

The Social Media News Genres and Users Behavior: a survey on Iranian users of Facebook

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Abstract

The effect of social media on users has been studied in many different ways, but as content of these networks rarely consist of news in majority, the news genres have been neglected to be studied as subject of research. The paper is a simple descriptive survey to get if the news genres contents of social media, particularly facebook have significant influence on users behaviors and attitudes. The findings show in the case of popularity of various genres, the social and cultural news are the most popular genres, while the economical ones are the least. The data analysis shows that the individual attitudes influence more in comparison by social behavior. This is reasonably because the attitude gradually changes by the content and then causes the upcoming effect on behavior. A contribution of paper is far beyond the findings, but in approach. The approach of self exposing advised by the supervisor to firstly know what the people think about their own influencing, and then in the next phase to done the research by another approach to measure the real influencing and compare the self believe with real influence.

Keywords: Social media, User Attitude, User Behavior, Facebook

1. Introduction

With increasing popularity of digital devices, the social media becomes more penetrated in our lives, and certainly has the particular effects which are deserved to study more to increase our understanding from how they may influence our attitudes, believes and deeds. In the way to increase our knowledge about it, this is important to separate the content, distribution channel, the mechanism of diffusion and so on and then design the researches to get more understanding from each of them. In the case of content, there are various types, consist of fun, educational, political, etc. the paper open up the door to investigate the social media content, with the news genres to know if any of them have which kind of potential on the attitudes and behaviors. This is remarkable that this is a student work to get the first knowledge about the research on social media and thus needs to develop in further studies of the student himself, or by others. The approach of self exposing advised by the supervisor to firstly know what the people think about their own influencing, and then in the next phase to done the research by another approach to measure the real influencing and compare the self believe with real influence.

2. Literature Review on Social Networks

Social media are visible in the form of consumer applications such as Facebook and Twitter, but significant use of social media tools takes place behind the firewalls that surround most corporations, institutions, and organizations (Hansen et al, 2011:4). As Online Social Networks become the tools of choice for connecting people, sociologists expect that their structure will increasingly mirror real-life society and relationships (Catanese et al, 2011). Calvi et al, (2010) uses the website observation method to study the libraries' profiles as social identity of institutes, instead of persons and concluded that Flemish cultural institutions make use of the possibilities offered by social media to communicate with their audiences and to promote themselves. Their method limited to the count of Wall posts with comprising the Frequency and cumulative percents. The analysis of Online Social Networks connection is of scientific interest on multiple levels. First of all, large scale studies of models reflecting a real community structure and its behavior were impossible before. Second, data is clearly defined by some structural constraints, usually provided by the OSN structure itself, with respect to real-life relations, often hardly identifiable (Catanese et al, 2011).

Sibona and Walczak (2011) offer a typology for research on social network sites and show that these research and in particular in Facebook cover wide areas include identity management, trust, self-presentation, surveillance and privacy concerns, and social capital. Much of the academic research on Facebook has focused on identity presentation and privacy concerns. Boyd and Ellison defined social network sites based on three system capabilities. The systems allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (Body and Eliasson, 2007:1). Networked communication has become an indispensable link to customers and partners and a critical internal nervous system required for every aspect of commerce. Social media tools cultivate the internal discussions that improve quality, lower costs, and enable the creation of customer and partner communities that offer new opportunities for coordination, marketing, advertising, and customer support (Hansen et al, 2011:4). They also suggest that the current time is an exciting time for those involved in the emerging discipline of social media network analysis. Researchers are designing novel collaborative technologies and social strategies that enable new forms of working and playing. They are also analyzing existing communities to find out what strategies and design decisions lead to success. Although social media success stories abound, there are countless examples of failed attempts to effectively apply social media to achieve desired goals. Social network analysis offers a systematic method to evaluate social media efforts, replacing anecdotes with scientifically based evidence. Unfortunately, many observers see no urgency in changing business strategies, marketing plans, research directions, curricula, or government programs. We hope this book will change their minds by showing the compelling business opportunities, attractive research challenges, strong educational needs, and important national priorities that social media can address and network analysis can elucidate (Hansen et al, 2011:8)

3. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship among the independent and dependant variables which survey intended to investigate. As the figure 1, the conceptual framework of the study consist of four different genres of news, including Social, Political, Cultural and Economical ones as independent ones, while user social and individual behaviors consist the dependant variables.

