



Differences In Motivations For The Use Of Facebook Between Males And Females

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ABSTRACT

Social networking sites have evolved with great pace and India has been no exception. Facebook is the top most rated social networking site (SNS) in India. Though this site is mostly used by younger generations, the popularity of this site is increasing among all masses and classes. The current paper explores gender differences in motivations for the use of Facebook. Of the sample (N=556), 229 male and 327 female Facebook users from India were asked to rate the motivations for the use of Facebook from 'most preferred' to 'least preferred'. The five motivations studied were- time passing, information, relationship development, relationship maintenance and trend following. The cross tab chi square analyses revealed significant differences in three out of five motivations between male and female Facebook users, namely time passing, relationship development and trend following. Female Facebook users rated 'time passing' as a more preferred motivation in comparison to male Facebook users, while male users rated 'relationship development' and 'trend following' motivations as more preferred in comparison to female Facebook users. Suggestions for future research are discussed.

KEYWORDS: Social networking sites, Facebook, motivations, gender

INTRODUCTION

The emergence and rapid adoption of internet and its various avenues for human communication brought a revolution in social behaviors and networking practices. Facebook, the most popular social networking site (SNS) has over 1.1 billion users worldwide (Smith, 2013). In India too, the high penetration of broadband internet and the increased online presentation powered by mobile phones, many Indians are going social these days. India has over 88 million active Facebook users with 7.3% penetration with respect to total population ("Facebook statistics, 2013"). India also has the second largest Facebook user base in the world and is expected to overtake US as Facebook's number one market (Choudhury, 2013). It is no surprise that Facebook is used by younger generation – so much so that about 49.1% of all Indian Facebook users are between ages 18 to 24 years. The second largest group is users between ages 25 to 34 years, who make up about 26.8% of all Facebook users in India. Only 4.1% users are of age 45 and above. Facebook usage in India is highly skewed towards males (75%) – with only 25% of users being females ("India Facebook", 2013). According to statistics posted by Prabhudesai (2013), India has the highest Facebook user base in the world in younger age demographics. India has more Facebook users between the ages of 13 to 19 years in comparison



of users in the US. In view of the fast growing user base it is expected to catch the US anytime.

Different people go online for different reasons. Those who use SNS are no exception. Any individual who creates a profile may have a unique intention for their time spent online. Their uses are based on different individual motivations. As people are different in their social and psychological circumstances, which may affect how and why they use different forms of media to fulfill their personal needs. The 'uses and gratifications' theory too suggests that there is a tendency of an individual to use a particular communication medium to fulfill his/her needs is shaped by the alternatives available (Blumler & Katz, 1974). In recent years, researchers have taken 'uses and gratifications' approach to the Internet use in order to identify a wide range of motivations that drive the use of various online sites and services, including SNSs such as MySpace and Facebook (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011; Pornsakulvanich & Haridakis, 2010; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008).

Empirical studies had shown gender differences in SNS usage patterns. Sheldon (2008) found that women were more likely to go to Facebook to maintain existing relationships, pass time and be entertained. On the other hand, men were more likely to go to Facebook to develop new relationships or meet new people. Barker (2009) found that females used SNS for communication with peer group members, entertainment and passing time, whereas men used it in an instrumental way for social compensation, learning, and social identity gratifications. Makashvili, Ujmajuridze, Amirejibi, Kotetishvili and Barbakadze (2013) found that male users rated passing time higher than females Facebook

users, at the same time, the results show that male respondents use social network extensively for making new friends and relationships while females prefer to stay connected to already existing friends. The present study aims to find gender differences in motivations for the use of Facebook. For finding this, cross tab chi square analyses were carried out, as both the variables were categorical/non metric.



II .METHODS

2.1 Participants

The sampling done to extract the sample was self-selection sampling. The participants of the study were Facebook users, who were recruited online using a web based survey hosting site www.surveymonkey.com. The survey yielded 556 (229 males and 327 females) complete responses out of 1024 started surveys from Indian Facebook users of 13 years and above.

