

Original Article

A Research on Facebook Connection Strategies of University Students

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DOI: 10.29081/gsjesh.2017.18.2.09

Keywords: *social capital, facebook connection strategies scale, social network, sport***Abstract**

This research was planned to investigate Facebook Connection Strategies of university students who are studying sports. The research was designed by general screening model from quantitative research methods. The study group is consisted of 498 university students, 243 female and 255 male students. "Facebook Connection Strategies Scale" was used as data collection tool. In the analysis of the data, pearson moment correlation coefficient, T test and One Way Anova test were used and the tukey test was used to determine the difference between the groups. In the analysis of correlations between FCSS subdimensions, a significant positive correlation was found between initiating subdimension and information-seeking and maintaining subdimensions. Conclusion, it can be stated that university students studying sports sciences use facebook as a social media tools to provide information and access to something more common in facebook connection strategies. Developing technological tools reveal the diversity of new mass media tools.

1. Introduction

Today, the process of changing and transforming technology inspires appearance of social networking sites. Social network offers individuals the opportunity to express themselves and to maintain connection with their environment (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2006). Developments in information and communication technology affect individuals and organizations during the process of sharing the information and communication, their organizational behaviours of working and socialization (Erkoç & Erkoç, 2011).

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After the revolution of Web 2.0, social networking sites have become the most common and indispensable communication instruments as the logic behind them focuses online launch and resuming process (Chambers, 2013; Korkmaz, 2012). These environments called social networks are important as they are user-based and bring people together and increase interaction between them (Akinci Vural, & Bat, 2010). According to Boyd and Ellison (2008), social networking sites provide opportunities people to create public or semi-public profile and to follow each other. Social networking sites have the potential to help settlers build online networks tools which include natives and other settlers, providing additional means of social interaction and communication (Jiang, & de Bruijn, 2013). A rapid increase in the number of users of these applications is observed. Online social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, MySpace, Twitter and Friendster continue to evolve into an environment that provides individuals communication and interaction. Developments and opportunities in information and communication technologies have an important influence on the socialization of individuals, especially young people. The internet, which is seen as the most preferred environment for social interaction, communication and information, has taken a vital place in the life of society (Gemmill & Peterson, 2006; Wang, Moon, Kwon, Evans, & Stefanone, 2010). In this regard, social networking sites are platforms that provide an environment for creating profile pages for individuals' personal information, creating social groups for communication, sharing information, acquiring new friendships, and maintaining existing friendships (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Hargittai & Hsieh, 2010; Gross & Acquisti, 2005; Wang et al., 2010). Facebook, which has the most widespread usage among all of networking sites, has constantly been developing with innovations that facilitate the communication of individuals (Korkmaz, 2012). Facebook enables people to connect with each other, join groups and share resources with private or public messages (Gonzales & Vodicka, 2010). This site has a wide range of factors such as personal information of individuals, common friends and common interests, and can encourage users to take action. In addition, facebook, which builds bridges positively, transforms these latent ties into weak and bridging bonds to create social capital gains (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). The concepts of weak bonds and social capital are frequently encountered in research on social network sites. It has been stated that weak bonds, which are closely related to the concept of social capital, are more influential than strong bonds when individuals find a new job, receive new information, or raise an opinion (Gladwell, 2000). In short, social capital is a concept in which individuals have positive and negative aspects, relational situations, material and political aspects with others (Hawe & Shiell, 2000). The notion of social capital based on the studies of Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988) and Portes (1998) is defined as the connections that individuals derive from their social relations and interactions (Burt, 2005; DiClemente, Crosby, & Kegler, 2009; Lin, 2008). At this point, it can be inferred that individuals with wider network connections might have more social capital. Social capital has two types; weak bonds containing ordinary acquaintances between individuals and

superficial relationships and strong bonds established among family and friends with emotional support (Putnam, 2000).

Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007) have put forward a third type of social capital called maintained social capital as a result of their research. This type expresses precious ties between individuals due to changes in a certain period of time. At the end of this process, Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe developed “Facebook Connection Strategies Scale” in 2011. The expression of *connection strategies* on the scale is a term that is defined to investigate the relationship between Facebook based relational communication activities, communication strategies and social capital gains (Akturk, Çelik, Şahin, & Deniz, 2014). In the study conducted on the field, it is stated that facebook has a significant role in the formation and maintenance of social capital of university students (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2006). Social capital is an important concept in improving social, political and professional identities of individuals by enabling communication with different individuals. At this point, especially sporting events or sports branches are seen as important places for the creation of capital (Putman, 2000). It is clear that the discourse on sports and entertainment is a tool for politics, academics, sports managers, politicians, journalists, athletes and commentators to create, develop and maintain social capital (Nicholson & Hoye, 2008).

2,907 billion social media users are available worldwide and this number continues to increase day by day. According to data in April 2017, Facebook is the most widespread social networking site worldwide with the number of 1.968 million active users (Global Digital Statshot Q2, 2017). Having significant influence social networking sites are being used effectively especially among the young population for the purpose of making new friends, communicating and creating friendship groups. This research was planned to investigate the Facebook Connection Strategies of university students who are studying sports.

2. Material and methods

Research Model

In this research, relational screening model was chosen from the general screening methods of quantitative research methods.

Study Group

The study group consisted of 243 women (48.8%) and 255 men (51.2%) in total 498 participants who are studying at Manisa Celal Bayar University in the fall semester of 2016-2017 academic year (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic characteristic of participants

Variables		Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Female	243	48.8
	Male	255	51.2
	Total	498	100,0

Data Collection Tools

"Facebook Connection Strategies Scale" developed by Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2011) was used as data collection tool. Turkish translation and validity reliability of scale was made by Aktürk, Çelik, Şahin and Deniz (2014). In addition, a Personal Information Form prepared by the researcher was applied to the participants.

Facebook Connection Strategies Scale (FCSS)

"Facebook Connection Strategies Scale" developed by Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe consists of 12 items and 3 sub-dimensions. The first nine items of the scale prepared in the form of a 5-point Likert are scored as "1-Not at all appropriate" and "5-Fairly appropriate" and the last 4 items are rated as "1-Definitely not agree" and "5-Definitely agree". In Turkish validity and reliability study of the scale, internal consistency coefficients of the subscales were determined as initiating (0.86), information seeking (0.77) and maintaining (0.87). Data related to the research is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The structure of factor Facebook Connection Strategies Scale (FCSS)

Factors	Items	Cronbach (α)
Initiating	1, 2, 3, 4, 9	.81
Information-seeking	5, 6, 7, 8	.86
Maintaining	10, 11, 12	.72
Total	12 Items	

Analysis of Data

The percentages, frequencies and arithmetic averages of the obtained data are given in the statistical tables. Skewness and Kurtosis values are taken into consideration in normality test. Nonparametric tests were used when it was determined that the data were not normally distributed. Arithmetic mean, standard deviation and correlation values of the scale sub-dimensions were examined. Also, Mann-Whitney U test was used in order to determine the difference between two groups variables and scale sub-dimensions.

3. Results and Discussions

In this part of the study, the findings of statistical analysis of obtained data are included.

Table 3. Mann-Whitney U-test results of FCSS subscales according to gender

Variables		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Initiating	Female	243	247,74	60201,50	30555	.790
	Male	255	251,17	64049,50		
Information-seeking	Female	243	262,52	63792,00	27819	.048
	Male	255	237,09	60459,00		
Maintaining	Female	243	264,49	64271,00	27340	.022
	Male	255	235,22	59980,00		

When the FCSS subscale averages were compared according to the gender variable, meaningful differences were found in favor of women in information-seeking ($U = 27819$, $p < .05$) and maintaining ($U = 27340$, $p < .05$) subscales. When the results of analysis are taken into account, it is understood that information-seeking and maintaining averages of female individuals are higher than male participants.

