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Western Michigan University

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THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 2013 CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ADVERTISING

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THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MIGRATION AMONG YOUNG PROFESSIONALS: A GROUNDED THEORY

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Introduction

"What really drives people to engage online are peer-influence factors and an instant recolonization for their individual digital activities in the form of comments, video clips, retweets, sharing, and online pools. These visible channels encourage people to be more participative in the social web" (Rajapat 2009, p. 28).

As social media become more and more prevalent, advertising continues to have a significant presence online. According to the most recent figures released by the IAB Internet Advertising Revenue Report, approximately $7.3 billion was spent on online advertising in the first quarter of 2011 alone (Interactive Advertising Bureau 2011). With this boom in digital advertising, it is important for advertisers to maintain focus among an increasingly diverse and large number of social media networks that can change very quickly. Although many advertisers have added Facebook and Twitter to their media mix, which ones will they need to include in the very near future and which ones will be less effective? Will advertisers need to shift their focus to Google+, Pinterest or other sites altogether? With so many social media networks to choose from, how do advertisers decide which site or sites warrant spending a majority of their strategic communication efforts?

To answer this question, one must first have an understanding of which social media site is likely to provide the highest return on investment by engaging the most customers due to the site's popularity and functionality. Equally important is the understanding of why users make the digital leap from one social media site to another. Advertisers must ask these questions in order to gain a sense of where to focus not only current advertising and communications efforts, but future investments in reaching target audiences.

For advertisers and marketers, it is imperative to clearly understand the reasons behind the popularity of different social media sites in order to gain a competitive edge and to be among the first brands to have a presence on the most popular sites. Dwyer, Hiltz, and Passerini (2007) encourage future research in an "effort to understand the development of relationships in the online social environment and the reasons for differences in behavior on different sites" (p. 9).

Professionals today are more likely than ever to regularly use social media at some point during their career. Some may have even used it to land the position they currently hold. "Seventy-eight percent of major corporations state that they use Internet search engines to select candidates for jobs. Of those 78 percent, 68 percent use LinkedIn" (ABC4 2011). In addition, both groups have Facebook pages and organize events via Facebook for the other group members and potential members.

Much of the social media revolution has been driven by Millennials and Gen Xers, who were born between 1965 and 2000. These two segments of the population currently dominate the workforce and will continue to grow in the next years. They are known as avid users of technology and quick learners (Suleman and Nelson 2011). While Millennials are commonly known as digital natives who grew up using and interacting with technology, Gen Xers tend to be more willing to accept the constant communication by machine and the eroding privacy that the use of social media generates. Maggiani (2009) contributes this phenomenon to Gen Xers' unique transition from interpersonal to electronic communication. The Pew Research Center (2013) reports that as of December 2012, 67 percent of adults use social networking sites with the largest age bracket being 18-29 year olds (83 percent), followed by 30-49 year olds (77 percent).

Little research currently exists that specifically addresses why individuals migrate from one social media site to another. There is a clear need to understand the relationship between the development of relationships in the online social environment and the reasons for differences in behavior on different sites (Dwyer et al. 2007). A qualitative approach is needed to develop theories that help explain the process. Therefore, the purpose of this grounded theory was to determine how young professionals use social media sites and why they choose to engage in activities on one social media site versus another. This study was guided by the following two central research questions: What is the theory that explains the process of social media migration among young professionals? How does it unfold?

The results of this study might help advertising professionals determine where to spend their time and energy most effectively. If advertising professionals were able to recognize the signs of a failing social media site, unnecessary efforts could be avoided.

Literature Review

Advertisers and public relations practitioners have used social media as part of their strategic communication campaigns for several years. Advertisers in particular have been infusing ads with live content from social networking sites in order to build brand presence while engaging existing and potential customers. While Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are currently the most popular social networking sites they are closely followed by Google Plus+ and Pinterest (Nielsen 2012). The social media environment tends to change fast and if advertisers want to capitalize on the power of social media in their integrated marketing communications campaigns, they need to understand why audiences migrate from one site to the next and how the process unfolds.

