

SOCIAL NETWORKERS' MOTIVATION TO USE ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES: IMPLICATIONS FOR LEVERAGING DIGITAL MARKETING

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Abstract: Online social network have become an integral part with most of Internet users. Improving internet connectivity coupled with enhanced smartphone usage is leading to increase in use of social media spearheaded by online social network websites. Today for marketers, an online social network based strategy is one of the prime parameters in deciding an inclusive marketing strategy. But depending on geographic region or nation, there exists immense variances in why individuals use online social network sites. So, for global marketers it is important to understand why people engage with online social networks at a micro level. So far, few previous studies have empirically investigated motivations of people for using online social networking sites, especially outside US. This study has explored user motivation across social networkers of Punjab (India) to engage in online social networking sites. The findings of this study suggest that there are five motives among the target population for using online social networks. Moreover, there are certain difference in motivation of males and females to use online social networks.

Keywords: Online social networks, user motivation, digital marketing, marketing implication.

JEL Classification: M3 – Marketing and Advertising

INTRODUCTION

In a short period of time, online social networking has developed into a sensation, through which a massive number of people using internet are linked. For example Facebook which is a widely used online social network in the world has a user base of 1.44 billion in Quater1 of 2015 (Statista, 2015). Similarly another online social network Twitter boasts of 302 million active monthly users worldwide (Twitter, 2015). Underlying this popularity of online social networks is the fact that as a media it encourages each member for response and influence. Online social network activities involve user contribution to content creation, which can include simple posting of comments or complex activity of recommending content to others. Online social networking websites (OSNS) acts as tools for co-operative

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communication, enabling information sharing between users/members of a defined virtual network (O'Reilly, 2005). Online social networks provide a platform to construct social relations and linkages among people who share similar backgrounds, interests, activities and real-life acquaintances or even with total strangers. Increasing popularity of virtual social networks had attracted a lot of attention from academicians to examine underlying motivations of users to use such online services in social media sphere (Heim & Brandtzæg, 2009; Lin & Lu, 2011; Cheung, Chui, & Lee, 2011; Karahanna, Xu, & Zhang, 2015).

Aspiration to communicate with others reflect the underlying intention among people to use on-line social networks (Park & Jun, 2003), but one cannot ignore the superseding effect of culture norms and sanctions on motivations to such sites across different parts of the world. (Recabarren, Nussbaum, & Leiva, 2008). When an effort was made to trace out the user motivations to indulge in online social networking, a narrow and limited academic research documentation was traced out for India and particularly for state of Punjab. India, with 232 million internet users, is world's 3rd largest internet market and has been reporting a 37% year over year addition to its user base (Griffin, 2015). Moreover, on Facebook (an online social network website) India is having the second largest user base of 101.5 million users (PTI, 2015). In India 60% of the active internet users use it mainly for the purpose of social networking out of which 60% of the traffic comes from non-metro cities (Mankani, 2010).

This highlights that internet is used more for online social networking and online network sites are the places to find majority of virtual users. At a certain spot of time, penetration of mobile internet was one of the highest in Punjab (a state of India) i.e.11% as compared to 8.5% of Indian average (Khanna, 2010) and otherwise also in 2014 Punjab is one the major customer base of internet users with more than 5.4% of the population using internet. Considering this huge share of people towards internet and virtual social network usage, an attempt has been made to explore the motives of Punjabis to use online networking sites.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Continuously increasing share of people in virtual social networks in terms of usage calls for insights about the underlying motivational intentions of online social networkers to indulge in such a behavior. An assortment of possible reasons which motivate users to use online social networks were identified using literature review. Krasnova, Hildebrand, & Gunther (2011) suggested that needs related to personal relationships, fantasy and togetherness are motives behind young people using online social networks. This study also stressed on the fact that online social networks plays a role in improvement of user's self-concept, emphasizing that for most of the users, self-concept improvement can be a motivator for indulging in social networks. Fulfilment of belongingness need coupled with peer pressure

forces an individual to pursue online social networks. Business related activities motivate males to use online networks whereas feminine side was motivated due to the intention for socialization i.e. to be in touch with others (Allen, 2008). Considering extrinsic motivators of goal oriented commitment to an action and intrinsic motivators of self-gratification leading from hedonic values push people to perform activities over online networks.

