“Like” is More than Just a Thumbs up: The Role of Feedback and Sociability in SNS Usage

Completed Research Paper

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Abstract

Social network sites (SNS) have increasingly become widely used technologies that are well integrated in the daily routines of many individuals. As venues for information sharing, SNS provide a diversity of communication capabilities and feedback features that can stir emotions, attitudes, beliefs, as well as influencing many decisions. In this paper, we argue that the meanings that SNS feedback features communicate to individuals induce in them feelings of social presence and enjoyment, which then shape their experiences related to information technologies. To investigate the impact of feedbacks and social presence on individuals’ intentions in an SNS context, we proposed and tested a research model integrating the tackled concepts along with attitude, enjoyment and perceived usefulness. Our results suggest that feedback is an essential component of SNS, capable of shaping individual perceptions of social presence and enjoyment, which in turn, along with attitude and perceived usefulness, are expected to influence individual intentions.

Keywords

Social Network sites, Adoption, Social presence, Feedback,

Introduction

Social network sites (SNS) are widely used technologies (Gao et al. 2010) that have become deeply integrated into everyday lives of many individuals (Cheikh-Ammar and Barki 2012, 2013; Yoo 2010). SNS such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and Google Plus have become vastly popular in the last decade and are thought to foster novel communication and information sharing venues. As an established part of the daily routines of many (Patterson 2012; Pempek et al. 2009), SNS offer new business opportunities for both electronic and traditional companies (Roosendaal 2011; Xu et al. 2012). More recently, some organizations have even uncovered benefits in creating internal SNS to be used by their employees (DiMicco et al. 2008). While SNS can differ in their business models and in the value they provide, they all rely on their users’ contributions and continuous interactions to be considered successful (Xu et al. 2012). As such, it is important to better understand the reasons behind individual decisions to adopt and continue using these technologies. Presently, empirically validated theories are still lacking in the IS literature (Ryan and Xenos 2011) and we still have a limited understanding of the antecedents of SNS continuous use.

As venues for information sharing, SNS are typical communication platforms where the transmission of messages between users can take different forms varying from written text, pictures and videos to symbols (i.e. thumbs-up), while concurrently allowing several interactivity features (Hsu et al. 2012). SNS are communication and information sharing platforms, where individuals can interact with others, and where fun and enjoyment are at the forefront (Kim 2011). In this paper, we argue that the different meanings that SNS feedback features can communicate to individuals may amplify their feelings of social presence and enjoyment, which can then shape their IT related experiences as well as their intentions to use it. (Gefen and Straub 2004; Hassanein and Head 2007; Hess et al. 2009; Kumar and Benbasat 2002, 2006).
Theoretical Background

To investigate the impact of SNS feedback features on the perception of social presence of an SNS, as well as its subsequent effect on intentions, the research model of Figure 1 is proposed. The model is based on the theory of social presence (Short et al. 1976), as well as on earlier work examining the role of social presence in e-services and online shopping contexts (Gefen and Straub 2003; Hassanein and Head 2007). The model of Figure 1 hypothesizes that both received and communicated Feedbacks are key determinants of the perceptions of social presence and enjoyment. Moreover, Attitude, Perceived Usefulness and Enjoyment are suggested as key antecedents of usage intentions in hedonic IS contexts, such as SNS (Van der Heijden 2004; Venkatesh and Brown 2001).

Social presence theory posits that a certain level of fit between a task and a chosen communication medium can be valuable (Short et al. 1976). Media differ in terms of the warmth they project, as well as in the way individuals perceive them as capable of channeling the psychological presence of communication partners during their utilization experience (Hassanein and Head 2007). Social presence is thus related to media richness, for it reflects the capability of a medium to transmit rich information regarding communication participants (Straub and Karahanna 1998). The construct of social presence is not new in the IS literature, where it has been associated to the warmth experienced when interacting with an IS (Gefen and Straub 2003; Hassanein and Head 2007; Kumar and Benbasat 2002; Yoo and Alavi 2001), and reflected by the sense of sociability, as well as the feelings of human contact, experienced by individuals when using a technology. Moreover, technology adoption can be affected by the perceived social presence of a medium (Gefen and Straub 1997), where the levels of socially rich text and picture design elements have been suggested to impact the perception of online social presence (Hassanein and Head 2007). In the case of SNS, which is an IT context where social presence is likely to be very relevant, it is expected that the feedback exchanged between users will influence individuals’ perceptions of warmth, as well as their feeling of human contact (Yoo and Alavi 2001), rendering their experience of SNS use more enjoyable.