Bansal, Taylor and James (2005) defined migration as a process that involves migrants (consumers) who move (switch) from one country (service provider) to another. They may decide to migrate freely, which is why they are sometimes called "voluntary migrants." If, on the other hand, they do not have a choice because a current service provider closes its doors, the migrants would be called "involuntary migrants" or "refugees." Keaveney and Parthasarathy (2001) refer to the customer movement in and out of the marketplace as churn, a process in which a service is tried and then discontinued in the online environment. This phenomenon also includes the customer service switching behavior, where consumers continue to stay online but switch to another provider. Parks and Floyd (1996) found that online relationships often move to other forms of communication, such as email, telephone, letters, or face-to-face communication because of the low level of socializing in an online environment. At the same time, they found that not all people draw a clear distinction between on-line and off-line communication and interaction.

Migration in an online service context was viewed by Hou, Chen, Shang, and Chern (2012) as a process in which an operator turns off a service in a virtual environment or when users are so unsatisfied with the activity that they discontinue visiting the site altogether even if they still keep an account or a subscription to the site. The authors classified the reasons for switching among social networking sites (SNS) into two categories: push effects and pull effects. Push effects that influence switching behavior include low socializing (LSO), low entertainment levels (LEN), low website system quality (LSQ) and low satisfaction with customer service (LSA), whereas pull effects include alternative attractiveness (AA), peer influence (PI) and critical mass (CM). The study indicates that pull effects appear to be more influential in determining switching behaviors, resulting in a switch from the previous social networking site to a new one. Low entertainment and low socializing in particular appear to be crucial factors influencing the migration process within social networking sites (SNS). Bansal et al. (2005) found that consumers sometimes migrate to another site without having any motivating reason to do so, which is considered a form of alternative attractiveness.

Hsieh, Hsieh, Chiu, and Feng (2012) divided switching behavior from blogs to social networking sites into positive and negative factors. Positive factors were described as relative usefulness, effectiveness of expression and relative playfulness, whereas switching costs was mentioned as a negative factor. Other reasons to get involved in virtual communities included usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived trust, and perceived behavioral control. However, these findings contradict what has been presented by Lin (2006), whose study has shown that members of virtual communities tend to make their own decisions rather than looking for external sources of information or others' suggestions. The ability to exchange information emerged as another reason why people engaged in virtual communities, in addition to looking for self-identity, values and attitudes (Ridings and Gefen 2004). Park, Kee, and Valenzuela (2009) found that the need for socializing and entertainment appeared to be the main reasons students join Facebook groups, which can result in more civic and political engagement offline. Finally, a recent study revealed that more mobile users (42.5 percent) are willing to switch to a new social media site (42.5 percent) than those who do not want to switch (18.2 percent). The main reasons for switching included easier access, faster loading of page, more privacy options and video conferencing. Overall, 85 percent of the participants indicated that they accessed social media sites through their mobile devices (Tech Journal 2011). Keaveney and Parthasarathy (2001) found that those consumers who switch to different online services ("switchers") often use those sites less frequently than "continuers." Continuers, who in general display a tendency to stay and prefer a particular website in the future, showed more previous experience with those services in general and with the post-purchasing service process in particular.

The current study is framed by Rogers' (1962) diffusion of innovations paradigm, which asserts that certain individuals known as "change agents" can exert influence on other people's decisions in a way they find desirable. According to Rogers, commercial change agents serve as an information source for individuals who purchase and try a new product. Zhong, Hardin, and Sun (2011) found that those who are high in communication technology (ICT) innovativeness, such as Millennials and Gen Xers tend to use social networks more often. In the context of this study, the change agents (those who migrate from one social media site to another) are considered early adopters of social media sites. Honigman (2007) explains that early adopters are influential as they have the newest devices, spend more money on electronic devices and, as a result, serve as an ideal group to test whether a product will succeed or fail in the market.