Three motivators in use of online networks starting with expression effectiveness, usefulness being second and playfulness as the third has been traced out. Easiness to use an online social network united with alleged value of usefulness of such service enhances the intrinsic motivations value leading to acceptance of online network site (Leng, Lada, & Muhammad, 2011). Observing the model of self traits, one can identify online network usage motivators like that of self-identity & self-construct. These factors can help to find motivators of online network usage across cultures. Other than these two motivations, information seeking along with personal entertainment, socialization, expression of self, time pass and keeping track of new trends also motivate people in using OSN (Online social networks), (Kim, Kim, & Nam, 2010).

Online social networks needs to offer means by which users of such sites are able to arouse their inner feeling of pleasure acting as a motivator to enhance online networking activities. Keeping in contact with others, to re-initiate long lost contacts but along with managing existing ones had also been inspiring people to use online networks (Schaefer, 2010). Maintaining contact with old and existing friends or to reunite with their older friends along with needs and desire of entertainment and time pass motivate people to use online networks (Doruer, Menevi, & Eyyam, 2011). Time pass, peer communication, enjoyment along with learning from others acts as motivators for adolescents to use online social networks.

Females tend to use online networks for building and nurturing relationships and men were found to be more interested to search for and make new contacts or friends (Barker, 2009). One more important aspect of user motivation was researched by Chen & Pang (2012), explaining the relationship between leisure activities and motivations of the users. Leisure was found to be related with intrinsic motivations and culture of the users, revealing that emotions, cognitions and motivation are affected by person's self-construal.

Need for leisure activities of an individual were not only found depended on the culture but also on individual's need, personality and experience. One of the important aspects of using SNS is to use the 'social capital' which is a collective set of benefits that is derived from mutual cooperation between the different users over the different SNS. Improved understanding of technology with larger reach of internet is one the prime motivators in making people use online social networks (Foster, Francescucci, & C. West, 2010). Making and keeping contacts, self-

expression, sharing of content like pictures and applications, social connection and social investigation instigates the users to visit different online network websites (Wise, Alhabash, & Park, 2010).

Self-identity expressiveness influence, social-identity expressiveness influence on online network sites (Pagani, Hofacker, & Ronald, 2011), cost effectiveness in accessing online social networks and suitability of use coupled with privacy features (Cravens, 2010) attract individuals towards social network usage. A research done by Gangadharbatla (2007) was aimed to find out the primary motivations of the youth to join and participate in any of the online SNS along with the intention of finding the managerial implications of the research. Motivations found were self-efficacy over the virtual network, cognitive and belonging needs & self-esteem which builds a strong attitude among people to join any social site. Secondly if any online network is able to put a good appeal to the individual's self-esteem and if the individual's likability towards features of online network could be established then, a marketer can expect more number of active users online. Given the conception that there were diverse reasons behind online network usage two research problems of present study were as follows:

Research problem 1- To identify different motives aimed at usage of online social network websites among people and to check, whether these motives differ across genders.

Research problem 2- To suggest online network marketers/managers tactics to entice more people to use online social network websites and position products/services in more targeted manner.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study was a two phased study that started with exploratory qualitative research using focus group to find what motivates social networking usage and it was followed by extensive quantitative study. The period of this study was from quarter four of 2014 to quarter one of 2015.

Sample and Procedure

The very large size of universe and quantitative character of data were two important considerations in favor of sample survey method. This study sample (N = 1000) consisted of Punjabis who were users of any of the top four online social networking website. For the purpose of this study, top four social networking sites of India have been considered i.e. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+ (Alexa, 2014). For the identification of sample from population under study snowball sampling technique was used, which is a non-probabilistic sampling technique. The sample unit in the study is an individual who is having an account with social networking site. Apart from this there was no limitation as to who can

take the survey. Age of participants varied from eighteen years to forty five years with majority of the respondents in the range of nineteen-thirty years.

