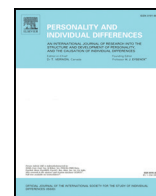




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Extending the Dual Factor Model of Facebook Use: Social motives and network density predict Facebook use through impression management and open self-disclosure

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ABSTRACT

This study tests the Dual Factor Model of Facebook Use (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012), which posits that individuals use Facebook to fulfill belongingness and self-presentation needs. Furthermore, it extends the original dual-factor model to include perceptions of network density to predict Facebook self-expression and use. In a cross-sectional online study ($N = 312$, 67% female), participants completed measures of their frequency of Facebook use, open self-disclosure and strategic impression management on Facebook, perceived density of their Facebook networks, and general belongingness and self-presentation motives. Self-monitoring, indicating the need to self-present, was positively related to Facebook use via strategic impression management and open self-disclosures. There was no overall correlation between need to belong and frequency of Facebook use, however this finding was qualified by divergent direct and indirect effects. Need to belong predicted increased Facebook use through strategic impression management and decreased Facebook use both directly and via open disclosure. Finally, network density predicted greater Facebook use through open disclosure. Results provide initial support for the extended Dual Factor Model, but also highlight the relevance of specifying the structural nature of one's network and types of Facebook use. Amendments to, and further developments of, the model are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Social networking websites (SNS) are ubiquitous in modern social life, and research has converged on the notion that SNS use fulfills basic psychological motives (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012; Seidman, 2013). Prior works emphasize that SNSs enable individuals to a) create and maintain relationships, b) negotiate their self-identities, and c) control their public image through strategic impression management (Rui & Stefanone, 2013; Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008). That said, SNS provide a context wherein users' perceptions of how their Facebook friends are interconnected can influence norms for what is shared, and subsequently, the quality and quantity of individuals' self-expressions on SNS (Lin, Tov, & Qiu, 2014). In the present study, we examined how contextual factors and basic psychological motives relate to individuals' use of the social networking site Facebook.

1.1. Facebook: a forum for self-expression and needs satisfaction

Facebook reached 1.6 billion users in 2016, making it the most popular SNS by any measure (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). Unlike

early generations of SNS that allowed for anonymous use, Facebook requires users to express identities within networks that typically consist of pre-existing offline relationships (Zhao et al., 2008), blurring the boundaries between “real” and “virtual” social interactions. Additionally, a user's friends list can be heterogeneous, representing different and sometimes conflicting social audiences. Unless one restricts their use of Facebook to private messaging, self-presentation on Facebook cannot be segregated to meet audience norms and expectations as with other forms of communication. These properties make Facebook a conducive social environment for studying dynamics of impression management and relational facilitation (e.g., van Dijck, 2013).

1.2. The Dual Factor Model of Facebook Use

According to the Dual Factor Model of Facebook Use (referred to as the DFM), individuals use Facebook to fulfill both belongingness and self-presentation motives (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). The proposition that relational and self-presentational processes underlie Facebook use is neither new nor controversial as evidenced by the large body of literature reviewed by Nadkarni and Hofmann supporting each component of the DFM. However, as reviewed below, no prior studies have empirically tested postulates of the DFM a-priori, nor have any extended the DFM to explore the role of associated network characteristics or self-expression strategies in Facebook use.

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1.2.1. Belongingness motives

Belonging is a universal social motive; people are strongly motivated to seek out close, positive, and affirming interactions with others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). As a latent construct, the need to belong can be operationalized as a desire for acceptance and to avoid rejection, coupled with concern over one's relational value to others (Leary, Kelly, Cottrell, & Schreindorfer, 2013). A number of studies have demonstrated that Facebook use is positively associated with increased perceptions of belonging (e.g. Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012; Seidman, 2013). Likewise, other studies have presented evidence suggesting use may be motivated by an unmet need to belong. For instance, Sheldon, Abad, and Hinsch (2011) demonstrated that decreases in belonging over a period of time preceded an uptick in Facebook use.

1.2.2. Self-presentation motives

In addition to providing a platform for users to satisfy their belongingness needs, Facebook also enables self-presentation. Two types of self-presentation motives have been discussed extensively in the literature (Baumeister, 1989): the first takes the form of “pleasing an audience,” or increasing status, self-esteem, or positive affect (e.g. Ickes, Holloway, Stinson, & Hoodenpyle, 2006); the other involves creating, enacting, and validating an identity—thereby satisfying an epistemic need for understanding one's place in the world (e.g., Swann, Rentfrow, & Guinn, 2002). The self-monitoring construct taps both aspects of this need for self-presentation, and is extensively studied and cited in the self-presentation literature (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Strong inferences of the construct's motivational component have been made by Ickes et al. (2006), who noted that “high self-monitors have a strong motive to express and evoke a high level of positive affect in their relations with others (p. 660)”; whereas low self-monitors are motivated to simply be themselves (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Ickes et al., 2006). Within the domain of Facebook research, studies have shown self-monitoring to be positively related to impression-management behaviors on Facebook (Nie & Sundar, 2013), negatively related to ‘honest’ self-expression on Facebook, and positively related to Facebook use in general (Hall & Pennington, 2013).

