PROFILING FACEBOOK USERS AMONG KIRKHS STUDENTS AND THEIR MOTIVES FOR USING FACEBOOK

BY

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ABSTRACT

Facebook is now the largest social networking site and it is a great way to catch up with old friends, keep up-to-date with everyone, and interact with people. Previous studies found that university students are heavy users of Facebook. As such, this study tries to find out the profile of Facebook users among undergraduate students of the Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS) at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and to investigate their motives for using Facebook based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory. The specific objectives of this study are: (1) to find out the characteristics of Facebook users among IRKHS undergraduate students; (2) to find out how IRKHS undergraduate students use Facebook; (3) to find out motives for using Facebook among IRKHS undergraduate students; (4) to find out the differences between demographic profile of IRKHS undergraduate students and their motives for using Facebook; and (5) to find out the advantages and the disadvantages of using Facebook among IRKHS undergraduate students. This study uses a survey research design whereby the data are collected from 355 students using a stratified random sampling procedure, based on division, gender, and nationality. Descriptive and inferential statistics are employed to analyze the data and to test the hypotheses. Four general hypotheses were generated in this study. The results showed that the majority of IRKHS students are Facebook users. Many of them are extrovert Malaysian females, aged 22 years and above. They are heavy users of Facebook and highly connected with others. IRKHS students use Facebook for social interaction, communication, education, and religious motives. They claim that Facebook is beneficial in maintaining relationships with others and for doing *dakwah*. It is also found that female students use Facebook more than male students for religious motive and education motives.

خلاصة البحث

أصبح فيس بوك الآن أكبر موقع الشبكات الاجتماعية ووسيلة رائعة للالتقاء مع الأصدقاء القدامى، ومعرفة مستجدات الأحداث لكل منهم بالإضافة إلى التفاعل مع الناس. وقد كشفت الدراسات السّابقة أن طلاب الجامعات هم أكثر الناس استخداماً للفيس بوك. ولهذا، تحاول هذه الدراسة التعرف على الملف الشخصي لمستخدمي فيس بوك بين طلاب المرحلة الجامعية بكلية معارف الوحي والعلوم الإنسانية في الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا والتعرّف على دوافعهم من استخدام فيس بوك بناء على نظرية الأغراض والإرضاء. وتتمثل الأهداف المحددة لهذه الدراسة فيما يلي: ١. معرفة خصائص مستخدمي فيس بوك من طلاب المرحلة الجامعية في كلية معارف الوحي والعلوم الإنسانية، ٢. معرفة كيفية استخدام طلاب المرحلة الجامعية في كلية معارف الوحي والعلوم الإنسانية للفيس بوك، ٣. معرفة الدوافع لاستخدام فيس بوك لدى طلاب المرحلة الجامعية في كلية معارف الوحي والعلوم الإنسانية، ٤. الفروق بين الملامح الديمغرافية للعينة وبين دوافعهم من استخدام الفيس بوك، ٥. ومعرفة الإيجابيات والسلبيات من استخدام فيس بوك لدى طلاب المرحلة الجامعية في كلية معارف الوحي والعلوم الإنسانية. ومن أجل تلبية أهداف البحث، استخدمت هذه الدراسة الاستبيان المسحي حيث تم جمع البيانات من ٣٥٥ طالبا باستخدام عينة عشوائية طبقية معتمداً على الأقسام في الكلية، والنوع الجنسي، والجنسيات. كما تم استخدام إحصاءات وصفية واستنتاجية لتحليل البيانات واختبار الفرضيات. وتم إنشاء أربع فرضيات عامة في هذه الدراسة. أظهرت النتائج أن غالبية طلبة كلية معارف الوحي والعلوم الإنسانية من مستخدمي موقع فيس بوك وأكثرهم من الطالبات الماليزيات وتتراوح أعمارهن من ٢٢ سنة فما فوق، حيث أنهن يكثرن من استخدام الفيس بوك ولهن صلة وثيقة بالآخرين. وأظهرت النتائج أنّ طلبة كلية معارف الوحي والعلوم الإنسانية يستخدمون الفيس بوك لأهداف التفاعل الاجتماعي، وللتواصل وللتعلم ولدوافع دينية. كما يؤكد الطلبة أن فيس بوك مفيد في الحفاظ على العلاقات الاجتماعية مع الآخرين ومفيد في الأعمال الدعوية. كما كشفت الدراسة أن استخدام الفيس بوك لأغراض دينية ودراسيّة بين الطالبات أكثر مما هو بين الطلاب الذكور.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Communication).