Measures

In order to get qualitative inputs for the purpose of framing questionnaire, exploratory qualitative research using focus group was used to find what motivates social networking usage. For the purpose of same 3 focus groups had been conducted considering the Krueger (1994) framework. Focus group interviews were conducted at three cities in Punjab (a state of India) i.e. Mohali, Amritsar and Jalandhar. Predefined questions were asked to the participants in order to register responses related to motivation for using online social networks. Considering the output of focus groups and borrowing items from prior literature of (Kim, Sohn, & Choi, 2011) and (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011), a 25 item questionnaire was framed. The face and content validity was first done by extensive review of the relevant literature. Subsequently these items were submitted to four academicians and one industry expert for evaluation. The reliability of the questionnaire was measured using Predictive Analytics Software SPSS and was found to be 0.882.

Administration of the Instrument

After accessing the reliability and validity, the final instrument was administered using a combination of personal, e-mail and online method. The questionnaire was administered online using services of surveymonkey.com. The link of the survey was shared on online social network websites (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+) using accounts of researcher and network of friends/followers or people in the circle of researchers social networking sites. People in researcher's social network links were requested to share the survey link from their profiles (after every two days this survey link sharing activity was repeated). Individual messages of the survey link were also sent to contacts using social networking sites and e-mail services to administer the questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Identifying Factors Motivating Online Social Network Usage

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied considering its primary objective of curtailing a large set of items into a relatively small set of factors. Variables identified after application of exploratory factor analysis were lesser in number compared to original variable set, but had been found proficient of accounting to a large portion of variability in the variables/items. Based on these variables different factors were identified and the identity of each factor was determined considering the items correlation with that factor. Factor identification was based on the fact that items having highest correlation with a factor would define the conceptual meaning of

the factor. Identified factors were named based on the portfolio of items/variables that correlate the highest with them respectively. Different items were found to have internal structure evidence showing validity evidence suggesting that items line up in a predictable manner i.e. when similar items were added, the factors can clearly predict one's overall motivation to use online social networking web sites.

The value of KMO being 0.883 (Table 1) supported the objective of reducing several variables into fewer factors by showing measures of appropriateness of factor analysis. Hypothesis of correlation matrix being an identity matrix was not accepted considering test of sphericity (Bartlett's). Significance value lead to rejection of null hypothesis and concluded about correlations in the data set that were appropriate for EFA.

Table 1
KMO and Bartlett's Test

<i>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.</i>		.883
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	7662.464
	df	300
	Sig.	.000

As the data collected for identifying the motivation for using online social network websites was on a five opinion likert scale where 1 represented disagreement & 5 represented agreement, so principal axis factoring procedure was used to extract factors from the list of variable. The data being collected on likert scale was discrete so principal component analysis procedure was best suited considering no distributional assumptions.

Using these rules, six factors were extracted (Table 2). Together these six factors were capable of explaining approximately 57% of all the variable variances. Approximately 57% of the total variance explained can be deemed as satisfactory because appropriate number of factors have been extracted (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2009). A plot of the eigenvalues has been provided below for reference.

A review of preliminary loading of factors advocate that appropriate explanation was achievable via principal component analysis, as it converged in six iterations. One important condition of that results were not non-positive definite was also met making proceeding with interpretation possible (Fig. 1).

Communalities which are interpreted as Multiple R²s during multiple regression indicating amount to which any factors elucidate the variance of items were found to be fine, providing additional indication about suitability of results for interpretation (Table 3).