2.2 Instruments and measures

The survey started with the demographic profile where the respondent reported the gender and confirmed their Facebook membership for at least six months till date. The motivations for the Facebook use were measured using a self reported item whereby the participant would rate the motivations behind using the site. The five motives namely time passing, information, relationship development, relationship maintenance, and trend following were taken from the study by Hall (2009). The participant would

give rating '1' to most preferred motivation, '2' to next preferred motivation and so on giving '5' rating to the least preferred one.

2.3 Data analysis

The data were downloaded as an SPSS file directly from SurveyMonkey. SPSS 20 was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were conducted to illustrate the demographic characteristics of the sample as well as for the different motivations for Facebook use. To find whether male and female Facebook users differ significantly on the motivations for Facebook use, cross tab chi square analyses were conducted.

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows how the respondents have rated the motivations from 1 to 5, assigning rating '1' to the most preferred motivation and '5' to the least preferred motivation behind using Facebook. When these extremes are compared, one can easily see that the most preferred motivation came out to be 'relationship maintenance' as 239 out of 556 (43.0%) respondents rated it as being their first preference behind using Facebook.

Table 1. Descriptives for motivations for the use of Facebook (N=556)

Table with 4 columns: Motivations for the use of Facebook, Rankings, Frequency, Percentages. Row 1: Time passing/entertainment (e.g. to overcome boredom; it is habit; it amuses/ entertains me), 1 (most preferred), 179, 32.2. Row 2: 2, 111, 20.0. Row 3: 3, 95, 17.1. Row 4: 4, 95, 17.1.



	5 (least preferred)	76	13.2
Information (e.g. to find/ share information; keep up with interests/hobbies)	1 (most preferred)	155	27.9
	2	170	30.6
	3	121	21.8
	4	63	11.3
	5 (least preferred)	47	8.5
Relationship development / Companionship (e.g. to make new friends; to find people like me)	1 (most preferred)	84	15.1
	2	119	21.4
	3	101	18.2
	4	111	20.0
	5 (least preferred)	141	25.4
Relationship Maintenance (e.g. to stay in touch with peoples; to maintain relationships that I value)	1 (most preferred)	239	43.0
	2	139	25.0
	3	89	16.0
	4	43	7.7
	5 (least preferred)	46	8.3
Trend Following/coolness (e.g. because everyone else is doing it; to impress people)	1 (most preferred)	43	7.7
	2	39	7.0
	3	61	11.0
	4	92	16.5
	5 (least preferred)	321	57.7

After ‘relationship maintenance’ motivation, ‘time passing’ was chosen by 179 out of 556 (32.2%) respondents as their first preferred choice,

followed by ‘information’ which was chosen by 155 out of 556 (27.9%) Facebook users as their most preferred choice. Eighty four out of 556



(15.1%) respondents voted ‘relationship development’ as their most preferred motivation for using Facebook. The motivation of ‘trend following’ was the least preferred one as 321 out of 556 (57.7%) respondents rated as their last choice behind using Facebook. Following ‘Trend following’, the next worth noting least preferred motivation was ‘relationship development’ which was voted as their last choice by 141 out of 556 (25.4%) respondents.

Five separate cross-tab chi square were conducted for gender. Table 2 represents the values of Pearson’s chi square analyzed for finding association between gender and motivations for Facebook use. It can be seen that significant associations were found between gender and three out of five motivations- time passing $\chi^2(4, N = 556)=22.28$, $p=.000$, relationship development $\chi^2(4, N = 556)=16.98$, $p=.002$ and trend following $\chi^2(4, N = 556)=10.67$, $p=.03$.

