

Social Media Use or Abuse: A Review

Syed Zulkarnain Syed Idrus¹ and Nor Azizah Hitam²

Centre for Communication Technology and Human Development, Kompleks Pusat Pengajian
Jejawi 1, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, 02600 Jejawi, Perlis

ABSTRACT

The Internet has consolidated itself as a very powerful platform that has changed the communication and business transactions. Now, the number of users navigating through the Internet is more than 2.4 billion. This large audience demands online commerce, knowledge sharing, social networks etc., which grew exponentially over the past few years. This paper provides a review regarding the use of social networks or social media, particularly Facebook as a platform in information sharing.

Keywords: Online services, social networks.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

For the past two decades, computer networks have grown at an explosive rate. In a wide range of environments, such networks have become a mission critical tool. Organisations are building networks with larger scales than ever before and the connectivity with the global Internet has become indispensable. Along with this trend has come an explosion in the use of computer networks as a means of illicit access to computer systems. Transmitted information level is becoming more important especially as interactions that used to only be carried out offline, such as bank and commercial exchanges are now being carried out online in the form of Internet banking and electronic commercial exchanges. Internet is known as a very powerful platform that changes the way we communicate and perform business transactions in current technology. According to the Internet World Stats (Internet World Stats, 2012) as of June 2012, more than 2.4 billion people and that is over a third of the world's human population have used the services of the Internet, which is approximately 100 times more people than were using it in 1995. The Internet has enabled and accelerated new forms of human interactions through instant messaging, Internet forums and social networking.

¹syzul@unimap.edu.my

²norazizah@unimap.edu.my

2.0 DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social networking or social media has become an integral part of modern society. Social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace have created new ways to socialise and interact. Users of these sites are able to add a wide variety of information to pages, to pursue common interests and to connect with others. It is also possible to find existing acquaintances, to allow communication among existing groups of people (Wikipedia, 2013b). However, social networking and online profiles contribute to this: giving potential intruders a plethora of sensitive information. Insafe reports that more than a quarter of children in Europe have online networking profiles, which can be exposed (Parris-Long, 2012). Thus, those children who use social networking sites like Facebook, Hyves, Tuenti, Nasza-Klasa SchuelerVZ, Hi5, Iwiw or Myvip, however say that their profile is set to “public”, meaning that everyone can see it and many of these display their address and/or phone number (European Union, 2011).

3.0 SOCIAL MEDIA USE STATISTICS

As of May 2013, with over 1.11 billion people in the world are now on Facebook alone (Wikipedia, 2013a), hence the danger is widespread. As increasing amounts of personal information are surfacing on the Web, it is essential to remain wary of the risks surrounding the ease in which our private details can be accessed.

It is good to be wary about publishing your personal information even if other people are happy to post pictures of their house or their contact details. Remember what goes online, usually stays online.

(Parris-Long, 2012)

Statistical results of the usage of Social Networking Site (SNS) by country and age in Europe among children is shown in Figure 1. In Asia, there are more than 250 million Facebook users (Internet World Stats, 2012) and Malaysia constitutes over 5% of its population (Wikipedia, 2013a). In fact, Bernama reports that youth in Malaysia are addicted to social media sites. Some even use Facebook at their workplace, where people who are addicted to Facebook would log on first thing in the morning. In (Hamat et al., 2012), their study presents the results of a nationwide survey on tertiary level students in Malaysia. They state that the respondents spend the most time online for social networking and learning. The results indicate that while the respondents are using SNS for the purpose of informal learning activities, only half (50.3%) use

it to get in touch with their lecturers in informal learning contexts. However, the respondents report spending more time on SNS for socialising rather than learning as they do not believe the use of SNS is affecting their academic performance.

