# Chapter 11
# The Impact of Social Capital and Time Spent on Facebook on Social Recognition and Attachment

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## ABSTRACT

*Prior research deals rather extensively with psychological aspects related to social network sites usage. In contrast, the present study focuses on "psychosociological aspects" related to social network site usage, such as attachment to the sites. The present research seeks to determine the impact of the "need for social belonging" on the extent of a user social network and time spent on Facebook, as well as the resultant effects on social recognition and brand attachment. The research model was tested with data from 315 Facebook users using a web survey. The structural equation model in AMOS was used to test the proposed hypotheses. The results highlight the central role of social recognition in explaining attachment to Facebook. They show that the need for social belonging affects the number of friends but not time spent on Facebook. Results indicate that it is the quality of the social ties and activity on Facebook together with a feeling of social recognition that explain attachment to Facebook.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Internet and social networks are integral to the everyday lives of hundreds of millions of consumers (Wilcox & Stephen, 2013; Casale and Fioravanti, 2018; Bailey et al. 2021), offering to their users a massive networking opportunities and an online marketplace (Sharma and Baoku, 2013). For many people, visiting social networks sites represents their primary Internet activity (Oh et al., 2014). Facebook

is the most used social network site worldwide (Zheng et al. 2015) with more than 1.86 billion users (Houghton et al. 2020); it is also the fourth most popular website overall, in terms of traffic with more than 467,339,001 monthly traffic (Ahrefs.com, 2021). The massive adoption of social network sites, and Facebook in particular, leads to questions about the motivations, practices, and types of relationships that users develop with the social network sites they adopt.

Prior research deals rather extensively with motivations and psychological aspects, demonstrating that users of social network sites tend to focus closely on self-presentation (Ben Mimoun & Ammar, 2013; Wilcox & Stephen, 2013). Less research addresses psychosociological aspects related to social network site usage though, such as attachment to the sites. In this context, the objective of the present paper is to uncover the impact of an expressed need to belong on the extent of the user's social network (conceptualized as social capital) and time spent on Facebook, as well as the influences of these elements on social recognition and brand attachment.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

## Attachment to Facebook

Consumers' relationships with brands take very different forms. Attitude toward the brand often serves to express consumers' brand relationships, but other concepts are available as well. For example, Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi (2012) propose "brand love," which consumers live in an intense, deep way. Extending experiential marketing to the brand level produces the brand experience concept (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009). Other brand-related concepts seek to specify the nature of the relationship between the individual and the brand. For example, a brand commitment approach mobilizes different (emotional, cognitive, behavioral) aspects of the brand relationship (Shuv-Ami, 2012) such as brand loyalty. Escalas and Bettman (2005), study self–brand connections to characterize the way individuals appropriate the brand, in the sense that they recognize themselves in the brand. Self-image congruence (Sirgy et al., 1997) is similar to self–brand connections, in that the brands contribute to help create and socially express their users' self-concept.

Finally, the concept of brand attachment also can characterize the relationship with the brand, from an emotional perspective. Studies adopting this concept (e.g., Park, MacInnis, Eisinggerich, & Iacobucci, 2010) show that the brand attachment creates a strong emotional link between the self and the brand that is rich in meaning for the consumer. These authors also show that attachment to the brand differs from the attitude toward the brand, with greater predictive power. In particular, brand attachment can minimize the risk of disloyalty in competitive situations.

For Facebook, attachment might refer to an attachment to the brand or to the social network itself and its services. These two sides cannot be dissociated, because of the uniqueness of its offer and brand. Therefore, several distinct and specific potential determinants of attachment to Facebook, are consider. The primary focus is psychosocial determinants, including the extent of the user's network, time spent on Facebook, and feelings of social recognition. Noting the central importance of social interactions in digital networks, their direct effects on attachment to Facebook are investigated, as well as their indirect effects on brand loyalty.

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