Method

This study uses a qualitative research approach as not much information currently exists that explains the process of social media migration among young professionals (Strauss and Corbin 1998). A grounded theory approach was used, which is a "systemic, qualitative procedure that researchers use to generate a general explanation of a process action, or interaction among people" (Creswell 2005, p. 52). In a grounded theory study the steps are to identify the central phenomenon, the causal conditions, the intervening conditions, and the strategies and consequences (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Therefore, during the initial stages data collection sought to answer the following sub-questions:

1. What was central to the process? (core phenomenon)
2. What influenced or caused this phenomenon to occur? (causal conditions)
3. What strategies were employed during the process? (strategies)
4. What effect occurred? (consequences)

Data Collection Procedure

Theoretical sampling was used to select participants for the study (Strauss and Corbin 1998). The first level of theoretical sampling implied the selection of the site for the study. An association of young professionals in two medium-size Midwestern cities was selected for the study because a vast majority of the members of the association consisted of Millennials and GenXers, and because part of the association's mission statement was networking and entrepreneurship, two qualities also often associated with social networking sites.

The second level of theoretical sampling involved the selection of the participants, who were the members of this association with an age range of 25-45. This homogenous sample included individuals who belonged to the association and who could speak about social networking sites and why and how they migrate to other sites. Some of the individuals who were approached indicated that they did not engage enough with social media and decided not to participate. The homogenous sample consisted of seven participants. After the initial theory was developed, a heterogeneous sample was developed, which included individuals who were identified by the initial participants of the study because of their high level of social media usage and expertise. The reason for including both a homogenous and heterogeneous sample was to determine the contextual and intervening conditions under which the theory holds (Creswell 2007). The final sample consisted of a total of 11 participants, including five men and six women, who considered themselves to be heavy users of social media.

The data in this study consisted of one-on-one interviews with the participants. Overall, this study generated almost eight hours of interview data with the average interview lasting 40 minutes, ranging from 22 minutes to 45 minutes. The interview protocol consisted of a set of seven initial open-ended questions, which served as guiding questions during the open coding stage. Additional questions evolved as the interviewing process continued and the study moved into the axial and selective coding stages (Creswell 2007). The researchers also used the memoing technique to record thoughts in a journal, consisting of impressions, observations, reflections, and interpretations, which played an important role in the development of the theory (Creswell 2007). Data were collected until each emerging category was saturated and variation in the data was understood and addressed. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for the coding process.

Data Analysis and Coding Procedures

Grounded theory consists of several phases of data analysis such as open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Open coding involved developing categories of information about the process of social media migration. Axial coding helped to connect those categories and selective coding allowed the creation of a story line that

connected the coding and the categories (Creswell 2007). The aim was to develop substantive theory that speaks directly to the process of social media migration among young professionals. This approach stresses the concept of the explanatory power of a specific phenomenon as opposed to generalizing findings regarding a larger or more general theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998). The theory was a result of memoing and data comparison, which is the result of extracting information from data collection and comparing it to the emerging categories (Creswell 2007).

Methods for Verification

This study built a "coherent justification for themes" (Creswell 2007, p. 196) by using several sources of data, including interview data and the researchers' notes. The theory that emerged was developed in categories and themes and illustrated with thick, rich verbatim quotes by the participants' descriptions of what happened as they migrated from one social media site to another, including negative and discrepant information. One of the researchers coded all of the data and developed the initial open, axial, and selective coding scheme. The other researcher reviewed all of the interview data and notes and verified the categories and themes that emerged. Both researchers discussed disagreements and adjusted the categories and themes accordingly. The researchers also conducted member checks by providing the participants with the theoretical paradigm that emerged during axial coding, as well as a list of theoretical propositions. Two of the eleven participants responded to the invitation to review the materials and both indicated that the representation of the findings appeared to be accurate.