Feedback

Feedback is a communication practice whereby a conversation initiator receives a reaction from a specific source (Ilgen et al. 1979). The organizational literature has considered the effect of a conveyed feedback in relation to a given task (Kluger and DeNisi 1996) as a source of motivation, as well as a catalyst for learning (Ilgen et al. 1979). Along similar lines, the IS literature has also suggested that, via its multiple forms, the feedback enabled by an IS can influence users’ participation in the context of online communities (Moon and Sproull 2008). Moreover, according to the visual rhetoric theory, visual
communications can take several forms (e.g., text, images and symbols), afford meaning and are transmitted with the objective of influencing an audience (Cyr et al. 2009; Scott 1994). Visual communications are expected to stir cognitive and affective responses and may be both conscious as well as unconscious (Scott 1994).

A popular and often used sociotechnical feedback feature in SNS contexts is the ‘Like’ (Peyton 2013). While this feature may have initially been created to afford SNS users the capability of sharing a particular message with their own network of contacts, ‘Like’ can also be perceived and experienced differently by its users (Faraj and Azad 2012). For instance, beyond its sharing affordance, it has been suggested that the “likes” received for a specific Facebook post can sometimes be perceived as acts of acceptance from the participants of a social network, and/or a form of identity validation and a reflection of individuals’ SNS reputation (Kietzmann et al. 2011). Moreover, SNS and their diverse communication features embed different informational capabilities which reflect their potential to create, modify, transmit and store information in new ways (Leonardi 2007). For instance, the “Like” button, popularized by SNS, is a unique way for transmitting meaning between social network users. Likes can be viewed on an individual’s home page, as well as being diffused on the newsfeed of her/his network of friends. Thus the way this information is understood, appropriated and re-transmitted between SNS members (Moon and Sproull 2008), can play a central role in their future participation and sharing on the SNS. For example, receiving a large number of “Likes” from friends and connections on an SNS can boost one’s self-esteem, as well as their sense of belonging to their social groups (Constant et al. 1994; Constant et al. 1996), which in turn is likely to encourage them to continue using their SNS for information sharing.

While information sharing can benefit a community, individual community members are also likely to consider the costs and benefits of such sharing (Katz and Te’eni 2007). For example, even though clicking the “Like” button can have security implications (Roosendaal 2011, 2012), it remains popular among Facebook users (Peyton 2013) due to its perceived individual benefits. We suggest here that social presence and enjoyment represent two individual benefits that need to be taken into account to better understand the reasons that underlie such behaviors. Social presence reflects a feeling of warmth and human contact that can be conveyed through a communication medium (Gefen and Straub 2003, 2004; Hassanein and Head 2007), which can be induced by feedback received from, as well as sent to other SNS members (e.g., “Like”). Social presence is thought to be conveyed by interface features such as customer support chat (Qiu and Benbasat 2005) and message boards (Cyr et al. 2007), as well as the capability of leading computer-mediated interactions between users (Hassanein and Head 2007). Moreover, SNS users are expected to make sense of the feedback they receive (i.e. Likes or number of likes) and recognize the symbolism it represents, stimulating in them related emotions (e.g., flow) (Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz 2004). Moreover, providing feedbacks to others is expected to instigate in individuals feelings of expected reciprocity (Constant et al. 1994), as well as feelings of potential reputation enhancement (Wasko and Faraj 2005), which is expected to boost their perceptions of social presence, rendering their SNS experience more enjoyable. In other words, someone who receives many likes and comments related to a Facebook post, or spends time to interact on some of his connection’s posts, is likely to find the experience more enjoyable and will more likely perceive the SNS as rich in social presence. Thus we suggest that:

\[ H_1 - Providing \text{ feedback to others will positively influence one's perceptions of social presence.} \]
\[ H_2 - Feedback \text{ received from others will positively influence one's perceptions of social presence.} \]
\[ H_3 - Providing \text{ feedback to others will positively influence one's enjoyment of SNS.} \]
\[ H_4 - Feedback \text{ received from others will positively influence one's enjoyment of SNS.} \]
\[ H_5 - Feedback \text{ received from others will positively influence the feedback provided to others.} \]

Social Presence

Social presence was initially conceptualized as the extent to which users experienced a communication technology to emulate face-to-face interactions (Short et al. 1976). It was later suggested that social presence reflected the capability of a technology to project a feeling of psychological presence in communication partners during its usage (Fulk et al. 1987). While several conceptualizations of the social presence construct exist in the literature (Hassanein and Head 2007), an often used one in IS focuses on the feeling of warmth experienced when interacting with an IS (Gefen and Straub 2003; Hassanein and Head 2007; Kumar and Benbasat 2002; Yoo and Alavi 2001), reflecting both the sense of sociability, as
well as the feelings of warmth individuals can experience when using an IS. Given its relevance to SNS contexts, the present study conceptualizes social presence along similar lines.

