Time Flies When you’re on Social Networks: Cognitive Absorption and University Students’ Academic Performance

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Abstract: The purpose of this presentation is to develop and test a research model that investigates and compares the effects of social media compulsive use on university students’ academic performance across cultures. The research model uses the concept of cognitive absorptions to conceptualize the holistic experience that users feel when using social media. A set of hypotheses are proposed regarding the direct effects of cognitive absorptions on user compulsive use of social media through the perceived utilitarian, enjoyment, and sociability outcomes. To test the hypotheses, an online survey was distributed in three countries: China, Taiwan, and the United States. The results allow us to develop a better understanding of social media use across different countries and its subsequent impact on academic performance.

Introduction

Given the rapid changes in the communication and collaboration landscape brought about by participative Internet use and social media, it is important to develop a better understanding of how these technologies are impacting our students. The first step in this effort is to identify how user’s cognitive absorption experience, their perception of utilitarian outcome of social media for goal/task fulfillment, their perceived enjoyment, fun, and entertainment, and their sociability outcome impact their decision to use social media, and in turn how the use of social media impacts academic performance.

The Project

The purpose of the project is to assess undergraduate students’ use and perceptions of the impact social networks on academic performance. An additional focus of this project is to explore factors that influence the compulsive use of social networking applications. The research questions to be explored in this study are: 1. How does students’ use of social networking applications impact their academic performance? 2. How do factors such as utilitarian outcome, perceived enjoyment, and sociability outcome impact compulsive use decisions.

To test the proposed research questions and its associated hypotheses, several web-based surveys will be conducted to collect data from college students across the three countries: China, Taiwan, and the United States, in their native language. Our survey instrument was developed by incorporating and adapting existing valid and reliable scales where appropriate. Majority of our questions are on a Likert-type scale, with a few items that provide opportunities for elaboration.

Conclusion
The contribution of the presentation is two folds, theoretical and practical. With regard to theoretical advancement, the major contribution of this research is to provide understanding of how cognitive absorption experience influence user’s compulsive social media use, which in turn impacts performance. As for practical contribution, this presentation will provide educators with insights to educate students on ways to better manage social media use so it is not interfering or impacting their performance.