Table 4. Relationships among Facebook Connection Strategies Scale (FCSS) sub-dimensions

	Initiating	Information-seeking	Maintaining
Initiating	1	,764*	,384*
Information-seeking		1	,304*
Maintaining			1

* $p < .05$

When correlation analyses between facebook connection strategies scale sub-dimensions of participants are examined, a high positive correlation between initiating and information-seeking sub-dimensions was found ($r = .764$; $p < 0.05$).

A moderate correlation between initiating and maintaining sub-dimensions in the positive direction was determined ($r = .384$; $p < 0.05$). It can be argued that Facebook is an effective way for individuals to meet new friends, as well as maintaining relationships with individuals.

A positive correlation was found between maintaining and information seeking sub-dimensions ($r = .304$; $p < 0.05$). The concept of maintaining includes all the behaviors of an individual such as searching and adding new friends, communicating and meeting available ones.

Discussions

In this study, Facebook connection strategies of university students who studied sports were investigated. 498 university students participated in the survey. Communication tools at every stage of our daily life have important effects in the era of information and communication technologies. One of the most important tools that reveals these effects is Facebook from social media networks. Facebook, which is one of the most popular social media tools in the world (Global Digital Statshot Q2, 2017), has many important effects from creating new friendships to communicating with individuals in their surroundings. Particularly, Bryant and Marmo (2010) found that simple activities on Facebook, such as wall posts and taking glance over others' status updates, are effective way of maintaining relationships with friends.

In general, social networking networks are used effectively in many areas such as individual use, social movements, professional and business representatives, politics and economics. Social media tools reaching 1.5 billion users worldwide contain differences in terms of technical and quality (Babacan, 2015). McEwan and Guerrero (2012) found that common relational maintenance

activities on Facebook are prominent to acquire social capital among new college students.

It was found that women participated in the current survey had a focus on seeking and maintaining information on Facebook connection points, whereas male participants had a higher average in initiating subdimension compared to women, although there was no significant difference. The high averages in initiating subdimension show that Facebook users use Facebook to meet new people, communicate, make friends and meet strangers. Some researchers noted that internet communication technologies can help people sustain social capital more easily as it allows short interactions free of physical and temporal constraints (Ellison, Vitak, Grey, & Lampe, 2014; Resnick, 2001; Yoder & Stuzman, 2011).

A high correlation was found in favor of women between communication initiation and maintaining sub-dimensions. It can be interpreted that individuals use Facebook to communicate and maintain their relationships with other people for socializing purposes. It can also be inferred that women use Facebook to find out more about the individuals who have some hidden information. Aktürk, Çelik, Şahin, and Deniz (2014) have stated that individuals who have high scores in seeking information in the research tend to investigate individuals they meet in social life and to learn more about them.

There are researches that support the fact that most of the social networking sites have the purpose of maintaining communication with existing friends or acquaintances, seeking information and initiating communication beyond the purpose of meeting and communicating with new people (Aktürk, Çelik, Şahin, & Deniz, 2014; Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2011; Jiang & de Bruijn, 2013). Especially for the young generation who are at university age, social media tools are seen as a platform where they share their loneliness (Babacan, 2015). Moreover, social networking sites provide new ways for interpersonal communication that may enable individuals to create social capital (Liu, Ainsworth, & Baumeister, 2016). This can be interpreted as socialization and interaction processes that individuals try to achieve in social life through social networks.

4. Conclusions

As a result, social media tools are important information and communication technology elements that affect individuals' communication styles and lifestyles and enable individuals to express themselves more easily. Social networks that keep up to date with new communication tools have important effects such as personal communication, sharing information, initiating friendships and interacting in the social environment in where individuals live.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author (s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author (s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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