Development of a Social Media Fatigue Scale

Ching-Chang Lee, Ming-Chia Hsieh

Department of Information Management, National Kaohsiung First University of Science & Technology, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, R.O.C., clee@nkfust.edu.tw

Abstract

Social networking includes numerous very popular online applications. Social networking websites allow people to communicate and interact with each other, and as a result, the number of users has grown rapidly over the last few years. Taking Facebook, the most popular social networking site, as an example, the number of people using Facebook exceeded 1 billion during every month in 2013. Social networking sites enable users to get together and form online communities. Apart from keeping in touch with their friends, users can locate old friends or make new friends via social networking sites. For that reason, social networking sites have become new tools for social interaction.

In order to provide free services to users, social networking sites depend on advertisements as a source of revenue. To facilitate greater advertisement revenue, social networking sites are constantly introducing new social applications and functions, allowing users to expand their social circles quickly and hoping to attract users to spend more time on the sites. However, according to a survey report by Gartner (2011), the phenomenon of social media fatigue (SoMeFat) has already appeared among social networking website users in certain areas, implying that users’ enthusiasm for social media has diminished. Some users gradually become lurkers, meaning they are no longer eager to share information with others, and some users have even canceled their social networking website accounts (Junco, 2011; Glynn et al., 2011; Joo, Kim & Yang, 2011). This phenomenon indicates that perhaps users are tiring of the social functions, content or activities provided by social networking sites, and, as a consequence, have decided to reduce their usage of social networking or even give up use of social networking sites altogether.

In order to understand and measure the phenomenon of social media fatigue, this study developed a social media fatigue scale, which was used as a tool to evaluate the level of fatigue of social networking service users. This study first developed a framework for formation of social media fatigue via a review of the literature, and then proposed a preliminary scale that could be used to measure social media fatigue.
By means of competition model analysis, this study discovered that a second-order factor model was the most parsimonious model for a social media fatigue scale, and formative factors consisted of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, lack of personal accomplishment and privacy exposure risk. Among the four factors leading to formation of social media fatigue, privacy exposure risk was the most important factor causing social media fatigue, followed by depersonalization, lack of personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion in that order.

The social media fatigue scale developed in this study possesses outstanding reliability, validity, fit and explanatory power, which makes it a very suitable tool for measuring social media fatigue. Operators of social networking sites will be able to gauge users' social networking fatigue via the social media fatigue scale, which can provide a basis for modifying the functions and content of social networking sites.

**Keywords:** Social networking, Social networking sites, Social media fatigue scale