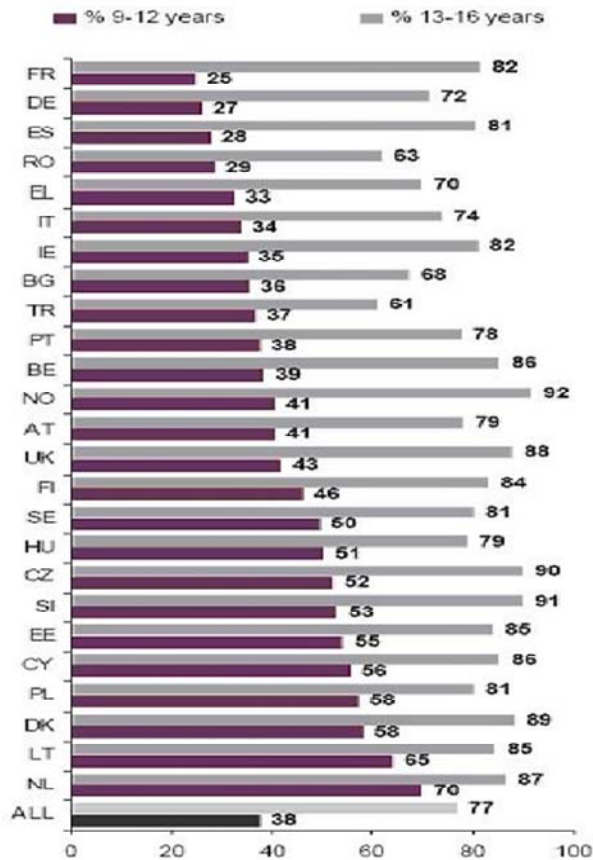


Figure 1: Children’s use of SNS by country and age (adapted from (European Union, 2011))

A study in (Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, 2008) shows that the vast majority of college students are using MySpace and Facebook, which are friend-networking sites for a significant portion of their day for reasons such as making new friends and locating old friends. Their results indicate that many uses and gratifications are met by users (e.g. “keeping in touch with friends”), which has an impact towards friend-networking sites on communication and social needs of college students. Both men and women of traditional college age are equally engaging in this form of online communication with this result holding true for nearly all ethnic groups. However, in (Weiser, 2000) women are more likely to

engage in online communication to maintain personal connections with family, friends and co-workers, whereas men use online communication for pursuing sexual interests and romance.

With regard to the most influential factor that affected the adoption of Facebook among youth in Malaysia, according to (Mustaffa et al., 2011), peer pressure was the most influential factor at 50.5%, followed by 27.0% in current trends, 16.5% use for personal interest and only 6.0% were influenced by anonymous invitation. Their results show that people tend to use Facebook because they were persuaded by their peers, who have been using the new media. The use of Face-book enables friends to keep in touch and maintain friendship, which is one way to stay connected.

Students use Facebook for not only social purposes but also educational purposes as suggested by (Bosch, 2009; Roblyer et al., 2010). However, consistent with previous researches (Ellison et al., 2007a; Pempek et al., 2009), students mainly used Facebook for social purposes rather than educational purposes. The results also revealed that students use Facebook especially to have fun, to contact with friends and to follow photos, videos, events *etc.* on Facebook. Facebook is not generally used as a tool to get or to share information about school related news and to communicate with the teachers, contrary to popular claims suggesting students use Facebook for school-related works. Thus, it can be said that Facebook is rarely used for educational purposes. It appears, therefore, that Facebook fulfills its role as it was intended by its creators: to support social networks (Kalpidou et al., 2011). It is also revealed that Facebook is not generally used for meeting new people as suggested by (Ellison et al., 2007a). In their research, it is suggested that more Facebook use involving contacting with an existing friend, a classmate, someone living near them or someone they met socially rather than use involving meeting new people. On the contrary to a study in (Muisse et al., 2009), it was revealed in this study that male students spend significantly more time on Facebook than female students. As for number of friends, male students have significantly more friends on Facebook than female students on the contrary to a study in (Pempek et al., 2009) findings which was suggested female students have significantly more friends on Facebook than male students.

