

Investigating the Engage in Electronic Societies via Facebook in the Arab World

Saad Ghaleb Yaseen, Department of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Al-Zytoonah University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan

Khaled Saleh Al Omoush, Department of Management Information Systems, Al-Zytoonah University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to develop and validate a comprehensive framework to elucidate the relationship between members' motivations, attitudes, behavior, and usage patterns of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) as a platform of Electronic Societies (e-societies) focusing on Facebook social networking platform. A questionnaire survey method was used to collect data. The sample included Facebook users from six Arab countries. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), using EQS, was conducted to analyze the data. The results indicated that motivations to engage in e-societies via Facebook, including self-presentation, social interaction, and curiosity, play a pivotal role in explaining Facebook user's attitudes, electronic behavior, and usage patterns. The findings suggest that Facebook has succeeded in providing the fundamental building blocks of e-society construction and copying the features of physical societies, satisfying the basic human needs of social networking. The present study contributes to a deeper understanding of why and how people join the SNSs as a major standardized instrument in building the universal e-societies across boundaries, languages, and cultures.

Keywords: Attitudes, Behaviors, Electronic Societies, Facebook, Motivations, Social Networking Sites (SNSs), Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), Usage Patterns

INTRODUCTION

Although the concept of e-societies dates back to the early days of computer networks, only a few years after the arrival of SNSs, such as Facebook, Twitter, Friendster, and MySpace, have met public success in social life. The popularity of e-societies has become prominent, due to the exponential growth in online social

networking membership. These popular social network environments has quickly become both a basic tool for and a mirror of social interaction, personal identity, and network building among people (Debatin et al., 2009).

The understanding of why and how people access, use, and interact with applications of SNSs represents an important line of research, which is still developing. There has been ongoing discussion about e-societies and SNSs as an advanced Internet-based instrument for building

DOI: 10.4018/jthi.2013040102

these societies. To the authors' knowledge, as yet, there is no systematic investigation of the relationship between motivations, attitudes, behavior, and usage patterns of SNSs integrated into one comprehensive model. Furthermore, most of the previous research concentrated on studying the SNSs in Western societies. Beside of the cultural values, there are notable differences between the West and the Arab world regarding the gender and age groups of Facebook users. To the authors' knowledge, no study has yet investigated the engage in e-societies via SNSs from the Arab perspective, and why and how they join the SNSs. Therefore, given this gap, the present study aims to develop a comprehensive model to understand the relationship between motivations, attitudes, behavior, and usage patterns of SNSs in the Arab world.

The selection of SNS for research is very important, because the results and its generalization ability will be influenced by the importance and popularity of that SNS, and the representative size of that site's audience in the society (Lampe et al., 2006; Cachia, 2009). Given that, Facebook was chosen to conduct the present study, since it is the leading SNS in the world and the most popular social networking platform, particularly in the Arab world. In particular, Facebook has played a central role in shaping political debates in the Arab Spring and coordinate the movements of young Arab to achieve their revolution.

ELECTRONIC SOCIETIES

According to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, society is an enduring and cooperating social group whose members have developed organized patterns of relationships through interaction with one another (www.merriam-webster.com). Social psychology recognizes the need for social networks as fundamental of building societies construction (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Kobler et al., 2010). The need of connectedness and feeling of staying in touch within ongoing social relationships corresponds to one of the basic human moti-

ational principles that inspire social behavior (Kobler et al., 2010). A social network is a set of individuals or other social entities, such as organizations, connected by a set of socially meaningful relationships (Wellman, 1997).

In today's world of IT, the Internet is playing an increasingly crucial role in the social life of individuals and societies through online social networking platforms. SNSs offer various modes of interaction and communication through which people can stay in touch online without concern for time and space around the world (Cachia, 2009). Marcus and Krishnamurthi (2009) and Ali and Lee (2010) indicated that SNSs are online communities that focus on bringing together people with similar interests. Acquisti and Gross (2006) stated that online social network is an Internet community where individuals interact, often through profiles that represent themselves and their networks of connections to others. Ellison et al. (2007) recognized SNSs as online spaces that allow individuals to present themselves, articulate their social networks, and establish or maintain connections with others. Therefore, this study deals with SNSs as Internet-based platform for building e-societies, similarly as the role of offline social networks in building the offline societies.

FACEBOOK SOCIETY

In September 2006, Facebook lifted the limitation on US-based college affiliation and opened itself to an international audience. It has quickly become one of the leading SNSs with over 40 languages (www.allFacebook.com). The barriers of entry to Facebook society are low. A valid e-mail address is the only requirement to join Facebook. Facebook is the second most popular site on the Internet, after Google, and the first SNS (www.alexa.com). With the availability of the Arabic version, Facebook became the most popular SNS in the Arab world.

According to "social bakers" site (www.socialbakers.com), by the beginning of 2011, Facebook attracted more than 21.31 million

17 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/article/investigating-engage-electronic-societies-via/77918

Related Content

How People Approach Numbers, Statistics, and Risks

(2012). *Human-Information Interaction and Technical Communication: Concepts and Frameworks* (pp. 296-329).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/people-approach-numbers-statistics-risks/63857/

Addressing Social Inclusion via eDemocracy Applications: Which Role for Human Rights?

Evika Karamagioli (2012). *Human Rights and Risks in the Digital Era: Globalization and the Effects of Information Technologies* (pp. 171-185).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/addressing-social-inclusion-via-edemocracy/64945/

Evaluating the Visual Demand of In-Vehicle Information Systems: The Development of a New Method

Ainojie Alexander Irune (2011). *International Journal of Mobile Human Computer Interaction* (pp. 1-21).

www.irma-international.org/article/evaluating-visual-demand-vehicle-information/51654/

User Experience of Mobile Internet: Analysis and Recommendations

Eija Kaasinen, Virpi Roto, Kristin Roloff, Kaisa Väänänen-Vainio-Mattila, Teija Vainio, Wolfgang Maehr, Dhaval Joshi and Sujana Shrestha (2009). *International Journal of Mobile Human Computer Interaction* (pp. 4-23).

www.irma-international.org/article/user-experience-mobile-internet/37458/

A Reconsideration of Modernization Theory: Contribution to ICT4D's Research

Sylvain K. Cibangu (2013). *International Journal of Information Communication Technologies and Human Development* (pp. 86-101).

www.irma-international.org/article/reconsideration-modernization-theory/77869/