behavioral decision-making process is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). Because of its ability to predict human behaviors, TPB has been widely used in technology acceptance research. Specifically, the TPB is employed as a theoretical framework in this study. According to Ajzen (1991), the TPB posits that the individuals’ intentions are the proximal determinants of their behavior. Thus, the likelihood of engagement in the behavior increases when individuals’ intentions to perform the behavior are high (Baker and White, 2010). In the standard TPB model, intention is determined by attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). However, TPB may not fully reflect individuals’ continuance motives. To apply the TPB to a specific context, researchers need to pinpoint what factors are related most closely to the behavior under study.

The purpose of this study was to extend the TPB in the social networking context in order to develop a customizable model with high explanatory power. This work

proposed that additional variables (i.e. perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment) enhanced our understanding of social networking user behavior. The importance of these variables can be explained with reference to existing literature (Lu and Su, 2009; Lin and Bhattacharjee, 2008; Kim et al., 2007; Moon and Kim, 2001; Davis et al., 1992; Deci, 1975).

Furthermore, this study intends to improve the literature on several issues. The first issue is associated with the population of this study. Over the years, numerous studies have focused on issues surrounding the adoption of online social networking sites like Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and MySpace. There is no research has been directed at an online social networking site that focus on Google Plus. In order to provide addition information about this topic, a study based on Google Plus is needed. Perhaps the present study is the first study to investigate users' adoption in Google Plus.

In another aspect, most of the population previously studied was targeted at younger people, mainly on students (e.g., Kim, Sohn, and Choi, 2011; Bicen and Cavus, 2011; Bicen and Cavus, 2010; Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert, 2009; Boyd, 2008; Ellison et al., 2006). These studies raised the question that students may not be able to represent the whole population of the services. Although students represent the most highly-engaged segment of online networkers (comScore, 2011), however, those above 55 years of age has become the fastest growing group across the globe today (comScore, 2011). The survey by comScore (2011) reported that more than 70 percent of social networking users' age 25 years old and above. In fact, older people increasingly use the Internet for searching information and communication purposes (Fox, 2004). Hence, a study focus on users across all age groups is needed in order to explore new knowledge and insight.

Against all these background and based on the Theory of Planned Behavior model, this study aims to examine factors influencing the intention to adopt social networking site.

1.3 Research Question

This research aims to answer the following questions:

- 1.3.1 Does the attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment influence intention to use Google Plus?
- 1.3.2 What is the relationship between intention to use Google Plus and actual usage of Google Plus?

1.4 Research Objective

There are a few objectives of this research. It is listed as below:

- 1.4.1 To investigate the influence of attitudes, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment on intention to use Google Plus.
- 1.4.2 To examine the relationship between intention to use Google Plus and actual usage of Google Plus.

1.5 Research Scope

This research focused on the users of Google Plus across all age groups. In this study, the respondents were randomly selected amongst users on Google Plus. In order to target Google Plus users, online questionnaires were used to collect the data. An invitation message that stated the purpose of the research and provided the link to the online questionnaire was sent to Google Plus users, which were recruited through researcher's friend list and those friends have been requested to forward the questionnaire to their friends and so on.

1.6 Research Significance

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a general and parsimonious model, it can be applied to different types of behaviors. However, the predictive accuracy of the three components (i.e. attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control) varies across situations (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, to apply the TPB to a specific context, researchers need to pinpoint what factors are related most closely to the behavior under study. In this study, the researchers propose an extended TPB model to provide more practical and helpful information for the context of social network. Based on upon an extensive review of literature, the utility of new constructs will be considered in the current study (i.e. perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment).

Moreover, this study provides a useful knowledge for social networking service providers, to detecting the latest commercial trends and adapting them to marketing strategies. Based on this study, the social networking service providers would understand the factors that influence users' intention to use and actual use. Thus, the service providers would have a better picture on how to make the changes, correction and adoption of their new upcoming marketing strategies in the future.

1.7 Operational Definitions

The following are the operational definitions of this study:

a. Social networking site

Social networking site is a cyber environment that enables users to present themselves, connect to a social network, and develop and maintain relationships with others. In this study, social networking site refers to a new social networking site dubbed as Google Plus.

b. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The TPB has been successful in predicting important behavior in wide variety of domains (Harrison, Mykytyn and Riemenschneider, 1997). Therefore, current study adopted and extended TPB to understand the factors that influence user's intentions to use social networking site. In the standard TPB, intention is determined by attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control. However, the predictive accuracy of the three components varies across situations. To improve the explanatory power of the TPB in the context of social network, the current study extends the original TPB by incorporating the perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment to measure users' intention to use social networking site. The definition of relevant variables as defined below;

Behavior in the intention-based model is referred as a manifestation which is observable, single-act criterion which is performed with respect to a specific target in a given situation at a given point of time. In this study, behavior refers as user actual usage of social networking site after realized their intention to use social networking site.

Intention is defined as an individual's willingness to engage in a particular behavior. In this study, intention is defined as a user's willingness to use social networking site.

Attitude refers to individuals' overall evaluations towards performing a given behavior. In this study, attitude is the degree to which a user has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of using social networking site.

Subjective Norm refers to individuals' perceptions of social pressure from important referents to perform or not to perform the behavior. In this study, subjective norm reflects how the user is affected by the perception of some significant referents (e.g. family, friends or colleagues) of using social networking site.

Perceived Behavioral Control refers to the amount of control individuals perceive they have over performing the behavior. In this study, perceived behavioral control is the degree of ease or difficulty perceived by a user with respect to using social networking site.

Perceived Usefulness is the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance. In this study, perceived usefulness is the degree to which a user believes that the social networking site allows him or her to effectively build and maintain relationships.

Perceived Enjoyment is the pleasure the individuals feels objectively when committing a particular behavior or carrying out a particular activity. In this study, perceived enjoyment is the pleasure the user feels objectively when using a particular social networking site.

1.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter gives the background to the study and focuses on the problem statement, research questions, and the research objectives. It also gives the scope of study, significance of study and the operational definitions discussed the significant terms in the context of this study.

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