Table 2
Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.558	26.234	26.234	6.558	26.234	26.234
2	2.189	8.758	34.992	2.189	8.758	34.992
3	1.777	7.106	42.098	1.777	7.106	42.098
4	1.392	5.566	47.664	1.392	5.566	47.664
5	1.182	4.728	52.392	1.182	4.728	52.392
6	1.039	4.157	56.549	1.039	4.157	56.549
7	.972	3.889	60.439			
8	.841	3.365	63.803			
9	.791	3.164	66.967			
10	.759	3.037	70.004			
11	.726	2.903	72.907			
12	.672	2.688	75.594			
13	.612	2.449	78.044			
14	.586	2.344	80.388			
15	.571	2.284	82.672			
16	.568	2.271	84.943			
17	.529	2.114	87.057			
18	.481	1.923	88.980			
19	.462	1.849	90.829			
20	.431	1.724	92.553			
21	.405	1.622	94.174			
22	.392	1.567	95.741			
23	.381	1.526	97.267			
24	.348	1.394	98.661			
25	.335	1.339	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Figure 1: Scree Plot

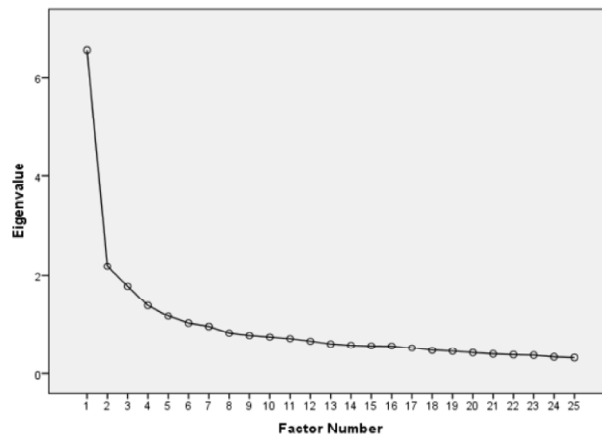


Table 3
Communalities

	<i>Initial</i>	<i>Extraction</i>
to meet new people	1.000	.647
to find other people like me	1.000	.735
to talk to people with same interests	1.000	.653
to establish long lost contacts	1.000	.412
to let out my emotions to others who will understand	1.000	.572
to express my anger to others who will sympathize	1.000	.618
to talk out my problems and seek advice	1.000	.619
to support social causes	1.000	.298
to let other know I care about their feelings	1.000	.434
to learn about unknown things	1.000	.534
to do research	1.000	.551
to learn about useful things	1.000	.605
to share new ideas and my achievements	1.000	.492
to get new ideas	1.000	.498
to relax by releasing work or other pressure	1.000	.554
to feel excited	1.000	.399
to pass time	1.000	.572
because I can use it anytime and anywhere	1.000	.601
because it is free	1.000	.676
because I can use it easily	1.000	.634
because I can find information related to jobs easily	1.000	.458
because people who are important to me think that I should use social networking sites	1.000	.664
because people who influence my behavior think that I should use social networking sites	1.000	.654
to create my social identity	1.000	.644
because of the feeling of social warmth on social networking sites	1.000	.613

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Having superior assurance about the suitability for principal component analysis, elucidation of results were approved. Now Varimax rotation which is orthogonal in nature was applied to maximize the variance of squared loadings of a factor on all items in factor matrix. In this rotation each original variable/item inclines towards one of the factors, and every factor signifies a small number of items leading to simplification of interpretation of results. Reviewing the rotated component matrix suggested that six factors club the variables in a theoretically understandable manner (table 4).

Table 4
Rotated Component Matrix

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
to learn about useful things	.755					
to learn about unknown things	.696					
to do research	.691					
to get new ideas	.622					
to share new ideas and my achievements	.595					
because it is free		.800				
because I can use it easily		.759				
because I can use it anytime and anywhere		.733				
to pass time		.569				
to express my anger to others who will sympathize			.756			
to talk out my problems and seek advice			.756			
to let out my emotions to others who will understand			.712			
to let other know I care about their feelings			.526			
to find other people like me				.824		
to meet new people				.773		
to talk to people with same interests				.755		
because people who are important to me think that I should use social networking sites					.749	
because people who influence my behavior think that I should use social networking sites					.717	
because of the feeling of social warmth on social networking sites					.620	
to create my social identity					.580	
to establish long lost contacts						.632
to relax by releasing work or other pressure						.584

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

From six identified factors, sixth factor was dropped as it comprised of two items with moderate communalities. Such kind of factors are treated as poorly defined factors and should be eliminated. Due to this reason, sixth factor has not been considered (Brown, 2015). All the five factors having salient loadings and with high factor determinacy were deemed to be considered as factors explaining the usage motivation of online shopping sites.

