An Investigation of Factors Influencing the User’s Social Network Site Continuance Intention

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Abstract

The social network sites (SNS) industry has recently shown an abnormal development pattern: An SNS could rapidly accumulate a large number of users, and then suffer a serious loss of users in a short time, which subsequently leads to the failure of the Web site in the highly competitive market. The user’s social network site continuance is considered the most important factor for an SNS to keep its sustainable development. However, little knowledge of the user’s SNS continuance raises the following research question: What factors could significantly influence the user’s SNS continuance intention?

To address this research question, I study the question from three lenses of research, including the I-view, the social interactivity view, and the trust based view. The I-view is an extension of the IS continuance model. From this research perspective, I tested the influence of the utilitarian factor (i.e., perceived usefulness) and the hedonic factor (i.e., perceived enjoyment) on the user’s satisfaction in the I-view. In addition, I extend the umbrella construct, confirmation, into two sub-constructs, informativeness and self-actualization, and respectively study their influences on the utilitarian factor and the hedonic factor. I find that the user’s perceived enjoyment has a significant positive effect on the user’s satisfaction, thereby motivating the user to continue using the SNS. The perceived informativeness of an SNS and the user’s self-actualization through information sharing with others on the Web site both have significant positive effects on the user’s perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment. From the social interactivity perspective, I suggest that a user’s social gains could have a projection effect on the user’s satisfaction in an SNS and his or her SNS continuance intention. Most previous studies emphasized on the influence of social connection outcomes (i.e., social capitals) on the user’s behavioral intention, but ignored the fact that an individual would also evaluate social connections according to the quality of the information sharing process (i.e., frequency and volume of information being exchanged) during the social activities. This study indicates that an SNS user’s perceived interactivity has a significant positive effect on the user’s sense of belonging to a virtual community and perceived social gains. The social gains significantly positively influence the user’s satisfaction in the Web site and intention to continue using the SNS. From the trust based view, I find that the user’s trust in the social network sites and the user’s trust in other members both have significantly positive effects on the user’s SNS continuance intention. In addition, both of the trust based factors could also positively influence the user’s perceived informativeness, self-actualization, and sense of belonging.

The findings from the current study create a solid foundation for future SNS continuance research, and also provide several practical implications to SNS managers to increase the cohesion between users and the Web sites.