Results

Open Coding

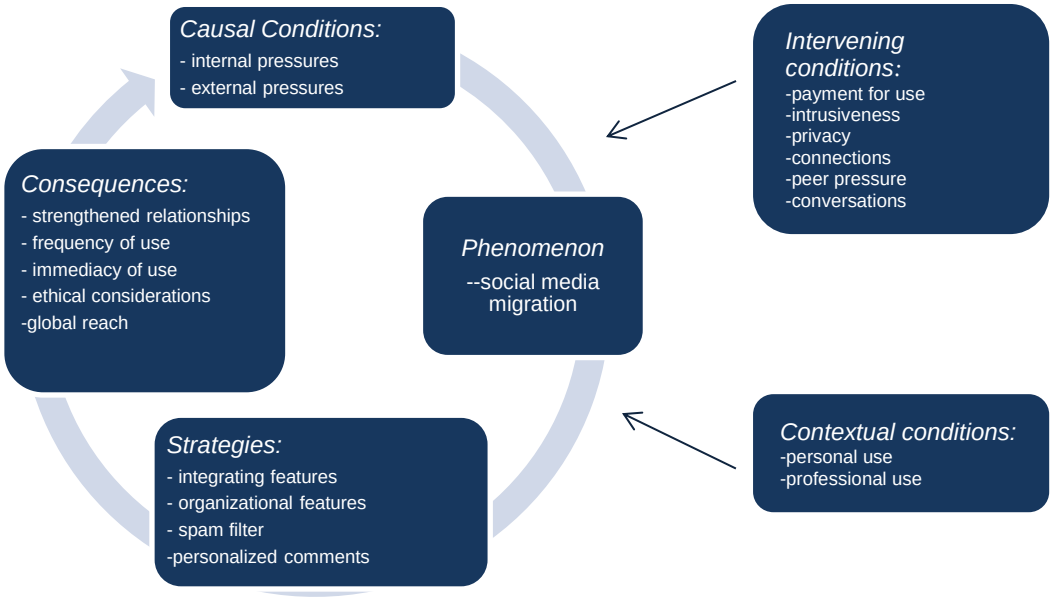
In the stage of open coding, interview transcriptions and notes were reviewed and six initial categories emerged, including *peer pressure, ease of use, intrusiveness, privacy, trending*, and *use of sites for free*. Each category consisted of properties that represented multiple perspectives of the participants, which helped to dimensionalize each. The properties included extreme possibilities on a continuum. The six categories were saturated until no new ones were needed to code all the data (Creswell 2007).

Axial Coding

In this stage of grounded theory coding the data were assembled in new ways using six prescribed categories as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998). The purpose of axial coding is to relate categories to their subcategories, thereby coding around the axis of a category and linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions" (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p.123). The prescribed paradigm included causal conditions, a central phenomenon, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences. The model suggests that when causal conditions exist and influence the central phenomenon, the context and intervening conditions affect the strategies that are used to bring about certain consequences.

The theoretical model developed as a result of this study suggests that causal conditions (internal and external pressures) shape a phenomenon (process of social media migration among young professionals) while the context (personal and professional use) as well as intervening conditions (payment for use; intrusiveness; privacy; connections; peer pressure; conversations; ease of use; purpose) influence the strategies (integrating features; organizational features; spam filter; personalized comments) to bring a set of consequences (strengthened relationships; frequency of use; immediacy of use; ethical considerations; global reach).

FIGURE 1
Model of the process of social media migration among young professionals



Selective Coding

The selective coding stage is defined as "the process or integrating and refining the theory" (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p.143). One of the first steps in this coding process is defining a central category, which is the main theme of the research. Refining the theory implies a review of the scheme and establishing consistency. This process determines if there are any gaps in logic, thus filling in the poorly developed categories and fixing those who look excessive and therefore validating the scheme (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p.156).

The central category in this study is the phenomenon of social media migration among young professionals. This process was perceived and described by the participants in two ways. First, they tend to stop using a specific social media site and start using another. However, after they stop using a particular site, they still keep a profile. Some participants mentioned that after a while of not using a particular social media site they forgot how to access it and did not remember their passwords, resulting in not using the site anymore. Second, some participants used several sites but clearly preferred some sites over others, meaning that they spent more time with and engaged more with those sites. After the central category was identified, other major categories were described and linked to the central category explaining *how* they were related to the core category. This step was accomplished by presenting a story that integrates the central category with all the other categories. The theory was then refined by deleting "excess" and adding those categories that needed to be developed more fully (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