Social presence is considered to be an important element in IS interface design, and past research has highlighted its role in overcoming physical distance and providing assistance in digital media interactions (Hassanein and Head 2007). Perceptions of social presence have also been shown to influence antecedents of behavioral intentions, including enjoyment (Cyr et al. 2007), trust (Gefen and Straub 2004), and perceived usefulness (Karahanna and Straub 1999).

To introduce a sense of human warmth and sociability, an IS can provide its users with rich means for interacting with others and/or for stimulating their imagination via automated features comparable to human communication (Hassanein and Head 2007). This is particularly needed in SNS contexts where individuals mainly interact with people they already know (Pempek et al. 2009). Hence, we suggest that an SNS perceived, as being rich in social presence would positively influence individuals’ attitudes towards it, as well as the pleasure they experience when using it. Moreover, cognitive dissonance processes are also expected to intervene and shape individuals’ usefulness beliefs towards an SNS they perceive as being rich in social presence and flow (Straub and Burton-Jones 2007; Turel et al. 2011).

$H6$ - An individual's perceived social presence of an SNS will positively influence her/his attitude towards the SNS.

$H7$ - An individual's perceived social presence of an SNS will positively influence her/his enjoyment of the SNS.

$H8$ - An individual's perceived social presence of an SNS will positively influence her/his perceptions of the SNS's usefulness.

**Enjoyment**

Perceived enjoyment is defined as “the extent to which using an IS, is perceived to be enjoyable, apart from any performance consequences” (Davis et al. 1992; Kim 2011). Perceived enjoyment is a belief relevant in post-adoption stages, where it is expected to shape users satisfaction leading to IS continuance intention (Kim and Han 2009). Past research has highlighted the role of hedonic elements in shaping users’ IS related experience (Cyr et al. 2007; Hassanein and Head 2007), and underlined the experienced pleasure or enjoyment sensed while using an IS as an important antecedent in traditional technology acceptance models (Venkatesh 2000), especially in the context of hedonic IS (Van der Heijden 2004). Moreover, enjoyment has also been found to be a strong predictor of individual attitudes and intentions related to the used medium in the context of internet-shopping (Churchill et al. 2001), and to be positively related to individual attitudes toward website use in general (Van der Heijden 2003). Perceived enjoyment and fun are psychological rewards suggested as intrinsic motivators capable of influencing IS use (Igbaria et al. 1996, 1997), so that individuals who experience an IS as pleasurable and perceive its use related activities as inherently enjoyable, will be more likely to use it more extensively (Igbaria et al. 1997). Hence:

$H9$ - An individual's experienced enjoyment on an SNS will positively influence her/his intention to continue using it.

$H10$ - An individual's experienced enjoyment on an SNS will positively influence her/his attitude towards it.

$H11$ - An individual's experienced enjoyment on an SNS will positively influence her/his perceptions of the SNS's usefulness.

**Attitude and PU**

Attitude is an affect that an individual feels for an object or a behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). A person’s attitude toward an IS, refers to the extent to which she/he feels the IS as good or bad (Hartwick and Barki 1994). According to the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen and Fishbein 1975; Ajzen 1991), attitude is a central antecedent of behavioral intentions. Attitude is thus suggested as a disposition towards a behavior particularly relevant in the online contexts (Hassanein and Head 2007). Attitude is expected to play a central role in SNS related decisions where many concerns have been raised regarding individual data privacy issues (Boyd 2008; Hargittai 2010; Roosendaal 2011), as well as regarding the dangers of excessive SNS usage (Kuss and...
Griffiths 2011; Maier et al. 2013; Xu and Tan 2012). With that in mind, individuals’ attitudes towards a specific SNS, and their feeling related to whether the SNS is good or bad, becomes even more relevant. Thus, a favorable attitude towards online social platforms such as SNS is expected to reduce barriers to its adoption, as well as increase the extent of its continuous use (Cheung et al. 2011; Ross et al. 2010).