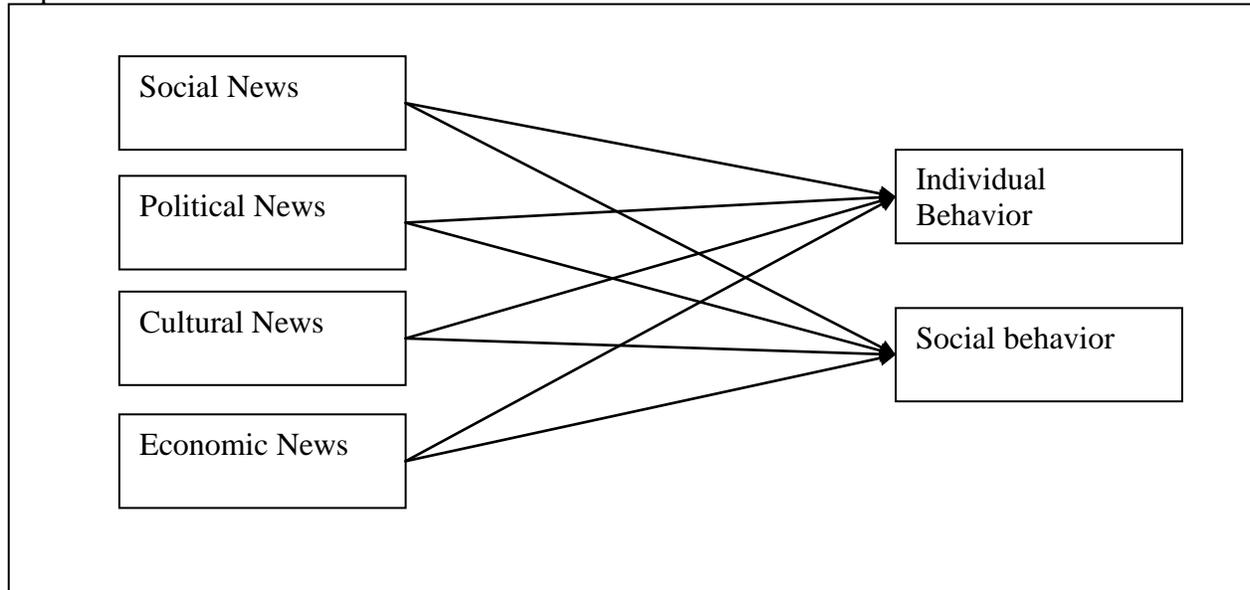


Figure 5: Conceptual Framework

4. Methodology

The study is a survey to measure simply the extent which news genres influence on the users behaviors. For this reason, a self exposure approach has been selected to see what users think about the influence they potent to get from various genres of news. For this reason an online questionnaire has been conducted to ask the users about their idea about the influence of each genre, with a five-point likret scale. The sample used from the corresponding author's facebook friends who live inside the Iran (by self exposing in their profiles) and in their shared post there are news contents. the online questionnaire sent for them and asked to fill it and after numerous request, a sample of 80 filled questionnaire returned. all of them contributed in the survey, because of there is no problem in the answers, may be in regard with clear questions which designed and asked in plain Persian.

5. Findings

As told in previous section, the population of 80 respondents filled the questioner and thus they form the sample. The demographic characteristics of the sample have shown in the table 1. The majority of them live in Tehran, which expected naturally to be more curious about the news, nearly 82.5% are under 25 years and most of them (80 percent) are educated and enjoy from higher educations.

Table 1 : Demographic Characteristics of Sample

| Facebook Users | Numbers | Percent |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Age Groups | | |
| 18-21 years | 34 | 42.5% |
| 22-25 years | 32 | 40% |
| 26-29 years | 14 | 17.5% |
| Genders | | |
| Male | 33 | 41.25% |
| Female | 47 | 58.75% |
| Educations | | |
| Up to High School Diploma | 16 | 20% |
| Undergraduates | 51 | 63.75% |
| M.A and PhD | 13 | 16.25% |
| Residence | | |
| Tehran | 71 | 88.75% |
| Metropolitans and major cities | 6 | 7.5% |
| Towns | 3 | 3.75% |

Table 2 shows the result of the data analysis with a simple aggregation. Social news has been explored to be the most popular genre among the sample with 73%, while none of the other genres was declared to be popular (high level of usage) more than 32%, which consist of cultural news genre. The economic news genres, get the most negative point in the case of popularity, with 63.75% reluctance, followed by political news genres with 50% of low attention. The mix of the news genres for given sample has been declared by respondents to have 40% influence on their individual attitudes, while the effect on Social behavior was 25%. Comparison of the two dependant variables show that the individual attitude is more influenced by news genres, than social behavior. This is a trend which may be deserved to be study more and test by stronger surveys to see if the individual attitudes play the mediated role in deriving the social action and behavior, depend on the news genres the user interested and read or not. Also According to the results, there was a significant relationship between the political, social and cultural genres and individual behavior change.

Table 2: The Data Analysis Descriptive Results

| Facebook Users | Numbers | Percent |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| Political News | | |
| Low | 40 | 50% |
| Average | 19 | 23.75% |
| High | 21 | 26.25% |
| Cultural News | | |
| Low | 33 | 41.25% |
| Average | 21 | 26.25% |
| High | 26 | 32.5% |
| Social News | | |
| Low | 7 | 8.75% |
| Average | 14 | 17.5% |
| High | 59 | 73.75% |

| | | |
|---|----|--------|
| Economic News | | |
| Low | 51 | 63.75% |
| Average | 11 | 13.75% |
| High | 18 | 22.5% |
| Self Expressed Effect on Social Behavior | | |
| Low | 42 | 52.5% |
| Average | 18 | 22.5% |
| High | 36 | 25% |
| Self Expressed Effect on Individual Attitude | | |
| Low | 28 | 35% |
| Average | 20 | 25% |
| High | 32 | 40% |

6. Conclusion

As indicated, there is no general consensus among scholars over the effects of media. Some believe that media has strong and unique influence on the audience thought and behavior. While, some theorists believe the "adjustment effect of media findings." they think that the personal, social and environmental factors and variables can alter the media influences.

The survey reported in the paper is simple in nature and in method. However this is useful to open the door about some descriptive researches about the news contents and genres in social networks. The findings show that social media is able to gradually change the users' attitude, not behavior directly. In its turn, the change in attitude results to change in social behavior, which may interpret as the final ability of social networks in shaping the users behavior and thus worth to study. This is strongly suggests to conduct some more scrutiny approaches and methods to get a better knowledge about the impression and effect of news genres and contents on the social media users' attitudes and behavior to increase our knowledge about the subject.

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