The Role of Trust in Other Users in Social Networking Service Context

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Abstract

With the rapid growth of intelligent web services and mobile communication, the concept of the participative web and social networking service emerged as one of hot issues in business and academic fields. Considering that the purpose of social networking service use is to build and develop interpersonal relationship, the benevolence/integrity of other users are essential for service use continuance. Although expectation-confirmation theory that relies on technology factor (i.e., perceived usefulness) has been useful for understanding general information technology usage, social factors (e.g., trust in other user) could be also critical variables for investigating social networking service context. For an empirical exploration, 245 samples were collected from the users of a social networking site. The results of data analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) confirm that the construct of trust in other users contributed significantly to intention to continue social networking service use via satisfaction. The results of this paper might be useful for future research on post-acceptance behavior in social networking service.

Key Words: social networking service, expectation-confirmation theory, trust in other users

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I. Introduction

With the rapid growth of intelligent web services and mobile communication, the concept of participative web and social networking is getting more embedded in people’s lives and changing various facets of our lives. Internet users are taking active roles on cyberspace as opinion leaders and followers alike. They participate to online activity and contribute to developing, rating, collaborating and distributing digital content. In other words, the roles of users are not just consumer any more, but have been evolved to the creator or generator of novel products and content (Choi and Kim, 2008). Thus, the concept of the participative web and social networking service emerged as one of hot issues in business and academic fields.

Even though there is no widely accepted definition of social networking service, it can be specified as online service, platform, or site that focuses on building and reflecting of social networking or social relationship among people who share interests and/or activity. The well-known service providers such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and Cyworld have enjoyed rapid growth over the past several years, emerging as powerful communication tools in cyberspace. A social networking service essentially consists of a representation of each user (often a profile), his/her social links, and a variety of additional services. Most of social networking services are web based and provide means for users to interact over the Internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging. On social networking sites, users are allowed to share hobby, medical affliction, personal experience, or even develop relationship within their individual networks.

However, considering the risks of online interaction, trust may be required for successful communication experience and service adoption (Gefen et al., 2003; Ridings et al., 2002). On large social networking services, there have been growing concerns about users giving out too much personal information and the risks of opportunistetic behavior of other users. Such a potential risks may inhibit the user to participate with social networking services, thus, benevolence and integrity of other users are required for continuance. To study users’ continuance behaviors online, the expectation-confirmation theory (ECT) has been widely applied (Bhattacherjee, 2001; Lin et al., 2005). However, previous studies are concerned mainly on technology factor, i.e., perceived usefulness that induced from human-computer interaction. For the purpose of social networking service use is to build and develop interpersonal relationship, not only technology factor but also social factor such as trust in other users should be integrated as a component of interpersonal interaction. Therefore, this study investigate the role of the “trust in other users” construct in ECT with an attempt to enhance understanding of individuals’ social networking service reuse intention.