Perceived usefulness and its effect on intentions has been well documented in the IS literature, where the construct has been suggested as a central belief capable of explaining usage intentions (Davis 1989). Moreover, the significance of PU has been frequently examined in many contexts and using diverse technologies (Adams et al. 1992; Davis 1989; Taylor and Todd 1995; Venkatesh and Davis 2000), and has been repeatedly validated as a central determinant in adoption decisions. In the context of SNS, the capability of the medium to transmit rich information regarding communication participants (Straub and Karahanna 1998) renders SNS usage to be perceived as useful for communication purposes and can thus encourage individuals to use the medium again (Cyr et al. 2007; Gefen and Straub 2003). This suggests that, individuals are more likely to continue using the SNS if they have positive attitudes towards it, as well as if they consider it to be useful.

**H12** - An individual’s attitude towards an SNS will positively influence her/his intentions to continue using it.

**H13** - An individual’s perceived usefulness of an SNS will positively influence her/his intentions to continue using SNS.

### Research Methodology

#### Data collection

As a leading social network site, Facebook was selected as the SNS to be examined in this study. To assess the proposed research model, an internet survey was developed following the recommendations suggested in the literature (Dillman et al. 2009). Items measuring the constructs of PU, Perceived Social Presence, Enjoyment, and Intentions were adapted from existing literature (Cyr et al. 2009; Davis 1989; Davis et al. 1989; Van der Heijden 2004; Kwon and Wen 2010; Rosen and Kluemper 2008; Venkatesh 2000) to fit the Facebook context. As suggested by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), attitude was measured via bipolar evaluative scales (e.g., good/bad) as an affect that an individual can feel for an object.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 – 24</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 34</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>94.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 – 44</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 – 54</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 – 64</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate/professional</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single, never married</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married without children</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married with children</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living w/ partner</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience on Facebook</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 6 months</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To measure their perceptions of the feedback they provided to others, respondents were asked to assess the extent to which they believed they often commented, liked and acknowledged their friends' Facebook posts. Similarly, their perceptions of the feedback they received from others was assessed by asking them to assess the extent to which they believed they often received likes and comments on their own Facebook posts from their SNS friends. A complete list of the survey items is provided in Table 2.

A worldwide online crowdsourcing market (OCM), Amazon's Mechanical Turk, was used for data collection. OCMs provide rapid access to large, diversified, and motivated participants with relatively minimal recruitment costs (Paolacci et al. 2010; Ross et al. 2010), and are thought to provide more diverse and adequate samples than the convenient, yet insufficiently divergent student samples (Thomas 2011). A recent study compared crowdsourcing samples to student samples and suggested that OCM (specifically, US Mechanical Turk) were viable sampling sources (Steelman et al., forthcoming). As suggested, US workers were invited to participate in this study, and a compensation of $2.00 was paid to every completed survey. The final sample contained 262 complete responses.

Respondents were only allowed to participate once and no technical or survey experience was required. The country of origin restriction (USA) was controlled by the Mechanical Turk website which displayed the survey only to US residents. The survey was available for one hour from the minute a respondent accepted the task and on average respondents completed the survey in 12 minutes. Table 1 provides demographical information related to the study participants.

### Data Analysis

Structural equation modeling was used as the main statistical technique to analyze the research model of Figure 1. First, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) assessed convergent, concurrent, and discriminant validity. Subsequently, Amos 21 was used to test the overall fit of the structural model, as well as to estimate the relationships between the model constructs. Overall fit was assessed via NFI (normed-fit index), IFI (incremental-fit index), CFI (comparative-fit index), GFI (goodness-of-fit index), RMSEA (root-mean-square error of approximation), and ECVI (expected cross-validation index).

