

Chapter 48

Why It Is Difficult to Disengage From Facebook

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ABSTRACT

The huge popularity of social network sites like Facebook gave rise to numerous studies exploring the prerequisites and consequences of FB use. This chapter does not deviate from this direction. It offers a theoretic attempt to analyze the reasons of attachment to FB but through another perspective: the disengagement phenomenon. The theoretical framework is based on the attachment theory and the actor network theory. Assuming that FB allows the satisfaction of the innate attachment need and that there is a social and technical interaction between users and the FB structure, the present analysis investigates the relations between user attachment style and FB use and between FB user and the FB platform (hardware and software). The aim here is not to reject (or not) some formulated hypothesis, but to develop a theoretical frame from the existing theories. The argument is that human/human and human/non-human attachment could explain why users find it very difficult to disengage even though they are willing to do so and suffering from being invaded by FB.

INTRODUCTION

In many countries, social life has become heavily reliant on the use of Social Network Sites (SNS). The leader of SNS is Facebook (FB) with more than one billion monthly active users (Patterson, 2015). Founded on 2004 mainly by Mark Zuckerberg, FB was exclusively destined to the Harvard University. Later, FB began to expand to reach the entire world. The biggest demographic using the site is the 18-29 age range. The graduated adults from college are the leaders and women seem to use it more than men (Patterson, 2015).

The deeper intrusion of FB in the society and in the professional context has removed concern not to enhance connection but to break it. Many connected people begin expressing their willingness to be disengaged. They suffer from being invaded by technologies and steered to adapt their FB experience to an economic object (Van Dijck, 2013). Even though, they could not detach and continue to integrate

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FB into their daily lives they feel bored or busy. So, the power is already handed on those who could disconnect (Jauréguiberry, 2014). Thus, the main question that we try to give some responses to is: why it is so difficult to disengage from FB and alter its use?

We should note here that disconnection/disengagement is not the opposite of connection. It is obviously coupled with it and could not be understood without its existence. It involves the choose-nots category by distinction with the have-nots and the want-nots, who consciously choose to not engage with FB partially or totally (Jauréguiberry, 2014). We consider disengagement as an approach of re-appropriation of FB use; a way of changing one's practices and a situation where the relation to and with FB is at risk (Karppi, 2014). When users will be faced by the choice to be separated from FB or individuals, attachment will be highlighted. Based on the attachment theory and the Actor Network Theory (ANT), we try to underline the nature and the quality of the attachment within FB network social structure. We then attempt to study the human/human attachment and the human/non-human attachment in order to border the disengagement phenomenon. Hence, the aim here is not to reject (or not) some formulated hypothesis but to develop a theoretical frame from the existing theories.

This analysis could help users as well managers and technology designers to understand how attachments to FB could impact people emotion and behavior. It answers to the serious preoccupation of the professional context about the permanent connection of their employees to FB and information technologies in general. This analysis could also help companies willing to implement disengagement measures to apprehend this choice from a relational perspective in order to get the implication of all users.

BACKGROUND

Preliminary Debate

While many studies emphasize the good effects of FB on users and its propensity to satisfy the need to belong and the need for positive self-presentation (Nadkarni & Hofman, 2012), some others draw its negative side such as the social media fatigue (Laumer et al., 2013) and the risk of dependence and addictions (Xu & Tan, 2012).

The question of whether the consequences of FB use are positive or negative is still debatable. However, it seems to influence / be influenced by the degree of user's engagement involved in/by/with FB (Karppi, 2014). If the disengagement phenomenon is related to the increase of connection (Sheldon et al., 2011), we should, at the beginning ask why people are so attached to the use of FB?

Amichai-Hamburger (2002) and Hart et al. (2015) assert that personality is a major factor in Internet use and in determining people's engagement causes and consequences with social media (here FB). Nadkarni and Hofman (2012) sustain that a high level of extraversion, neuroticism, narcissism, and low levels of self-esteem and self-worth are associated with high FB use. In two surveys of nearly 600 people aged 18 to 83, Hart et al. (2015) conclude that people who are more engaged with FB are higher in attachment anxiety and extraversion. However, they find that extraversion, neuroticism, and self-esteem were not as consistently related to user FB engagement.

Then, as FB is a virtual social network through which users create and entertain relations with each other, the attachment theory seems to be one of the leading theories for studying interpersonal relationships (Rom & Alfasi, 2014). Using FB seems to be influenced by how people successfully build rela-

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