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Extended Abstract

Factors Affecting Discontinuance Intention to Use Social Networking Services

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Abstract: The issue of social networking sites (SNS) discontinuance has attracted the attention from academia and industry. However, related studies are limited. Drawing on social cognitive theory, this study puts forward a theoretical model of SNS discontinuance intention. 551 valid data were collected via an online survey and further analyzed using SmartPLS3.0. The result shows that, perceived irreplaceable significantly affects SNS excessive use, which further has a significant effect on fatigue and guilt. Also, fatigue and guilt significantly impact discontinuance intention to use SNS. The findings enrich our understanding on social media discontinuance and provide insights on how to prevent user churn in SNS context.

Keywords: social networking sites, discontinuance intention, social cognitive theory, negative emotion, excessive use

1. INTRODUCTION

Social networking services (SNS) have permeated into individuals' everyday lives and satisfied their different gratifications^[1]. However, SNS discontinuance has become increasingly prominent in recent years^[2]. As discontinuance is detrimental to information system sustainability, it is vital to explore factors affecting SNS discontinuance.

Extant studies have noticed the phenomenon of SNS discontinuance, and make efforts to investigate why SNS users discontinue their use. Theories such as stimulus-organism-response model and social cognitive theory are employed, and factors such as information overload, social overload, fatigue, exhaustion and technostress are found to have significant effects on SNS discontinuance^{[2]-[4]}. Although prior studies have explored the roles of different factors, it is still lack of understanding on the mechanism of user behavioral change, for example, from excessive use to discontinuance. Also, studies on negative emotions (e.g., guilt) and SNS discontinuance are not enough.

Therefore, this study puts forward the following research questions: What factors affect individuals' discontinuance intention to use SNS? Specially, what roles do excessive use and negative emotions (i.e., fatigue and guilt) play in generating SNS discontinuance intention? To answer the questions, this study conducts an empirical study to better understand SNS discontinuance.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND HYPOTHESES

Social cognitive theory posits that the relationships among environmental factors, personal factors and individual behaviors are dynamic and mutual^[5]. In the SNS use context, individuals will assess their current use condition, make judgment and develop emotions, which will further influence their decisions on how to adjust their behaviors.

In particular, this study examines the effects of perceived irreplaceability, excessive use, fatigue and guilt on SNS discontinuance intention. When users perceive irreplaceability of the service, they will be more likely to excessively use it^[6], which may further generate negative emotions, such as fatigue and guilt^[7]. And extant studies have proven the important role of negative emotion in driving SNS discontinuance^{[2][4]}.

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3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

An online survey was conducted among WeChat users in China. All the measurement items of constructs were adapted from prior research and modified to the current research context. 551 valid data were collected and used for further analysis. To examine the research model, validity and reliability of the measurement model were first tested, followed by hypotheses test using SmartPLS 3.0.

Results show that, the explained variance of discontinuance intention, guilt, fatigue and excessive use are 47.8%, 25.3%, 21.4% and 30.1%, respectively. Fatigue ($\beta = 0.488$, $p < 0.001$) and guilt ($\beta = 0.280$, $p < 0.001$) are significantly related to discontinuance intention, thus hypotheses H4 and H5 are supported. Excessive use is revealed to significantly influence fatigue ($\beta = 0.463$, $p < 0.001$) and guilt ($\beta = 0.530$, $p < 0.001$), therefore hypotheses H2 and H3 are confirmed. And the path from perceived irreplaceability to excessive use is statistically significant ($\beta = 0.549$, $p < 0.001$), hence hypothesis H1 is supported.

4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study focuses on the emerging social media discontinuance phenomenon, and attempts to investigate factors influencing discontinuance intention to use SNS via an empirical study. The findings reveal the significant effects of perceived irreplaceability, excessive use, fatigue and guilt on SNS discontinuance. All the findings have important contributions both in theory and in practice. From a theoretical viewpoint, this study explains the role of excessive use to enrich our understanding on behavioral change in SNS context. In addition, this study highlights the influences of fatigue and guilt to deepen studies related to negative emotions on IS use behavior. From a practical perspective, this study helps individuals to properly adjust their SNS usage behavior and use the service in a reasonable way. Moreover, this study provides suggestions for service providers on how to avoid individuals' excessive use and negative emotions to prevent user churn. Future research could consider other social media to reveal the differences. And other negative emotions (e.g., anxiety and dissatisfaction) could be explored due to individuals' complex psychological responses [8].

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