Separate analysis were also conducted to observe the differences between IT and business students in Malaysia in (Leng et al., 2011). 86% of variances in 'attitude' were explained by perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment for IT students compared to 66% for business students. 72% of variances in 'intention' were explained by perceived usefulness, attitude and social norm for IT students while 86% of variances in intention were explained by perceived

usefulness, attitude and perceived behavioural control for business students. Thus, 'perceived enjoyment' has significant effect on attitude towards SNS for both IT and business students. Whereas, 'perceived behavioural control' has no direct effect on intention to use for IT students, as IT students face less constraint internally and externally in using SNS as they are more equipped with IT skills and resources.

4.0 IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is no longer a luxury, but now a necessity, however, it is here to stay and keeps growing. How much can we perceive the utilisation of this so-called technology, as one cannot imagine to what extent that the user would go and beyond reasonable doubt in deceiving or preying on other users who are vulnerable. In recent years, there are a lot of cases involving Facebook reported in the Malaysian local newspapers *vis-a-vis* articles published, which some can be regarded as excessive. There are articles on sexual harassments/allegations, cheating (usually for money), characterised by contempt

Thus, there are various issues with regard to this matter, some of which can be mentioned here. In the Berita Harian newspaper article written by (Youb, 2013), political figures are utilising the Facebook and Twitter to promote themselves for the upcoming election. In (The Star, 2013), the newspaper reports that a stolen car was found several days after because someone had alerted the authority having seen the owner posted it on her Facebook wall. Girls have even run away from home with male friends and some had also been raped with whom they had just befriended through Facebook. Some have also been blackmailed by seductive strangers when they exchanged nude photographs of themselves or even by their former boyfriends. The most daring act is the sale of firearms, which were made openly via Facebook. Furthermore, social media at times is used to spread lies when it should be used in a constructive way for the betterment of society as well as for spreading knowledge and information.

In (Haythornthwaite, 2005), the author believes that the uniqueness of SNS is not in their ability to allow individual to meet strangers but rather their ability to enable users to shape and make their social networks visible to others. Many SNS members do not necessarily develop a network to meet new people but rather to communicate with people who are already a part of their existing social networks (Ellison et al., 2007b).

The authors in (Donath & Boyd, 2004) hypothesised in their study that social networking sites have the ability to greatly increase weak ties within a community because the technology is conducive to maintaining such ties cheaply and easily. The uses and gratification perspective proposes that individuals use media to fulfill their various needs (Blumler & Katz, 1974). The underlying principle of the perspective is that people will choose media according to their expectations and their drive to attain a gratifying experience. The perspective assumes that people are active consumers of media (Katz et al., 1973) and they make choices about where to go, and what to pay attention to. This assumption of an active audience seems particularly well suited to studying a medium designed for active use and known for its interactivity (Morris & Ogan, 1996). Through the use of SNS like MySpace and Facebook, members are now able to satisfy their various needs in one central location within the context of a large network composed of a diverse body of individuals (Urista et al., 2009).

The vast majority of participants in a study in (Urista et al., 2009) state that they use SNS because they are an efficient way to communicate with friends. One participant stated, “if you want to spread news quickly about an event or something, you can do it very easily on MySpace”. Many users take pleasure in this capacity for dispersing messages to multiple friends at one time. As one participant put it, “with MySpace I can tell the same thing to everyone, which prevents a million questions being asked” (Urista et al., 2009). Thus, participants agreed that they enjoy the convenience and accessibility SNS has to offer to users for communicating with others.

5.0 ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

There several challenges exist in social media such as Return-On-Investment problem because of fragmentation; influential factor; and time consumption. While the challenges is said to be onerous, but, somehow there are rewards for penetrating social media effectively i.e. successful bloggers, Twitterers, Facebook users build audiences of like minds and interests (Horton, 2009).

In (Wok et al., 2012), the authors found that users in Malaysia aged between 17-40 years old used the social media more for sharing negatively-oriented information as opposed to the positively-oriented information. Youth in Malaysia seen as more likely to trust social media as a news source, even most of the reports or information disseminated is not true. Those aged under 30 years is now making social media as their primary information access. They seem no

longer interested in watching or get information through the mainstream media such as television or major newspapers (Bernama, 2013)

Now, the mainstream media is no longer recognised as a prime channel by the youth, mainstream media only become the main information channel to the elderly only.

