

# EVALUATING USER EXPERIENCE WITH SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES: A MEDIATED MODERATION RELATIONSHIP

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## ABSTRACT

Social networking sites (SNSs), such as Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, QQ, and Twitter, are defined by their unique focus on allowing people to present themselves, share contents, articulate their social networks, and establish or maintain connections with others. The proliferation of social networking sites has created a phenomenon that engages millions of Internet users around the world. Given the popularity of these sites and their importance in people's lives to facilitate communication and relationships, it is important to understand the factors influencing SNSs use and user satisfaction.

While majority of studies have confirmed that social connections or maintaining social networks is the key factor explaining why people use social networking sites (Haythornthwaite, 2002; Ellison *et al.*, 2007), very little is known about the role of SNSs users' feelings and perception which play in forming their overall SNS usage experiences, and the factors that make using social networking sites a compelling experience. This study tends to examine the nature of SNSs use and explore the factors that influence the use and gratification.

One of the major determinants of technology use is competency (Spitzberg, 2006). Competency factors are expected to impact SNSs use, in that use of SNSs reflects and extends users' technical capabilities, and facilitates the awareness, development and fulfillment of needs or desires previously unrealized. Along with the competency logic, it is reasonable to believe that a diverse social environment will contribute more to the competency enhancement and the resulting satisfaction than the social platforms composed of like-minded others. Therefore, we expect SNSs users' perceived competence is positively associated to user satisfaction. The relationship is furthermore moderated by users' perceived identification with user community. We further propose a mediator of the interaction between users' perceived competence and user identification on user satisfaction to demonstrate a comprehensive SNSs user experience model. In particular, as a consequence of competency-enhancing experience from interacting in a diverse online social environment, users will embrace affective states or positive emotions such as feeling flexible, spontaneous, imaginative, creative, and playful.

The sample includes a group of students who enrolled in undergraduate and/or graduate level classes in United States. LISREL 8.80 (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1993) was applied for measurement analysis in the current study. Next, the hierarchical regression models were used to test the proposed hypotheses. The results supported both hypotheses.

Our findings entail important implications regarding how to design SNSs to effectively address users' personal and social needs, and motivate users' participation and engagement. Our study suggest that the feature of SNSs as a media of generating and bridging social capital could be enhanced by the diversity of user composition, as evidenced by the empirical results that perceived competence in relationship to user satisfaction is more salient for the low level of perceived user identification. Our study also shows that fun aspect of SNS usage should also be a design focus. As such, SNSs should be effectively designed to augment the function of generating and bridging social capital, supporting loose social ties, and allowing users to create and maintain larger, diffuse networks of relationships from which they could potentially draw resources.

Future work could quantitatively extend our study by moving beyond the American setting, and incorporating the cross-cultural elements to determine which societies have similar or divergent views on the moderating role of social networking sites' users' identification with user community on the relationship of users' perceived competence with users' satisfaction with the site. Furthermore, future studies could test the similar framework by including other antecedents and consequences.

References Available Upon Request