### Reliability and confirmatory factor analyses

All Cronbach’s Alpha values (next to each construct label in Table 2) were largely superior to the recommended 0.7 minimum (Churchill et al. 2001), suggesting that all constructs were reliably measured.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enjoyment (0.95)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy1</td>
<td>I have fun interacting with Facebook.</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy2</td>
<td>Using Facebook provides me a lot of enjoyment.</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy3</td>
<td>I enjoy using Facebook.</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy4</td>
<td>Using Facebook bores me.</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>-0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Feedback received (0.95)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfr1</td>
<td>My Facebook friends often comment on my Facebook posts</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfr2</td>
<td>My Facebook friends often Like my Facebook posts</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfr3</td>
<td>I frequently receive Likes for my Facebook posts</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfr4</td>
<td>My Facebook posts are often acknowledged by my friends</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Feedback Sent (0.85)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfs1</td>
<td>I often comment on my friends’ Facebook posts</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfs2</td>
<td>I often Like my Facebook friends’ posts</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfs3</td>
<td>I often acknowledge my friends posts on Facebook</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfs4</td>
<td>When I like my Facebook friends’ posts, I frequently click on the related Like icon</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Social Presence (0.91)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSP1</td>
<td>There is a sense of human contact on Facebook</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is a sense of personalness in Facebook

There is a sense of sociability in Facebook

There is a sense of human warmth in Facebook

There is a sense of human sensitivity in Facebook

There is a sense of personalness in Facebook

There is a sense of sociability in Facebook

There is a sense of human warmth in Facebook

There is a sense of human sensitivity in Facebook

There is a sense of personalness in Facebook

There is a sense of sociability in Facebook

There is a sense of human warmth in Facebook

There is a sense of human sensitivity in Facebook

Table 2. Item descriptive statistics

Table 3. Composite Reliabilities and Convergent Validity

Table 4. Inter-construct Correlations

Structural model fit and hypothesis testing

The analysis of the structural model yielded satisfactory model fit and significance of the hypothesized relationships: $\chi^2 = 513.7; df = 332; \chi^2/df = 1.55; NFI = 0.93; IFI = 0.97; CFI = 0.97; GFI = 0.88; RMSEA = 0.04; PCLOSE = 0.81$. The regression weights and significance levels are shown in Figure 2.

As shown in Figure 2, all paths (except the link between Feedback from Others and Enjoyment) were significant at $p < 0.05$ or better, and the model explained 55% of the variance in Intention. As
hypothesized, Feedback from Others had a positive and significant effect on Feedback to Others (.63, p < .001) and Perceived Social Presence (.20, p < .001). Moreover, Feedback to Others was positively linked to Perceived Social Presence (.53, p < .001) and Enjoyment (.19, p < .05), and Perceived Social Presence was positively related to Enjoyment (.61, p < .001). Together, the two feedback constructs and Perceived Social Presence explained 60% of the variance in Enjoyment. As well, Perceived Social Presence was positively related to Attitude (.13, p < .05) and PU (.22, p < .01), and Enjoyment was positively related to Attitude (.73, p < .001), PU (.52, p < .001), and Intention (.23, p < .05). Attitude and PU were also positively related to Intention (.30, p < .01; 31, p < .001, respectively).

**Figure 2. Structural Model Results**

**Conclusion**

This paper contributes to research on social network sites by proposing and testing a theoretical model that explains individual intentions to continue using a specific SNS. Despite the popularity of SNS and their widespread usage, the IS literature still lacks empirically validated theories in this area (Ryan and Xenos 2011). The present paper highlights the role of social presence in the context of SNS, a construct that has mostly been used in the e-commerce literature, but somewhat ignored in SNS contexts. The results of the present study showed that the perception of social presence in SNS appears to be a central determinant of PU, Enjoyment, as well as Attitude towards the SNS, which in turn influence individual intentions of using the SNS. Moreover, the present study also underscores the importance of social network enabled feedback as a central design feature that can affect individual perceptions related to an SNS via their impact on individual perceptions of social presence and enjoyment.

This study is also expected to add to the discussion on visual literacy, which is related to the ability of individuals to interpret and make sense of images and symbols (here “likes”), and the meanings they represent (Debes 1969). A main assumption of visual literacy is that images could be read and their meaning communicated (Debes 1969; Fransecky and Debes 1972). In the present study, the way individuals read and interpret the thumbs up image imbedded in an SNS is suggested to significantly influence the way they experience their SNS, and is therefore likely to affect their post-adoption decisions.

From a practitioner point of view, the present study’s results can also be useful for SNS developers. By embedding social presence features into the design of their SNS, designers can positively influence users to continue to use an SNS, thereby ensuring its success (Xu et al. 2012). In particular, they can achieve this objective by incorporating features that facilitate the provision of feedback in their designs, which is
likely to positively influence users’ perceptions of social presence in the SNS, as well as making their SNS usage experience more enjoyable.

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