Table 2. Pearson’s Chi Square values for gender of Facebook users and Facebook parameters

Facebook motivations	Pearson Chi Square value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Time passing	22.28**	4	.000
Information	2.26	4	.69
Relationship development	16.98**	4	.002
Relationship maintenance	5.23	4	.27
Trend following	10.67*	4	.03

N=556 ** $p<.01$ * $p<.05$

The significant differences obtained in motivations for Facebook use with regard to gender is backed by previous empirical studies (Barker, 2009; Hall, 2009; Hargittai & Hsieh, 2010; Joinson, 2008; Makashvili et al., 2013; McAndrews & Jeong, 2012; Pfeil et al., 2009; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Sheldon, 2008).

Table 3 represents cross tabulation of gender and categories of ‘time passing’ motivation. It can be seen that more female Facebook users (35.2%) rated ‘time passing’ motivation as their first choice for using Facebook in comparison to male Facebook users (27.9%). Even for second and third choices, the percentage was higher for



female Facebook users, 21% and 19.3% respectively in comparison to male Facebook users in second and third choice categories, 18.3% and 14.1% respectively. But for the less preferred choices- fourth and fifth, the percentages were higher for male Facebook users, 18.3% and 21.4% respectively in comparison to female Facebook

users in those two choice categories, 16.2% and 8.3%, respectively. So more female Facebook users chose 'time passing' as a more preferred motivation in comparison to male Facebook users who less preferred this motivation for using Facebook.

Table 3. Cross tabulation of gender and categories of 'time passing' motivation

Gender	1 st choice n, %age of total	2 nd choice n, %age of total	3 rd choice n, %age of total	4 th choice n, %age of total	5 th choice n, %age of total
Male	n=64, 27.9%	n=42, 18.3%	n=32, 14.1%	n=42, 18.3%	n=49, 21.4%
Female	n=115, 35.2%	n=69, 21%	n=63, 19.3%	n=53, 16.2%	n=27, 8.3%

Table 4. Cross tabulation of gender and categories of 'relationship development' motivation

Gender	1 st choice n, %age of total	2 nd choice n, %age of total	3 rd choice n, %age of total	4 th choice n, %age of total	5 th choice n, %age of total
Male	n=38, 16.6%	n=62, 27.9%	n=47, 20.5%	n=41, 17.9%	n=41, 17.1%
Female	n=46, 14.1%	n=57, 17.4%	n=54, 16.5%	n=70, 21.4%	n=100, 30.6%

Table 4 represents cross tabulation of gender and categories of relationship development motivation. It can be seen that more male Facebook users (16.6%) rated 'relationship development' motivation as their first choice for

using Facebook in comparison to female Facebook users (14.1%). Even for second and third choices, the percentage was higher for male Facebook users, 27.9% and 20.5% respectively in comparison to female Facebook users in second and third choice categories, 17.4% and 16.5%

respectively. But for the less preferred choices-fourth and fifth, the percentages were higher for female Facebook users, 21.4% and 30.6% respectively in comparison to male Facebook

users in those two choice categories, 17.9% and 17.1% respectively. So more male Facebook users chose ‘relationship development’ as most preferred motivation in comparison to female Facebook users who less preferred this motivation for using Facebook

.Table 5. Cross tabulation of gender and categories of ‘trend following’ motivation

Gender	1st choice n, %age of total	2nd choice n, %age of total	3rd choice n, %age of total	4th choice n, %age of total	5th choice n, %age of total
Male	n=23, 10%	n=20, 8.7%	n=46, 20.1%	n=21, 9.2%	n=119, 52%
Female	n=20, 6.1%	n=19, 5.8%	n=40, 12.2%	n=46, 14.1%	n=202, 61.8%

The cross tabulation of gender and ‘trend following’ motivation is presented in table 5. It was inferred from the table that trend following motive was least preferred motivation for both the genders as significant percentages are clustered in the less preferred choices, but still there are differences in the categories of male and female. For first, second and third choices, more male Facebook users preferred motivation of ‘trend following’, 10%, 8.7% and 20.1% respectively, in comparison to female Facebook users, 6.1%, 5.8% and 12.2% in the first three choices. But for categories of fourth and fifth preferred choice, the percentage was higher for female Facebook users, 14.1% and 61.8% respectively in comparison to male Facebook users in these categories, 9.2% and 52% respectively. Thus, the female Facebook users less preferred ‘trend following’ motivation in comparison to male Facebook users as they

were higher in percentage in less preferred choice categories.