The Story

The causal conditions that made young professionals choose one social media site over another were based on *external and internal pressures*. *External pressures* appeared to be related to the fact that participants felt the need to have a social media presence to network. Participants mentioned that they tend to network by becoming affiliated with groups that are related to their professional work on Facebook. For example, one participant described Facebook as a useful tool to connect with people interested in his philanthropist work. Other participants mentioned that they use social media sites as part of their jobs, specifically to interact with customers and to reach people effectively. Thus, the use of the social media sites that are trendy or popular served to explain why they might decrease their use of a site. Moreover, another main external reason noted was the need to be in contact with friends and family that live in distant places. *Internal pressures* seemed to be linked to the personal needs that participants identified as essential to determine the continued use of one social media site. Those needs were described as protecting one's privacy and keeping a low level of intrusiveness as a result of personal information that is being used by companies to target them. In addition, the amount of information that is generated by social

media sites was mentioned as a factor that could be overwhelming and might cause a decrease of use or even abandonment of the site altogether.

The *intervening conditions* are the ones that could be considered elements or factors that might impact the way participants deal with the internal and external pressures when opting for one social media site over another. *Payment* for using social media sites was generally mentioned as a reason for decreasing one's use of that site. Most participants indicated that it was not logical to pay for access to personal information that they had already uploaded or for content they had created. They agreed that charging for using a site would only alienate potential customers. However, some respondents stated that they would pay a minimal fee for social media sites as long as the site had a perceived value. Their opinions differed on the amount a social media site might charge before they would no longer use it.

Another intervening condition was the *intrusiveness* of advertisers and the amount of information displayed on social media sites. Several participants indicated that this could be a deciding factor when switching from one site to another social. Receiving spam messages or advertising on Facebook was perceived as annoying by almost every participant, primarily because of knowing that their content is filtered and used by companies without their consent. Participants also revealed that they easily become annoyed or overwhelmed by posts that are irrelevant to them or that disclose too much personal information, such as someone's medical diagnosis.

This invasive action by social media sites was mentioned by several participants, who explained that they felt their *privacy* being invaded when Twitter allowed some sponsored tweets to be featured on users' newsfeed based on their demographic information. Almost all the participants noted that privacy issues impact whether they use social media sites and also the extent to which they use them. They emphasized the importance of taking control of the content of their posts. One participant stated that he knows how companies use his content and that he alters his posts accordingly so that they could not use it to "annoy" him in the future. Participants also recognized the importance of controlling content on their social media sites to improve their chances for future employment opportunities. Almost all participants were aware of the fact that companies actively search job seekers' social media sites as part of the hiring process. On the other hand, some participants welcomed well-targeted commercial messages on social networking sites and indicated that they sometimes even follow those advertisers. They indicated that they would simply stop following those companies if their message became too annoying or invasive but they would not automatically decrease their use of the social media site because of sponsored messages or stop using it completely.

The main motivation that most participants found to continue using social media sites was the *connection* to family and friends. One participant emphasized that social media has changed the way in which she keeps in touch with her family. She described that social media provide a connectedness that could not be achieved via email or other forms of electronic communication. Through social media, participants expressed that they could stay up to date on the main family events, see pictures, use chat tools to talk to members of their family and know everything about them.

Two conditions are closely related to the notion of being connected: *peer pressure* and *conversations*. Some participants pointed out that they use specific social media sites for a specific group of people like students, colleagues at work or customers. In this sense, it is peer pressure that intervenes in the process of social media migration. Participants talked about the importance of being part of the "cool" social media site, where all their friends and acquaintances interact. This was one of the main reasons why many people abandoned or stopped using MySpace and started using Facebook. However, MySpace and Facebook were not the only social networks participants talked about. Most of them admitted to having created a profile on Google+ but stated that they hardly ever use it because "none of their friends were there."

The second intervening condition closely related to connections is the notion of social media *conversations*. Participants explained that the difference between MySpace and Facebook was that the MySpace interface was limited to posting one-way messages on someone else's wall, a characteristics that one participant called "switching back and forth." Facebook, on the other hand, became more conversational so it became easier to maintain multiple conversations at the same time by using tools like chat or by just writing on someone's wall and then expecting or seeing a comment on the same posting by other users.

E*ase of use* emerged as another intervening condition. Participants appreciated the convenience social media sites offer through shared posts by others in their network, such as finding good deals on airline tickets. The ease of sharing content through social networks was mentioned multiple times and included a variety of social networks, including Tumblr, a popular blogging site. Participants also appreciated the interconnectedness of different social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, which allow users to post the same status update on multiple sites at the same time.