………………………………..
Saodah Wok
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Communication).

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Nerawi Sedu
Examiner

This dissertation was submitted to the Department of Communication and is accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Communication).

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This dissertation was submitted to the Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences and is accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Communication).

………………………………..
Badri Najib Zubir
Dean,
Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed
Knowledge and Human Sciences

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the results of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degree at IIUM or other institutions.

Liza Shahnaz

Signature……………………… Date……………………..

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DECLARATION OF COPYRIGHT AND AFFIRMATION OF FAIR USE OF UNPUBLISHED RESEARCH

Affirmed by Liza Shahnaz

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Signature   Date

This thesis is dedicated to my parents,

H. Abdul Wahid Bin H. Umar Al-Amri and Hj. Annisah Binti Christopher Tumetel.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Facebook is the second most-trafficked social networking site and the sixth most-trafficked website in the world (Foregger, 2008). As of February 2009, Facebook has close to 200 million registered users from all over the world (Smith, 2009) and 65 billion pages viewed each day (Owyang, 2008). As a social networking site, Facebook is a common destination for youths (Boyd, 2007). A survey in 2008 reports that almost all (93%) of university students in the United States are Facebook users, where they spend 47 minutes everyday on the site (Sheldon, 2008).

Facebook helps people to connect with their long-lost friends and to establish new connections virtually. Facebook also contains interactive features and games that attract people regardless of their age. Like any other social networking sites, Facebook, too, allows its users to display their profile in any way they wish. The profile often contains demographic details, interests, and also photos. In addition, Facebook permits users to exchange views and comments on each other's profile, to join certain groups based on their interests, to play various online games and many other fun activities (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007).

Facebook became accessible to high school students in 2005 and to commercial organizations in 2006 (Foregger, 2008). Until today, many students in Malaysian universities have signed up for a Facebook account (Yung-Hui, 2010). With these backgrounds, this study attempts to find out the profile of Facebook users among undergraduate students at the International Islamic University Malaysia

(IIUM), specifically at the Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS) and to determine their motives for using it.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Facebook.com is identified as the top most social-networking website in eight countries in Asia-Pacific region, that is, the Philippines, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand, Hongkong, and Vietnam (Nguyen, 2010). It is a virtual space where people establish or maintain connections with others. Users may employ the communication tools on the site to interact with those they know personally or they may use the site to meet new people (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). In 2007, Pew Research Center found that young adults who have grown up with cellular phones, personal computers and the Internet use social networking sites like Facebook to stay close to family and friends (Sheldon, 2008).

Nguyen (2010) reported that in February 2010, the Internet users in the Asia-Pacific region spent 2.5 hours per day on average exploring the social networking site. Social networkers in the Philippines visited the Facebook 26 times throughout February 2010 and spent 5.5 hours per visit.

Social networkers in Indonesia access the website 22 times in a month and spend 5.4 hours per visit while, Malaysian social networkers spent 3.8 hours per visit and 22 times in February, 2010. Most Malaysian social networkers are women aged between 15 to 24 years old (Nguyen, 2010).

Many college students use Facebook for its fun activities such as, organizing parties, sharing activities, and chatting with friends (Coley, 2006). Similarly, Sheldon (2008) indicates that students also like the opportunities to find others with similar interests, for example, students with whom they were together in previous classes. As

a result, students become the majority users of Facebook (Sheldon, 2008). Students are addicted to and are willing to spend a few hours on Facebook everyday. Thus, it is important to know who they are and what motivates them to join the Facebook.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to find out the characteristics of Facebook users among IRKHS undergraduate students and their motives for using it. The specific objectives are:

1. To find out the characteristics of Facebook users among IRKHS undergraduate students;

2. To find out how IRKHS undergraduate students use Facebook;

3. To find out the motives for using Facebook among IRKHS undergraduate students;

4. To find out the differences between the demographic profile of IRKHS undergraduate students and their motives for using Facebook; and

5. To find out the advantages and the disadvantages of using Facebook among IRKHS Facebook users.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is important because it will enrich the literature review on the motives for using Facebook among university students since there have been only a few studies investigating online social networks (Foregger, 2008; Raine, 2008; Sheldon, 2008). Previous academic work has focused on identity construction and privacy issues (Gross & Acquisti, 2005; Stutzman, 2006), analysis of network composition

(Hamatake, Lifson & Navlakha, 2005), and social networks and social capital (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2006).