The above results for significant associations between gender and motives are consistent with the previous studies (Hargittai & Hsieh, 2010; Joinson, 2008; Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012; Sheldon, 2008). A higher percentage of females in this study was found to be using Facebook primarily for passing time in comparison to males, whereas a higher percentage of males are motivated to use Facebook for relationship development and trend following as compared to females. This seems to be appropriate as females in country like India have less avenues for passing time due to gender role expectations (Eagly, 1987) as partying late, going out with friends for long hours, especially when the friends are males, are seen as inappropriate and unsafe for them. So they



might be finding Facebook as a refuge from all sorts of restrictions, where they can be friend with people as per their own likings, sitting on Facebook, sharing messages, interacting with friends, even late at night within the safety of their homes.

Motivations for use of Facebook for males can also be explained on the basis of gender role expectations, where males are expected to be more outgoing and having larger social networks. As men are more adventurous (Helgeson, 1994) and therefore may be more willing to meet new people through online mediums. It has also been found that men use networking sites for dating and to learn about new events compared to women (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008), which also reflects relationship development motive and trend following. Males are more sensitive to peer pressure (Berndt, 1979; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986) and might be influenced by it to follow the trend of showing their presence on such sites and engaging in online behaviors like their peers.

IV LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Like all research, there were limitations to this study too. The data was collected through an anonymous online survey. There was no system of checks and balances to guarantee participants met the demographic. Although the researcher intended to assure the most accurate representation of Facebook users in India, the final subsample yielded a larger proportion of females taking up the survey than males. The survey was open for everybody irrespective of the region to which the participants belonged which might have interfered with the results. As India is known to have a diverse culture and the usage of SNS might be driven by specific cultural

influences. The measure of motivations behind the SNS use had taken only five motivations; so it is not known if there were other motivations for Facebook use that were not expressed through the used measures. As the online environment is rapidly changing with the development of new technologies, it is uncertain how long the results of this study will remain relevant because of changing the dynamics of who, how and why people use these services.

V IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The current study offers useful insight into the motives that drive the users of SNS as well as provides noteworthy information about how the salience of these motives can differ between genders. Identifying the motivational differences between male and female Facebook users could be beneficial to lure male and female users by designing their advertisements according to their motivational needs through the company's Facebook pages. Also such significant motivational differences could be used to identify the users who are at risk of becoming addictive to such sites. As Facebook provides host of activities which could be addictive like quizzes, games, funny applications, so what initially was taken up to pass time and get over boredom might finally lead to addictiveness and negative psychological consequences like jealousy, loneliness and depression. So awareness could be spread about these areas so as to reduce the likelihood of such negative outcomes.

VI SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study opens up a number of avenues for further research. As this study is first of its kind in Indian context, many areas which were uncovered



in this study could be explored in future research. In future if online survey is to be carried out, proper measures should be taken to assure adequate representation of the Facebook site users in order to guarantee participants meet the demographic. Comparative studies could be conducted across the different cultures in India, which might be influencing the motivations for SNS use, like the population of metropolitan cities and conservative areas could be compared in the future. Also interaction between age and gender variables could be taken in future to find the differences in motivations for SNS use. Other motivations for the use of SNS could be studied like relaxation, escape, peer identity, social support, etc. Further studies should also include other communication media and SNS which are too gaining popularity in the Indian scenario, like WhatsApp, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc and comparisons could be made.

VII CONCLUSION

The exponential growth of social networking sites like Facebook makes it an area of continued study. The findings of this study open the door for continued research in this area.

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