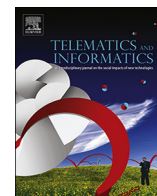




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# Patterns of motives for social network site use among sixth grade pupils in Taiwan

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the profiles, gender, digital opportunities, and patterns of motives for using social networking sites (SNSs) among 401 sixth-grade pupils in Taiwan. A survey based on Aladwani's GoToFB scale and a self-constructed questionnaire were employed to gather information on pupils' SNS use motives and their usage frequency of Internet-accessible electronic devices. The results show that their primary motive of using SNSs was connecting with others. Significant differences were found in connecting, sharing, organizing, and monitoring between genders, and in connecting, sharing, relaxing, branding, monitoring, and expressing between pupils with different digital opportunities due to regional digital development. In addition, a two-stage cluster analysis yielded four distinct subgroups: highly motivated, less motivated, relaxed-oriented, and socially-oriented. They were varied not only in their motives of SNS use, but also in the usage frequency of Internet-accessible electronic devices.

## 1. Introduction

With the increasing use of communication technology and the pervasiveness of the Internet, social networking sites (SNSs) have become key communication platforms for many people. According to Statista's (2017) investigation report, approximately 2 billion Internet users are using SNSs, and this number is continuing to increase with the rapid growth of the mobile device usage and mobile social networks. In particular, young people are quickly becoming avid SNS users (Espinoza and Juvonen, 2011; Hargittai, 2007; Subrahmanyam and Lin, 2007), using such sites to share text-based updates, photos and videos concerning their whereabouts, personal lives, expertise or interests (Hawk et al., 2015; Pempek et al., 2009; Pornsakulvanich and Dumrongsiri, 2013).

The unique social features and explosive development of SNSs have attracted a number of researchers to investigate how and why people use these services (i.e., their underlying motives) (Greenhow and Robelia, 2009; Kim et al., 2011; Krishnan and Hunt, 2015; Ross et al., 2009). Several studies identified motives of SNSs usage from the uses-and-gratifications perspective, which interprets users' adoption of communication media as a function of their social-psychological needs and satisfaction (Brandtzaeg and Heim, 2009; Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Smock et al., 2011). Some researchers (Barker, 2009; Haferkamp et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2011) investigated further into the relationship between SNS usage motives and specific groups, personality traits, attitudes, usage patterns, demographic factors, and so on. Pornsakulvanich and Dumrongsiri (2013), based on uses-and-gratifications and theory of reasoned action, have suggested there are internal/external influences on the motivations for SNS use. Internal influences can be regarded as psychological or individual characteristics, and include, for example, gender, age, race, and ethnicity (Baek et al., 2011;

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Shim et al., 2008). External influences refer to media, significant others, social, economic, and political situations that affect SNS use, e.g., individuals' region, educational background, personal relationships, economic/socioeconomic status, government policies or cross-cultural differences, and even educational-political context for using new media for learning in schools (Alhabash et al., 2012; Hargittai, 2002; Pornsakulvanich and Dumrongsiri, 2013; Wijesundara, 2013).

Actually, the important point to note is that not just young people are joining SNSs, the proportion of elementary school pupils or younger children who have access to and engage in the use of these sites is also increased rapidly. Although some of the most popular sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, require users to be over the age of 13 to sign up and have a profile, it was reported early in 2010 that a large numbers of children under the age of 13 are active users of these sites. Researchers have noted that more than half of aged 11 and 12 EU Kids (59%) who use the Internet have a profile on a social networking site requiring a minimum age of 13 (Livingstone et al., 2010), and New NSPCC research found that 82 per cent of 11 and 12 year olds in the UK who have a profile on a social networking site, have at least one profile on a site which specify a minimum age of 13 (Lilley and Ball, 2013). The report on the UK children's media use and attitude by the media watchdog Ofcom also found that one in ten children aged 8 (9%) have a social media profile, doubling to one in five by the age of 10 (21%), and further doubling from 21% to 43% between the age of 10 and 11, and increasing sharply again from 50% to 74% between 12 and 13 (Ofcom, 2016). Moreover, some similar surveys on Taiwanese children's Internet behaviors (Child Welfare League Foundation, 2012) showed that 95.3% of fifth and sixth graders have Facebook accounts, and up to 67.0% of fourth to sixth graders in Taiwan are interested in using the site (Ke, 2015). However, while considerable attention has been paid in the past to the motives for SNS use among young adults or adolescents, elementary school pupils or younger children's motives have not been much explored.