At the same time, participants pointed out that they use social media sites for different *purposes*. For example, one participant mentioned being part social networking sites *Live Mocha* and *ESL* (English as a Second Language), which are sites for interacting with other people from different parts of the world and learn new languages. Members teach each other their native languages and learn new languages from other members. Learning through social media networking sites was an important component of social media migration in general. One participant mentioned that he could nurture skills and get ideas from watching videos on YouTube. He explained, "I think YouTube is changing the way the world learns."

Participants categorized the *contextual conditions* in which the process of social media migration takes place into personal use and professional use of the sites. They mentioned several *strategies* or features that social media sites should possess in order to be more efficient, easy to use and thus become popular. They were split about whether social networking sites should try to *integrate* as many different features and tools as possible or to stay focused on what they do best. One participant expressed how useful some social sites' tools could be if they were integrated more with other social media sites. For example, is was suggested that tools like Google Calendar, Google Docs, and Gmail should be integrated with Facebook and other social media sites to create a more convenient user experience. On the other hand, another participant was skeptical whether full integration was even possible. In fact, he believed that those social media networks that are trying to encompass too many options are prone to failure, as evidenced by Facebook's recent decline in popularity: "I think […] a lot of the […] frustration that you see with things like Facebook, is because it's trying to do too much. There's so much in there that it's not good at what it's good at anymore." Participants mentioned that it would be beneficial to have social media sites that enable individuals to have lunch meetings or discussions through Facebook or Twitter by adding features that would make these discussions more user-friendly. An example would be to add a video-call option, which is an added value offered by Google+.

Another example of adding value was the need for *organizational features* that would give users the ability to archive and categorize tweets and status updates so that they would be searchable later. One participant said she had more than 15,000 tweets and that she found it difficult to sort through them and find specific content. Participants also described the importance of *spam filters* and how they would like to see more of a separation between business pages and personal pages because there are so many perceived ways to be spammed by business promotions and messages.

One participant, who has been using a popular social media site in China named Ren-Ren, recommended that Facebook should incorporate a popular feature found on the Chinese social network. It lets users reply to a comment of a specific user so that it can only be seen by that particular user and not all individuals engaged in the conversation. Another application that could be included on Facebook that he mentioned was a tool that matches interests of different users so they can find a partner and connect online. Both of those features are examples of users' craving for privacy and *personalized comments*.

If some or all these strategies or suggestions would be applied, the effect might be seeing the development of new social media sites and thus more people migrating to those sites or instead, witnessing current popular social media sites becoming even more popular. Several consequences emerged as effects of social media migration, including strengthening existing relationships with other users, more frequent use of sites adopted by the user, and more immediate use of the site.

Overall, the most important effect of social media migration is the connection of users with others they already have a relationship with in real life. In that sense, social media offers an added value because it can *strengthen relationships*. Only a few participants mentioned that they would use social media to connect with people only virtually. However, another way social media can help individuals build and strengthen relationships is by connecting them to their "significant other" before making personal contact. That way, they have an opportunity to learn about the other person before investing in a new "real life" relationship.

At the same time, connecting with existing "friends" in a new social media environment is not necessarily a sure way to get users to migrate from one site to the next if it is a completely separate channel. Participants indicated that they would consider it, as long as it can be integrated with other sites they already invested their time in. In regard to Pinterest, an up-and-coming new social media site focused on "pinning" visuals of products, participants expressed contrasting opinions related to the *frequency* of using the site. One participant observed that most of her female friends are spending less time on Facebook to interact more through Pinterest. They became aware of Pinterest because their Facebook friends posted Pinterest content on Facebook as well. However, other participants said that they were too busy to add one more social media site to their list of social networks. They were at some point exploring the site but decided not to spend any more time with it.