(Datuk Azman Amin, Director General of Department of National Unity and National Integration)

Analysis of the perceptions and reported practices of senior Australian public relations practitioners in (Macnamara, 2010) indicates generally upbeat views on social media and a belief that these new forms and communication media offer opportunities to improve and even transform public relations. However, the question remains whether Facebook is helpful or harmful to the people (user) specifically and society in general. According to a research study conducted by (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011), Facebook use enhances self-esteem by providing multiple opportunities for selective self-presentation through photos and personal details. Another research study by (Gentile et al., 2012) found that participants who spent time on social network sites endorsed more positive self-views.

While some research indicates that Facebook has a positive effect on the user other studies suggest that Facebook use is detrimental. A study conducted by (Tazghini & Siedlecki, 2013) found a negative association between self-esteem and Facebook activity. This association was related to actions like untagging undesirable pictures or adding others as friends who they are not familiar with. Similarly, in (PR Newswire, 2012) research indicated that Facebook has a negative impact on self-esteem and body image.

Facebook is making it easier for people to spend more time and energy criticizing their own bodies and wishing they looked like someone else.

(Dr. Harry Brandt, Director of The Center for Eating Disorders at Sheppard Pratt)

6.0 DISCUSSIONS

The technology and potentially useful tools such as social media give us the upper hand to be at a peak of expansion in today's digitised world. Thus, we have to keep at par with the development because they are here to stay and no doubt will keep on growing by the years, depending on which side of the fence that you are standing. The social media tools and services can mean a good

thing if you put it up to a good use or utilise. To others, it may do more harm than good and could also mean an invasion of privacy. We have to think and decide wisely on how and what to use social networkings as such to maintain a healthy computer user, and hence neither misuse nor abuse.

7.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would also like to express their cordial thanks to Associate Professor Dr. Narimah Ismail for the support and had made this paper possible for publication.

REFERENCES

- A. Parris-Long. (2012). *Safer Internet Day: Why Every Generation Has A Role To Play In Keeping The Web Secure*. Retrieved from <http://uk.news.yahoo.com/safer-internet-day--why-every-generation-has-a-role-to-play-in-keeping-the-web-secure-.html>. Last visited: 10/02/2012.
- Afendi Hamat, Mohamed Amin Embi, & Haslinda Abu Hassan. (2012). The use of social networking sites among Malaysian university students. *International Education Studies*, 5(3), 56.
- Amy L Gonzales, & Jeffrey T Hancock. (2011). Mirror, mirror on my Facebook wall: Effects of exposure to Facebook on self-esteem. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*, 14(1-2), 79–83.
- Amy Muise, Emily Christofides, & Serge Desmarais. (2009). More information than you ever wanted: Does Facebook bring out the green-eyed monster of jealousy? *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 12(4), 441–444.
- Bernamea. (2013). Media sosial lebih dipercayai golongan muda. *The Malaysian Insider*, October 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/bahasa/article/media-sosial-lebih-dipercayai-golongan-muda>. Last visited: 7/10/2013.
- Brittany Gentile, Jean M Twenge, Elise C Freeman, & W Keith Campbell. (2012). The effect of social networking websites on positive self-views: An experimental investigation. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(5), 1929–1933.

- Caroline Haythornthwaite. (2005). Social networks and internet connectivity effects. *Information, Community & Society*, 8(2), 125–147.
- Elihu Katz, Jay G Blumler, & Michael Gurevitch. (1973). Uses and gratifications research. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(4), 509–523.
- Eric B Weiser. (2000). Gender differences in internet use patterns and internet application preferences: A two-sample comparison. *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 3(2), 167–178.
- European Union. (2011). Digital agenda: Children using social networks at a younger age; Many unaware of basic privacy risks, says survey. Press Releases Database. Retrieved from <http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release-IP-11-479-en.htm?locale=FR>. Last visited:18/09/2013.
- Goh Say Leng, S Lada, MZ Muhammad, AAHA Ibrahim, & T Amboala. (2011). An exploration of social networking sites (SNS) adoption in Malaysia using Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and intrinsic motivation. *Journal of Internet Banking and Commerce*, 16(2), 1–27.
- James L Horton. (2009). PR & Social Media. Internet-World-Stats. Internet usage statistics. The internet big picture: World internet users and populations stats. 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>. Last visited: 15/09/2013.
- Jay G Blumler, & Elihu Katz. (1974). *The Uses Of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives On Gratifications Research (Vol. 3)*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Jim Macnamara. (2010). Public relations and the social: How practitioners are using or abusing, social media. *Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal*, 11(1), 21–39.
- John Raacke, & Jennifer Bonds-Raacke. (2008). Myspace and Facebook: Applying the uses and gratifications theory to exploring friend-networking sites. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*, 11(2), 169–174.
- Judith Donath, & Danah Boyd. (2004). Public displays of connection. *BT Technology Journal*, 22(4), 71–82.