Those children in the sixth grade or close to this age group are beginning to explore outside the family for meaning in life (School Family, 2016), and their social characteristics gradually show a greater interest with the opinions of peers, keeping certain thoughts and feelings secret from parents, and an intense desire to fit in with others. It may thus be worthwhile examining why this specific target group uses SNS sites. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate Taiwanese elementary school sixth-graders' primary motivations for the use of SNSs, and whether there are internal/gender differences or external/digital opportunity differences that affect sixth-grade pupils' motives for using these sites. Additionally, individual differences may be a critical factor influencing pupils' SNS usage. People may have different levels of involvement in the use of SNSs, and it is very possible that some use is primarily motivated by entertainment or communication, while the others use them just to express themselves or to pass the time. It is also possible that individuals may have some similar motives, but show different intensities of use.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Motives of SNS use

Several researchers have investigated the motives of SNSs usage, which may relate to factors such as information, entertainment, surveillance, diversion, social utility, narcissism, self-expression, media consumption, and aesthetic experience (Gülner et al., 2010; Hsu, 2007; Sheldon, 2008). For example, Jung et al. (2007) identified six motivations for SNS use: entertainment, professional advancement, self-expression, passing time, keeping in touch with family and friends, and following trends. Likewise, Brandtzæg and Heim (2009) suggested four common motives for SNSs usage: information, entertainment, personal identity, and social interaction. Focusing on the top social networking site, Facebook, Alhabash et al. (2010) found five motives for use, including social connection, social investigation, status updates, content, and photographs. Pempek et al. (2009) gave nine motives for Facebook use, which included communicating with friends, passing time/entertainment, viewing/posting photos, planning events, sending/receiving messages, getting to know people better, making/reading wall posts, obtaining contact information, and presenting oneself to others. Moreover, Papacharissi and Mendelson (2010) extracted nine distinct motives for Facebook use: social interaction, new friendships, relaxing entertainment, expressive information sharing, habitual pass time, cool and new trend, companionship, escape, and professional advancement.

Some studies have reported major motives for SNSs usage for different age groups. For example, regarding the older adolescents or emerging adults, these studies showed that the major motives for SNSs usage are connecting with current friends and acquaintances, or relationship maintenance (Alloway and Alloway, 2012; Barker, 2009; El-Deeb and Awad, 2016; Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Subrahmanyam et al., 2008), followed by passing time and entertainment (Lin and Lu, 2011; Shi et al., 2013; Smock et al., 2011) or seek "information" (Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, 2008). Similarly, Lenhart and Madden (2007) found that most teens, between the ages of 12 and 17, are using SNSs to stay in touch with people they already know, either friends that they see a lot (91% of social networking teens have done this) or friends that they rarely see in person (82%); another research argued that the main motivation for preadolescents between 11 and 15 year olds to use SNSs is not to start new friendships but to maintain the pre-existing ones (Barker, 2009; Ellison et al., 2007; Subrahmanyam et al., 2008). Most of these studies investigating major motives for using SNSs are focusing on young people or adolescents. Yet pupils could have undergone a tumultuous period of identity formation and role development when growing into adolescents or teenagers (Erikson, 1993). They may increasingly focus on social relationships with peers, and become early adopters of Internet applications that help them engage with their peers (Lenhart and Madden, 2007). However, little is known about what and why elementary school pupils or younger children use SNSs, or what their main motivations are.

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