Other stories revealed the *immediacy* of social networking sites in the minds of the users. For example, one participant remembered that she heard about the death of Michael Jackson via Twitter 15 minutes before it was officially announced in the traditional news. Another participant also described the immediacy of Twitter by telling a very gratifying experience when attending a concert of one of her favorite pop singers. She admitted to having been a fan of this singer since she was 11 years old. She was impressed and very happy when the singer, who is one of the most-followed artists on Twitter, retweeted her comment after the concert and thanking her and her friends for attending. In that moment she felt the power that social media can have to connect people and also how gratifying it was for her to be retweeted by someone she would otherwise not have access to. This experience was so powerful for her that she still feels excited about it months after it happened.

Another consequence of social media migration that emerged were *ethical considerations*. Participants mentioned the issue of privacy multiple times, especially when it came to sponsored tweets and other paid messages. However, another ethical issue pertained to the content users provide on social media sites. One participant was concerned about the ethical implications of reusing content from other websites and curating it on Pinterest. She believed that repinning is still technically plagiarism. This participant also voiced her frustration with Pinterest for not allowing users to filter content because the social network automatically chooses followers for its users.

Other participants were surprised to learn how prevalent some social networking sites are even in remote locations around the globe. One participant said that even in a small remote village in the Himalayas he found people using Facebook. This observation gave him a sense of the *global reach* and the impact that social media sites could have even in the remotest places of the world.

Theoretical Propositions

As a result of the theoretical model and the story line, a series of theoretical propositions was developed, explaining how and why social media migration occurs among young professionals in the Midwest. The following theoretical propositions have been grounded in the data of this study:

1. The process of social media migration can occur at any moment
   1.1. Migration can be triggered by any of the intervening or contextual conditions presented in the model.
   1.2. Migration may be avoided if social media sites adopt appropriate strategies presented in the model.

2. The process of social media migration is influenced by two conditions: internal and external pressures.
   2.1. Internal pressures can increase the use of social media sites (staying connected with friends)
   2.2. External pressures can decrease the use of social media sites (spam, sponsored messages, etc.)

3. The process of social media migration can be affected by intervening conditions.
   3.1. Users may pay for social media sites if there is a perceived benefit.
   3.2. Advertisers' messages are perceived as intrusive and may result in decreased use of the social media site.
   3.3. Revealing private information causes participants to use social media sites more wisely but it does not deter them from using social media sites.
   3.4. Users adopt new social media sites because their friends and family do.
   3.5. Users drop social media sites because switching requires too much time and effort.
   3.6. Users prefer social media sites that let them engage in conversations.
   3.7. Users prefer social media sites that are easy to use.
   3.8. Users prefer social media sites that have a clearly defined purpose.

4. The process of social media migration takes place in two different contexts: personal and professional.
   4.1. In a personal context, the process of migration is influenced by the user's personal network, including family and friends, and the social media sites most of them use.
   4.2. In a professional context, the process is affected by specific features of social media sites that add value and thereby enrich the user's daily work.

5. Social media sites can implement several strategies that might impact social media migration.
   5.1. Social media sites that integrate useful features that will be more attractive to users.
   5.2. Social media sites that offer organizational features will be more attractive to users.
   5.3. Social media sites that offer spam filters will be more attractive to users.
   5.4. Social media sites that offer privacy options will be more attractive to users.

6. Implementing one or more of the strategies (5.1-5.4) might result in specific consequences as part of the social media migration process.
   6.1. Strategies 5.1-5.4 may strengthen users' relationships either before they connect in real life or after but not in lieu of personal relationships.
   6.2. Strategies 5.1-5.4 may result in an increase in frequent use of the site.
   6.3. Strategies 5.1-5.4 may result in an increase in immediate use of the site.
   6.4. Strategies 5.1, 5.2, and 5.4 may result in ethical concerns among users.
   6.5. Strategies 5.1-5.4 may result in an increase in global reach of the site.

Discussion and Implications

Implications for Marketing, Advertising and Public Relations Professionals

This study aimed to explore a new aspect of the study of social media and its evolution. The study fills a gap in the literature in that it explores the process involved in social media migration among young professionals and how they switch from one social media site to another. Studying this aspect of social media usage is important and relevant for advertisers because they would have a clearer understanding of the perceptions of social media users of the role social media plays in their lives, what their expectations are regarding social media and, perhaps most importantly, what kind of actions companies should avoid in order to interact with young professionals more effectively in their integrated marketing communication campaigns. Almost all the participants agreed that the main purpose of social media sites is to connect with others. In addition, they valued the large reach social media sites provide in order to promote themselves or promote activities or events for work.

