FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE USE OF WEB BASED SOCIAL NETWORKS: A STUDY ON FACEBOOK

By

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Abstract

Today's world is a place where innovation is the norm and technology transforms everything. Today's society like everything else is transformed by technology in a way previously unthought-of. Old methods of communicating in social circles have been redefined over the web as web based social networks.

Although work has been done on many areas of social networking on the web, as yet no research has attempted to find out what actually influences people to socialize over the internet on these vastly popular new genres of web sites.

Using data collected from 357 randomly selected participants from Sri Lankan regional network on Facebook, this research attempts to find what factors influence the use of these social networking sites, whilst trying to define and model the relationships so that site builders and society alike can benefit from the results. For the purposes of this research we define use of social network as peer to peer interaction on these websites.

Some of the factors uncovered during the initial pilot studies and literature review are time spent by users on Facebook average level of trust in the network, the completeness of a users profile, the level of ethics as expected by the user, the number of friends of the user, the user's emotional bond with Facebook, prior offline contacts of the user, new online contacts that user acquires through Facebook, the user's perception of critical mass of friends and the usefulness of information tools.

The results of the research have shown that these factors in isolation of one another influences the usage of Facebook. Furthermore the results of the research indicate these factors can be reduced to just five factors that influence use of social networks when their collective effect is considered rather taking each factor in isolation. These five factors in order of importance are completeness of a person's profile, the user's perception of critical mass of friends, the number of friends in a person's network, the time spent by the user on Facebook and the prior offline contacts of the user.

As a result of this research, a model has been developed that takes into consideration the above five factors. This model can be used forecast use of Facebook based on the five factors identified above.

DECLERATION

"I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university to the best of my knowledge and believe it does not contain any material previously published, written or orally communicated by another person or myself except where due reference is made in the text. I also hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted to be made available for photocopying and for inter library loans and for the title and summary to be made available for out side organizations"

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11/10/2008
date

To the best of my knowledge above particulars are correct

UOM Verified Signature

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Supervisor

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