Many research works have identified several motives such as seeking information (Johnson & Kaye, 2003), accessing interpersonal utility and passing time (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000), finding entertainment (Eighmey & McCord, 1998), having social interaction (LaRose & Eastin, 2004), communicating (Charney & Greenberg, 2002), maintaining old ties (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2006), and escaping or find relaxation and learning (Ferguson & Perse, 2000). This study only adopts three of the motives mentioned above (social interaction motive, communication motive, and entertainment motive) and added three new motives to suit the background of the respondents. The three new motives are religious motive, education motive, and business motive.

Past studies conducted on social networking site used Social Cognitive Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory for the Internet Use (Larose & Eastin, 2004). The present study applies the Uses and Gratifications Theory to Facebook use as a new social networking site.

Previous studies on Facebook use that concentrates on university students in the Western countries (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007; Foregger, 2008; Sheldon, 2008). However, this study will fill the gap by exploring the profile of Facebook users among Muslim students from various countries who are studying at the KIRKHS, IIUM.

IIUM provides free wireless connection within the Gombak Campus, as such, Facebook becomes accessible to IIUM students at anytime and anywhere. By identifying the profile of Facebook users and the advantages as well as disadvantages of Facebook use through the present study, it will help the university to get a better

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understanding on how Facebook influences students' life. Therefore, the IIUM authority may reevaluate its policy regarding the widely used Facebook among IIUM students.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study tries to identify Facebook users among university students and their motives for using Facebook. This study is limited to undergraduate students and conducted at the Gombak Campus of IIUM and on only one kulliyyah, that is, Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences. Using stratified random sample, a total of 353 students are selected to participate in this study. The main stratum is division. Specifically, the respondents comprise of undergraduate students of Islamic Revealed Knowledge Division (IRK) to represent religious-based students and Human Sciences Division (HS) to represent secular science-based students. Thus, the outcome of this study would solely be generalized to undergraduate students of KIRKHS, IIUM.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses social networking site, the Facebook, Uses and Gratifications Theory, motives for using the Facebook, and motives for using Facebook and demographic profile. Hypotheses of the study and the theoretical framework are also given at the end of the literature review.

2.2 SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE

Social networking site is an online space where individuals are allowed to present themselves, articulate their social networks, and establish or maintain relationships (Ellison, Steinfeld & Lampe, 2006). Social networks can be oriented toward work-related contexts (e.g., LinkedIn.com), romantic relationship initiation (e.g., Friendster.com), or interest-related contexts (e.g., MySpace.com).

In 2007, The Pew Internet and American Life Project reported that more than half of the American youths aged 12-17 years old use online social networks such as MySpace and Facebook, whereby users can create a profile and build a network of friends and acquaintances (Raine, 2008). Most of the social networkers visit the site at least once a day (Bilton, 2010). Social networking is also growing in popularity among adults, as many American adults also log on to a social networking site every month (Raine, 2008).

Research has shown that these online social networks are popular for many reasons. Facebook, in particular has been successful in increasing social capital and

providing entertainment (Ray, 2007). In addition, previous research found that the connections made through online social interaction of networks often develop into offline relationships (Ellison, Steinfeld & Lampe, 2006; Parks & Floyd, 1996). Nowadays, the widely used social networking site is Facebook.

2.3 THE FACEBOOK

The currently popular social networking site is Facebook (Nguyen, 2010). Facebook is a social utility that connects people with friends and others, who study, work, and live around them as well as enables people to communicate daily in various ways to each other (Foregger, 2008:11).

Facebook reached its 500th million registered member in July 2010, thus, making it the most populated social networking site on the Internet history (Mashable, 2010). Facebook stands out for three reasons. First, its success resulted from being popular among college students. Second, the amount and the quality of personal information made available on it are voluminous. And, third, the information given can be personally identified (Acquisti & Gross, 2007).