At the same time, some interesting questions emerged that advertisers should attempt to answer in the near future. For example, advertisers need to determine less intrusive ways to advertise through social media. Participants complained about the invasion of their privacy by advertisers, which, coupled with the vulnerability they experience in the social space, could have a detrimental effect on their use of social media sites. In addition, another practical implication of the findings of this study is that the majority of the participants expect a specific and meaningful purpose of each site they use, especially those that they access for work or their career. They expect a benefit from using those sites, as opposed to the ones they use for their private lives, such as Facebook. In this sense, it is essential to emphasize the potential that social media sites could have as platforms for learning and personal branding. This implication poses a challenge and an opportunity for companies to actively participate in social media sites and offer value to the user, so that they can be seen as problem-solvers as opposed to advertisers. Companies have to understand the importance of fostering interactivity and engagement between the company and the user to be seen as useful and meaningful.

The participants in this study expressed frustration when they were not able to control the social space they were using, especially in terms of content and privacy. They recognized that they are somewhat exposed through social media and accepted it but only to a certain extent and only if they could benefit from the exposure in some way.

Finally, as new social media sites pop up every day, it is important to recognize that young professionals will follow those who are close to them (including peers, family, and friends) to new and trendy sites. They tend to be motivated by others and follow them to those sites instead of leading them there. In that sense, the participants of this study fall into Rogers' (1962) early adopters or early majority categories, but not the innovator category. Friends and acquaintances strongly influenced the participants of this study to migrate to a new social media site or to stay with one they had invested a considerable amount of time and energy in to establish a presence. While they are not innovators, they are inclined to participate in trending social media sites that are seen as "cool" or innovative sites where most of their friends and acquaintances are interacting as well. Knowing that peer group behavior greatly affects young professionals' tendency to "buy into" a company or cause, advertising professionals could spend more time developing strategies that involve peer interaction and sharing.

Limitations

The study is limited to the perspectives of young professionals in the Midwest. One unexpected limitation was that some of the members were not willing to participate in the study because they did not consider themselves active users of social media sites. The researcher recruited other young professionals outside of the organization who attended college and work in their respective fields of study. The theoretical propositions that emerged from this study can be generalized only to the subjects of this study but not to a more broad population because of the purposeful, theoretical sampling frame.

While in-depth interviews allowed the researchers to explore how young professionals in the Midwest use social media in their daily lives, this information may not necessarily be applicable to young professional in other cities or even those in the Midwest as a whole. Also, as new social media sites emerge every day and existing social media sites add new features, some of the opinions held by the participants may no longer be applicable. However, the study does describe the social media migration process in the context of Rogers' (1962) diffusion of innovations framework, which should hold across multiple types of social media networks.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to determine how young professionals use social media sites and why they choose to engage in activities on one social media site versus another. This grounded theory resulted in a series of theoretical propositions that should now be tested quantitatively and perhaps among a more diverse sample of young professionals that includes other geographical areas but also different kinds of professions.

While this study adds to the existing literature about social media migration by providing the perspective of young professionals, one voice that is not often heard is that of mid- and late-career professionals, who comprise one of the fastest growing segments of social media users and are also among the largest spenders. Therefore, additional research that focuses on the perception of mid- and late-career professionals would be helpful.

One key theme that emerged from this study was that young professionals are not automatically early adopters when it comes to new social media practices. In fact, this study suggests that young professionals in the Midwest fall into the early adopters or early majority category described by Rogers (1962). At the same time, they acknowledge that they tend to follow peers to new social media sites if they offer a perceived benefit. A new study could attempt to identify innovators of new social media site users and focus in more depth on the process they go through when choosing and using those sites.

Finally, as new social media sites emerge and dissipate quickly, the theoretical propositions presented in this study should be tested quantitatively and adjusted frequently so that advertising and public relations practitioners can get a better understanding of how the process works.

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