- Maria Kalpidou, Dan Costin, & Jessica Morris. (2011). The relationship between Facebook and the well-being of undergraduate college students. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*, 14(4), 183–189.
- Mark A Urista, Qingwen Dong, & Kenneth Day Day. (2009). Explaining why young adults use MySpace and Facebook through uses and gratifications theory. *Human Communication*, 12(2), 215–229.
- MD Roblyer, Michelle McDaniel, Marsena Webb, James Herman, & James Vince Witty. (2010). Findings on Facebook in higher education: A comparison of college faculty and student uses and perceptions of social networking sites. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 13(3), 134–140.
- Merrill Morris, & Christine Ogan. (1996). The internet as mass medium. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 1(4).
- Nicole B Ellison et al. (2007b). Social network sites: Definition, history and scholarship. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 210–230.
- Nicole B Ellison, Charles Steinfield, & Cliff Lampe. (2007a). The benefits of Facebook friends: Social capital and college students use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 12(4), 1143–1168.
- Norakmah Mat Youb. (2013). Puteri UMNO: Promosi diri di laman sosial. *Berita Harian Online*, 2013. Retrieved from [http://www.bharian.com.my/bharian/articles/PuteriUMNO/Promosidiridilamansosial/ Article/](http://www.bharian.com.my/bharian/articles/PuteriUMNO/Promosidiridilamansosial/Article/). Last visited: 22/09/2013.
- Normah Mustaffa, Faridah Ibrahim, Wan Amizah Wan Mahmud, Fauziah Ahmad, Chang Peng Kee, & Maizatul Haizan Mahbob. (2011). Diffusion of innovations: The adoption of Facebook among youth in Malaysia. *The Public Sector Innovation Journal*, 16(3), 1–15.
- PR Newswire. (2012). Public survey conducted by the center for eating disorders at Sheppard Pratt reveals that Facebook drains body image and self-esteem. PR Newswire Association LLC, March 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/public-survey-conducted-by-the-center-for-eating-disorders-at-sheppard-pratt-reveals-that-facebook-drains-body-image-and-self-esteem-144601505.html>. Last visited: 8/10/2013.

- Saadah Wok, Syed Arabi Idid, & Norealyna Misman. (2012). Social media use for information-sharing activities among youth in Malaysia. *Journalism and Mass Communication*, 2(11), 1029–1047.
- Sarah Tazghini, & Karen L Siedlecki. (2013). A mixed method approach to examining Facebook use and its relationship to self-esteem. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(3), 827–832.
- Tanja E Bosch. (2009). Using online social networking for teaching and learning: Facebook use at the university of cape town. *South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research*, 35(2), 185–200.
- The Star. Stolen car found, thanks to Facebook. (2013). The Star Online. Retrieved from <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2013/09/22/Stolen-car-found-thanks-to-Facebook.aspx>. Last visited: 22/09/2013.
- Tiffany A Pempek, Yevdokiya A Yermolayeva, & Sandra L Calvert. (2009). College students' social networking experiences on Facebook. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 30(3), 227–238.
- Wikipedia. Facebook statistics. (2013a). Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook_statistics. Last visited: 20/09/2013.
- Wikipedia. Internet. (2013b). Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet>. Last visited:23/09/2013.