1.2.3. How do people fulfill their needs on Facebook?

Facebook provides opportunities for social connection, identity construction, and impression management (Michikyan, Dennis, & Subrahmanyam, 2015), but unfortunately, interactions on Facebook cannot be segregated to optimize self-presentation (Zhao et al., 2008). That is, individuals must present themselves to all audiences simultaneously within a single social context. Marwick and Boyd (2011) refer to this phenomenon as context collapse, and argue it can be a significant source of identity conflict, particularly when audiences or identities are segmented.

Individuals may use specific self-expression strategies to mitigate the challenges of context collapse. These include presenting only positive self-aspects or limiting self-presentations to be generally consistent with all audience expectations. Indeed, stronger self-presentation motives are associated with more self-enhancement on Facebook, which elicits more positive feedback from other users (Bareket-Bojmel, Moran, & Shahar, 2016). Additionally, people use impression-management strategies like ‘self-cleansing’ (deleting problematic disclosures after the fact) to negotiate normative standards among multiple Facebook audiences (Marder, Joinson, Shankar, & Thirlaway, 2016), and these strategies are associated with greater use of Facebook overall. Alternatively, users may be motivated to express themselves more openly on Facebook, viewing open self-disclosure as a means of identity-construction and relationship facilitation. For example, a recent study by Michikyan et al. (2015) found users with a non-coherent sense of self expressed hidden self-identities on Facebook—presumably to validate identities they were uncomfortable expressing offline.

1.2.4. Social network density

In addition to motivational factors, certain characteristics of the Facebook social network should impact Facebook use. Previous studies have examined a variety of social network characteristics in this context (e.g. Lin et al., 2014); however, network density stands out as particularly relevant. Within the extant literature, social network density is defined as the interconnectedness of individuals belonging to an ego-centric network (Lin et al., 2014). In the context of SNS use, network density is related to more emotional expression (Lin et al., 2014), greater self-disclosures (Vitak, 2012), posting more status-updates, and spending more time on Facebook (Park, Lee, & Kim, 2012). These findings suggest individuals who see themselves as part of a “dense” online social network may be incentivized to self-disclose more openly on Facebook. However, if networks are highly faceted (i.e., characterized by relatively distinct audiences), individuals may feel uncomfortable openly disclosing self-relevant information. Consistent with this assertion, studies have shown that network diversity (the reciprocal of network density) relates to greater feelings of social tension online (Binder, Howes, & Sutcliffe, 2009). Thus, perceptions of network density may be an important determinant of self-expressions on Facebook.

1.3. Present study

The DFM is an integrative model of Facebook use that predicts belongingness and self-presentation needs underlie individual differences in patterns of Facebook use. Though the DFM draws from motive-based models of social behavior like self-presentation theory (Baumeister, 1989), it lacks clear hypotheses pointing to contextual and behavioral mechanisms of use such as perceived network density and strategies for self-expression. Thus, with the DFM (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012) serving as a conceptual base, we used structural equation modeling (SEM) to test a series of hypotheses delineating the interplay of motivational, contextual, and behavioral factors predicted to influence Facebook use (see Fig. 1).

Consistent with the DFM, greater belonging and self-presentation needs should be associated with more Strategic Impression Management (SIM) on Facebook, which in turn should relate to more frequent Facebook use overall (Hypotheses 1 and 2). By contrast, perceptions of network density should relate to more Open Self-Disclosure (OSD) on Facebook, which should also relate to more frequent Facebook use overall (Hypothesis 3). Supplementing our formal hypotheses, we also explored the association between social motives and OSD on Facebook—a topic for which limited research exists. Specifically, we examined whether belongingness or self-presentation motives are associated with OSD as a self-expression strategy on Facebook. In summary, the proposed SEM estimates the direct effects of perceived network density and both social motives on Facebook use frequency, along with the hypothesized indirect effects on use via OSD and SIM.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and procedures

The sample consisted of 312 undergraduates attending a university within the Southwestern United States (67% women, $M_{\text{age}} = 19.1$, $SD = 3.01$). Participants were 54% Hispanic, 30% non-Hispanic White, 6% Black, 7% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3% multiple ethnicities/not reported. Students were eligible to participate if they used Facebook at least once a month; however, approximately 60% logged in daily or more, 22% logged in at least once a week, and 18% logged in less than once a week. Participants signed up through the university introductory psychology subject pool to complete the survey online for partial course credit. The university IRB approved all procedures prior to data collection.

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