Therefore, Facebook in this study is defined as a social media that binds people with family and friends. Facebook helps people, especially international students, to easily reach their family members and friends back home. Additionally, Facebook uses and Facebook features are user friendly, so it is easy for people to use Facebook.

In the following section, the history of Facebook is discussed to get a better understanding of what it is all about.

2.3.1 History of the Facebook

The history of Facebook began on February 4, 2004 when it was launched by Mark Zuckerberg, an undergraduate student at Harvard University (Boyd, 2007). According to Markoff (2007), Zuckerberg made Facebook as a virtual medium for Harvard's university students to identify each other and to make new social relationships. Foregger (2008: 3) claims that on the fourth day of its establishment, "650 Harvard students had registered (Tabak, 2004) and within a month, Facebook expanded to other Ivy League Colleges in Boston". At the end of 2004, Facebook had one million active users, and by May 2005 over 800 college networks were listed on the website (Foregger, 2008).

Networks on Facebook are "affiliations of profile based on college, high school, workplace or region" (Foregger, 2008: 3). When people join the Facebook, they must associate themselves with a network. A person from a different network is restricted from viewing others' full profile (Foregger, 2008).

Number of Facebook users continues to expand rapidly. In September 2005, Facebook became available to high school networks (Foregger, 2008), and in November 2006, it offered its virtual doors for commercial organization networks (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007).

Until September 2006, only those who had email address ending with .edu could join as members. It changed when the Facebook membership is opened to the general public, allowing anyone with a valid email address to become a member of Facebook, however, full profile of Facebook users remained restricted for full viewing only to those within the same network (Foregger, 2008).

Foregger (2008: 4) claims that "Facebook became the sixth most popular website due to its fast growth networks, behind sites like Yahoo! and Google

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(comScore.com, 2007)". She also adds that "as of 2008, Facebook owns 55000 networks, 6 million active user groups, and more than 1.7 billion photos posted". Kompas (2010), an online newspaper in Indonesia, reports that as of January 2010, Facebook accounted for 350 million active members (Jodhi, 2010). As of March 2010, Facebook dominates the Internet as the most popular online destination among United States users (Paul, 2010). The number of people on Facebook is now more than 500 million users, with almost three quarters of them are outside the United States (Facebook.com, 2011).

Foregger (2008) states that "these number of Facebook users change continuously, as almost 200000 of new registrations occur each day". This is may be due to the interesting uses and features of Facebook.

2.3.2   Uses and Features of the Facebook

People use Facebook to keep up with friends, to upload an unlimited number of photos, and to learn more about the people whom they meet online (Elder-Jubelin, 2009). Facebook also allows users to create and to customize their own profile with photos and with miscellaneous information, namely, basic information, personal background, contact information, and education history.

Basic information on Facebook includes user name, hometown, gender, birth date, interest in (for example: women, men), looking for (e.g. friendship, relationship, and networking), political views, religious views, and family members. While personal information comprises interest, favourite musics, favourite quotations, favourite movies, favourite television shows, and favourite books (Facebook.com, 2009). On one hand, contact information contains email address, personal website/blog, instant messaging screen names, home address, mobile and land phone

numbers. On the other, education history includes information on university, high school, city/town, and study specialization (Facebook.com, 2009).

Facebook also permits its users to set their own privacy settings. There are two types of privacy setting on Facebook, that is, public profile and private profile. Public profile is open for all to view, while private profile restricts its information to a list of friends that the users chose (Facebook.com, 2009). Each profile is also customized with many features.

According to Elder-Jubelin (2009), the useful features on Facebook are the chat feature, a network, and a wall. The chat feature allows Facebook users to talk to their friends on the site. The network is an affiliation a user chooses to be a member of and an example of would be one that includes IIUM students. The wall feature displays public conversation between Facebook users and their friends. The wall also contains users' profile picture, full name, and list of friends. Facebook also permits users to share status, links to videos and news articles on the wall.

Status is a line of information that appears next to Facebook users' profile picture (Carter, 2008). It aims to inform a user's friends about his/her current activities or thoughts. To share links to video or news articles on Facebook means that users can embed videos or news articles from other website to their profile. For example, videos from Youtube.com and news articles from TIME.com.

Another Facebook feature, that makes it different from MySpace, is it permits users to add various applications to users' profile. For example, True Path application aims at giving reminders based on Al-Qur'an and *hadith* to other Facebook users and their friends.