- First factor that comprises of the items related to usage of social networking sites to learn about useful things, to do research, to learn about unknown things, to get new ideas and to share new ideas and my achievements can be named as Need for information exchange. It comprises of both information seeking and sharing part.

- Second factor comprises of items related to use of social networking sites by users because it is free, ease of anytime and anywhere use and help in passing time. These items can be clubbed under the factor heading of need for entertainment fit.
- Third factor is collection of items related to use of online social networks for expressing anger to others who will sympathize, to talk about problems and seeking advice and to let out my emotions to others. All these factors provided the explanation of need for expression.
- Fourth factor in the line of five factors comprises of items like to find likeminded people, to meet new people and to dialogue with people of similar interests. These items can be clubbed under head of need for networking.
- Fifth factor considered usage of social networks by people of Punjab because people important to user think user should use online social network, because people influencing user's behaviour think user should use online social network, because of the feeling of social warmth on social networking sites and to create my social identity. All these can be clubbed under heading of need for social acceptance.

Differences Across Genders in Online Social Network Usage

After identification of five factors that motivate people of Punjab to use online social network websites, in order to find whether any difference exists between motives of males and females to use such sites, one-way MANOVA was applied. Significance value of wilk's lambda was found to be 0.009, verifying that one-way MANOVA was statistically significant. Test of between - subject effects (Table 5) depicted that gender had a significant effect on motive of need for networking only. For all remaining four motives gender was not found to make any significant difference. Motive of need for networking to use online social network websites is found to be relatively stronger in males than females.

Table 5
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

<i>Source</i>	<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>Type III Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Gender	Need for information exchange	.114	1	.114	.157	.692
	Need for entertainment fit	1.121	1	1.121	1.295	.255
	Need for expression	1.715	1	1.715	1.911	.167
	Need for networking	11.555	1	11.555	11.702	.001
	Need for social acceptance	1.633	1	1.633	1.839	.175

Culture Specific Tactics for Online Social Network Marketers

Based on the five varied motives to use online social networks which have been identified for people of Punjab (India), some practical recommendations for online social network marketers/managers can be suggested. Online marketers should target males over different network sites with promotions or communication which offers a message to enhance an existing network i.e. to find like-minded people or to meet new people. This means advertisements of like that of matrimonial sites targeted at males would be more effective in comparison to females for market of Punjab over online networking websites. Online social networks could penetrate more into the Punjab market by highlighting the fact that these sites are free to register and have anytime and anywhere use convenience. Pressure from peer groups has been identified as one of the motives for people joining online social networks so targeting Punjabis with widgets or advertisements that offer facility for friend requests, can help marketers to gain more users or customers.

If any online networking sites can integrate features like where users can talk on one to one basis to some medical practitioner without making anybody or any other contact aware about the same could help a SNS gain more loyal users. As to talk about problems and seek advice from friends was one of the motive for people to use social networks, if specialized services can be offered then it could definitely be useful for online networks. On more general perspective marketers need to locate specific threads of interest that meet their product or service over OSN and should use experts in that area on periodic basis to make promotions. Finally marketers of online social networks need to develop more entertainment features to bring more people to such websites.

CONCLUSION

The results from this study shed light on different factors that motivate people of Punjab to indulge in online social networking. People in Punjab have been found to be use online network websites due to the motives of need for information exchange, need for entertainment fit, need for expression, need for networking, need for social acceptance. This study indicates that social networkers join or use any online social network website due to one or more of the identified motives. Marketers need to base their tactics for promoting products over online networks considering motives that social networkers have to join such sites.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The uneven gender ratio may be one limitation in present study with only 340 female participants and 660 male participants. This unbalanced sample ratio makes it grim to generalize the results based on gender differences. The results of present study also has created contemporary future research directions. Impending research

can focus on different micro-cultures within India. A comparative study of Indian culture with some other country or culture can also be initiated to study motivations for online network usage. Moreover, Other than just online social network sites, such kind of study can also be conducted for use of video blogging sites.

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