

Chapter 42

Understanding Users' Switching Between Social Media Platforms: A PPM Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Social media such as micro-blogs and social networking sites are popular among users. Due to the intense competition, it is crucial for social media platforms to attract users and retain them. The purpose of this paper is to draw on the push-pull-mooring (PPM) model to examine users' switching between social media platforms. The results indicated that identification, perceived usefulness, dissatisfaction, privacy concern, and social influence significantly affect switching intention. In addition, social influence has a positive moderation effect on switching intention. The results imply that social media platforms need to consider the effect of push, pull, and mooring factors in order to prevent users' switching behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has been popular in the world. A few social media platforms such as Facebook, WeChat, Twitter and Instagram have received wide adoption among users. For example, WeChat, the largest Chinese social media platform, has been adopted by 83.4% of internet users (CNNIC, 2019). In the US, the adoption rate of Facebook is 69% (Pew, 2019). Users can conveniently communicate with their friends, such as share, comment and like on these platforms (Xu et al., 2019). This helps strengthen social networking relationships between users, which may facilitate their continuance usage. At the same time, intense competition exists between different social media platforms. They need to expand the user base to achieve a competitive advantage. For users, they may discontinue usage of the current social media platform and switch to an alternative one. As a few platforms have similar functions and services, users may feel it relatively easy to switch to a different social media platform. This presents a great challenge to social media companies. They need to understand the factors affecting user switching and take effective measures to retain users. Otherwise, they may lose the competition.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6307-9.ch042

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Previous research has examined social media user behaviour from multiple perspectives, such as like behaviour (Xu et al., 2019), user engagement (Molinillo et al., 2019; Shen et al., 2019), impulsive purchase (Chen et al., 2019; Hu et al., 2019), and self-disclosure (Koohikamali et al., 2017; Koohikamali et al., 2019). The results advance our understanding of social media user behaviour and provide the base for future research. However, prior research has seldom considered user switch between different social media platforms. As switch represents a behaviour that is different from adoption and continuance, it is necessary to examine users' switch behaviour and identify the determinants of user switching. The results may enrich extant research on social media user behaviour.

The purpose of this research is to draw on the push-pull-mooring (PPM) model to examine users' switching between social media platforms. PPM provides a useful lens to explore user switch behaviour and it has been used to examine information systems user switching in various contexts, such as mobile payment (Wang et al., 2019a), social commerce (Li and Ku, 2018), and mobile shopping (Chang et al., 2017). In this research, we generalize it to the social media context. According to PPM, a user's switching is influenced by three types of factors: push, pull and mooring (Moon, 1995). Among them, push factors drive users away from the original platform, which include dissatisfaction and privacy concern in this research. In contrast, pull factors attract users to an alternative platform, which include perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment and identification. Mooring factors reflect personal or social factors that prevent or facilitate user switch, which include social influence. In addition to the direct effect, we propose that social influence moderates the effects of both push and pull factors on switching intention. We expect that the results can disclose the mechanism underlying user switch and provide guidelines for social media companies on how to prevent users' switching.

RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

Social Media User Behaviour

As a popular service, social media user behaviour has received great attention from information systems researchers. They have examined various types of social media user behaviour, such as impulsive purchase, self-disclosure, engagement, and like behaviour. Among them, impulsive purchase is a hot topic. Xiang et al. (2016) found that parasocial interaction, which includes similarity, expertise and likeability, affects social commerce users' impulsive buying tendency. Chung et al. (2017) reported that both utilitarian value and hedonic value influence impulsive buying of restaurant products. Other research has noted that the determinants of impulse buying include affective trust (Chen et al., 2019) and social influence (Hu et al., 2019).

As users need to disclose much personal information when using social media services, self-disclosure also receives much research attention. Liu and Wang (2018) argued that boundary coordination and turbulence determine users' self-disclosure on social network sites. Koohikamali et al. (2019) noted that the trade-off between privacy concern and benefits affects self-disclosure on social network applications. Similarly, privacy concern and social support are found to influence personal health information disclosure (Zhang et al., 2018).

Other research has examined consumer engagement in social media. Shen et al. (2019) noted that technology attractiveness and community involvement affect social commerce users' engagement. Molinillo et al. (2019) reported that social support and community identification influence consumers'

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