

Chapter 56

Examining the Psychosocial Dimensions of Young People's Emergent Social Media Behavior

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ABSTRACT

Social media usage among young people has grown astronomically, generating interest among a number of interest groups. This chapter fills a gap on social media psychosocial antecedents propelling high-usage behavior and the subsequent psychosocial outcomes showing in attachment to the social media. The chapter explored the emergent psychosocial needs driving young people's level of usage in social media and the consequences, among a population in Ghana. The findings revealed that young consumers' social media behavior could be greatly influenced by their social psychological needs, but individual psychological variables did not significantly predict usage behavior in social media. The findings also suggest that young people are more emotionally attached to social media, slightly attached cognitively and not attached behaviorally. This implies young people have developed some level of emotional involvement for the use of social media which could affect their well-being positively or negatively.

INTRODUCTION

Social media comprises of various forms of internet based or web 2.0 platforms that allow users or the public to generate and share ideas, pictures, videos, information, interests, and other expressions. It is one of the most dynamic, interdisciplinary socially facilitated media of contemporary society (Hjorth & Hendry, 2015; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Made up of five distinct types, including social networking sites, social news, media sharing, blogs and micro blogging, social media is transforming young consumers' behaviour as it has created a shift in how consumers use technology, connect with others, engage with brands and other social activities such as entertainment (Chuma, 2014; Pinto, 2015). Such level of advancement and accessibility is increasingly creating opportunities for high usage and the likelihood

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of psychological consequences (Bolton et al., 2013; Chiang, 2013; Wu, Cheung & Hung, 2013). Given its growing importance, the power of social media to influence consumer behaviour cannot be overlooked. Studies shows that, at a global level, it has become a major medium through which businesses engage their customers and for multiple levels of communication in all social interactions (Kim, 2016).

Although social media usage can be found among different groups of people, the younger consumer generation has been found to be connected to social media to a higher degree and this has become the focus of attention by researchers (Chiang, 2013; Dunne, Lawlor & Rowley, 2014; Khan, 2017; Westlund & Bjur, 2014). The younger generation basically consists of those from the later generation of generation Y, born from 1980s to 2000 and described as millennials, and the generation Z who are described as totally distinct from previous generations of consumers or market segment. They are considered as a dominant consumer segment, brand conscious, technologically advanced and digital citizens (Abeeele, 2016; Bertel & Ling, 2016; Bolton et al., 2013; Kotler & Keller, 2013; MacCasland, 2005; Mascheroni & Vincent, 2016; Walsh, 2009). They spend a lot of their time on technology devices mainly smartphones, internet and social media for social connections, information and entertainment. They are considered technology lovers and multi device owners (Bertel & Ling 2016; Lien & Cao, 2014; Khan, 2017; Lin & Lu, 2011; MacCasland, 2005; Naumouska, 2017; Whiting & Williams, 2013). Consequently, young people have been considered vulnerable to excessive usage and behavioral outcomes of social media. Due to their prolific usage of social media, they are considered as the population of interest for new digital media technologies such as smartphones and social media (Babadi-Akashe, 2014). As social media assumes a high level of influence it is imperative to understand young consumers from different parts of the world.

Social media has created strong interactions in people and Bolton et al. (2013) suggested social media antecedent factors and outcomes in young people should be the focus of research. In response to this call, psychosocial antecedents and outcomes including social capital, psychosocial motives, and psychological wellbeing such as dependence and addiction associated with social media, has been examined. Findings suggest some social and psychological factors including entertainment, information, and relationships are key drivers of social media behaviour (Al-Kandari et al., 2016; Bulduklu, 2017; Cheng et al., 2015; Kuru et al., 2017; Khan, 2017; Wei & Lo, 2015). Other findings suggest individual psychological factors such as personality, self-esteem, and self-seeking status influence social media behaviour in young people (Seidman, 2012; Steinfield, Ellison & Lampe, 2008; Wilson et al., 2010; Wood & Scott 2016). The Western world and Asia have been the central geographic context for the majority of these studies. However, social media usage behaviour in a diverse sociocultural context (Carter & Yeo, 2016; Khan, 2017; Rubin, 2002; Sundar & Limperos, 2014; Whiting & William, 2013; Wu et al., 2013) may present different patterns of behavior relevant to understanding social media behavior. As there are only a few studies from a developing country setting (Karikari et al., 2017), this calls for more studies to bridge this gap (Al-Kandari, Melkote & Sharif, 2016). Findings from the US, UK and Asia have been the focus of developing countries studies on social media. In Ghana, Karikari et al. (2017) found that social media supports the generation of social capital and user well-being but usage can be influenced by external social pressure. Nevertheless, there have not been many studies on the extent to which psychosocial factors associated with social media usage in Ghana may differ from other parts of the world. Consequently, as psychosocial factors have become significant drivers of young people's social media behaviour, it is imperative to examine these factors and how they interplay with usage behaviour and psychosocial outcomes from a different context.

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