



A motives framework of social media website use: A survey of young Americans



Joseph N. Luchman*, Jennifer Bergstrom, Caitlin Krulikowski

Fors Marsh Group LLC, 1010 N. Glebe Road Suite 510, Arlington, VA 22201, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online 20 June 2014

Keywords:

Social media
Motives
Social media sites
Internet
Survey

ABSTRACT

Social media is increasingly important in daily life and is an especially important social interaction mechanism for young people. Although research has been conducted evaluating user types based on motives for using social media, no such framework has been extended to social media websites. We extend previous research by evaluating the underlying structure of social media website usage motivations using a 13 item survey and evaluations from 19 different social media websites administered to 1686 young Americans. Using a multidimensional scaling approach, we uncover 2 major motive dimensions underlying social media website use: fun-related and content-specific. Based on the derived dimensions, we generate a graphical “quadrant” system for classifying social media websites and depict all 19 social media sites based on their quadrant. We propose that our quadrant system can be used by other researchers to further refine understanding of social media website usage motives.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The use of social media (SM) has grown immensely over the past decade, with technological and Internet innovations like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube achieving massive adoption in a few years (e.g., Brenner, 2013). Although many age groups use SM, young people are adopting at the fastest rate (Brenner & Smith, 2013). In 2013, 89% of young adults ages 18–29 reported using social networking sites, while only 78% of 30–49 year olds, 60% of 50–64 year olds, and 43% of adults over the age of 65 reported SM use (Brenner & Smith, 2013). Consequently, young peoples’ experience of social relationships, information gathering, and interaction with the world is increasingly being shaped through SM (e.g., Correa, Hinsley, & De Zuniga, 2010).

SM includes countless sites with very different functions or uses that fulfill different personal needs (Brandtzæg & Heim, 2009). For example, it may seem obvious that specific SM fulfill specific needs (e.g., YouTube as an entertainment site); yet many SM ultimately develop uses that are perhaps unexpected (e.g., YouTube as a learning tool or messaging platform). Hence, it is important to understand how young people use and conceptualize SM to fully

understand how various sites fulfill personal needs and affect how they interact with the world.

Toward the end of understanding how young adults conceptualize SM, many attempts have been made to categorize SM users into representative typologies. For example, Brandtzæg and Heim (2011) found five user types in a large-scale Norwegian survey. Similar efforts have found that *Internet use* more broadly has a similar dimensionality (e.g., Brandtzæg, Heim, & Karahasanović, 2011; Johnson & Kulpa, 2007). By contrast, there is a dearth of peer-reviewed literature attempting to represent SM sites. Although the practitioner literature is full of attempts to represent SM sites, with taxonomies varying in the number of dimensions from 4 (e.g., Tuten, 2012) to as many as 26 types (Solis, 2013), the vast majority of such research describes SM from a specific-functional perspective, often including an organizing framework that is created solely for the purposes of the study at hand. Moreover, existing frameworks are usually populated by SM archetypes such as blogs and wikis, are subjective, and lack rigorous empirical foundations.

The purpose of the present work is to expand upon previous work that attempts to derive a framework for young adult SM usage in terms of over-arching functions and between-user interaction. We began the current work by conducting an extensive literature review to form a clear, representative definition of SM (see Romano Bergstrom et al., 2012). Stemming from our definition, literature review, and preliminary qualitative research, we developed and administered a survey to young adults to learn about their

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 5718583800.

E-mail addresses: jluchman@forsmarshgroup.com (J.N. Luchman), jbergstrom@forsmarshgroup.com (J. Bergstrom), ckrulikowski@forsmarshgroup.com (C. Krulikowski).

perceptions of SM usage and functionality. Our study contributes to the literature on SM usage by evaluating SM sites according to how young users interact with them. Our findings show the underlying dimensionality of SM site usage and produces a model which allows for emerging social media to be added according to the users' experience.

In each distinct definition of SM, common characteristics persist, including a network of online applications, platforms, and technologies that allow for user-generated and controlled content to be shared and altered, as well as environments for participation, collaboration, conversation and identity creation (e.g., Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Green, 2011; Henderson and Bowley, 2010). With the above characteristics in mind, we define *social media* as:

Internet communications where more than one user can publish or post information within a community of users.

Our definition both allows for many different organizational and user goals to exist, and does not assume specific goals, such as building relationships or demonstrating authenticity, as do other definitions.

Additionally, our definition focuses on the concept of interaction (i.e., "Internet communications where more than one user...") which can vary in intensity from consumer to creator to exchanger. SM users are free to choose to be only consumers of SM; however, the opportunity to interact within the community must be present, separating SM from "push-only" websites (i.e., where information is *pushed* to the user with no opportunity for interaction).

Finally, our definition implies that there is a public or semi-public (depending on security settings) aspect of SM (i.e., "...publish or post information within a community of users"). The public or semi-public nature of our definition is a critical distinction that separates SM from other Internet-based communication, such as email and instant messaging. The public or semipublic environment also excludes other online activities where multiple users/administrators can post on a private website.

Owing to the broadness of the definition of SM, we attempt to develop a SM framework which is an organizing structure that identifies various SM types by uncovering commonalities between reported usage of SM sites. An important goal of the present study was to allow our framework to be applied despite the rapidly changing nature of SM, readily encompassing current SM platforms while maintaining the flexibility to accurately represent future developments.

In attempting to create a framework of SM sites, we sought to define how, why, and where users interact with each other via the SM, without assuming it is known or that there is a singularity of purpose for a social medium, as many other frameworks assume. We began by examining existing research on why users interact with each other through SM. As with the definition of SM, previous literature provides a multitude of distinct attempts to couch SM in a framework that is all encompassing, while being simultaneously adaptable and intuitive. Schultz (2007) provided one of the earliest and more representative attempts at SM classification in which she attempted a visual representation of SM as an ecosystem consisting of functional and application-specific clusters. Others provide SM classifications that are primarily function-based (i.e., blogging, sharing, archiving, community creation, identity creation, and networking; e.g., Brandtzæg & Heim, 2009; Green, 2011; Kietzman, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Others utilize organizational structures that blend functions together with more site-, application-, or tool-specific categorization, such as aggregators, multimedia sites, simple notification services, forums, wikis, mash-ups, and folksonomies (e.g., Beer, 2008; Chung & Austria, 2010; Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). Yet others include specific media vehicles as individual SM categories, like videos, photos, text, and podcasts (e.g., Joos, 2008).

In perhaps one of the most comprehensive accounts of SM motives to date, Brandtzæg and Heim (2009) found that the 5 major reasons for SM use include (a) making new friends; (b) connecting with old friends; (c) socializing, often in terms of sharing ongoing updates; (d) obtaining information from others, and (e) debating with others about specific topics—such findings mirror those found for motives to use the internet broadly (e.g., Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

Deriving from research on motives, the extant literature also contains several frameworks for SM users. The best documented and most comprehensive effort was undertaken by Brandtzæg and Heim (2011), who found 5 types of SM users. The first of the types were known as *sporadics* who use SM, but do not use SM very much. The second type *lurkers* tend to use SM more than do sporadics but generally just watch others' content for entertainment but do not post their own. The third type *socializers* are very active and use SM to keep in touch by viewing others' content as well as posting their own—with their main focus of SM usage being for socializing and connecting with others. Socializers are also active in seeking out new contacts. The fourth group was labeled *debaters* who were much more practical in their SM usage, focusing their use on obtaining information and activity on discussion boards. Finally, *actives* were engaged in a lot of activities for all sorts of purposes (information, debate, socialization, etc.).

Unfortunately, extant research on SM sites lacks the breadth observed for SM users in terms of capturing how SM sites fulfill SM user needs and, consequently, lack flexibility and generality. In the next section, we describe the development of a survey and data collection effort intended to discern the underlying structure of SM websites, based on 19 of the most commonly used SM sites or SM clusters currently on the Internet. In an effort to maintain our framework's generality, our survey is based on SM motives, but channels such motives into appraisals of SM sites—thereby overcoming the specificity of previous frameworks and maintaining a structure that can apply to any SM site current or future.

2. Method

2.1. Survey development process

In order to generate our motives-based SM site framework, we developed a survey that included questions that follow both from research from (Brandtzæg and Heim 2009, 2011) findings regarding SM motives and user types as well as the authors' own qualitative research (Carroll, Romano Bergstrom, & Fischer, 2013). In particular, our 13 SM questions assessed various aspects of SM usage related to socialization, personal entertainment, information gathering, instrumental uses, as well as debating and learning.

The 12 primary questions we used are reported in Appendix A. We also asked all respondents: *How much personal information do you share about yourself?* on a 5-point Likert-type scale with the anchors *None* (i.e., *I only read anonymously*) (coded 1) to *A Great Deal* (i.e., *I share most information about myself*) (coded 5).

Based our own preliminary qualitative research (Carroll et al., 2013), and consistent with Boyd and Ellison (2008), we identified 19 SM sites or SM clusters that are most popular among young users. The following SM sites or SM clusters were evaluated: (1) Blogs, (2) Discussion Boards/Forums, (3) Facebook, (4) Flickr, (5) Foursquare, (6) Google Places, (7) Google+, (8) Instagram, (9) LinkedIn, (10) Myspace, (11) Pinterest, (12) Social News Sites (e.g., Reddit, Digg, etc.), (13) Second Life, (14) Tumblr, (15) Twitter, (16) Wikipedia, (17) Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/350621>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/350621>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)