WORD-OF-MOUTH MARKETING ON SOCIAL NETWORK WEBSITES

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1. Introduction

Social network websites (SNS, or social network services) have attracted a lot of users. According to Nielsen Online [Nielsen 2009], the usage of SNS and blogs has outgrown emails in December 2008. Recent news showed that Facebook, the largest SNS, has become the largest website by number of visits [Pepitone 2011].

With huge user base, word-of-month (WOM) marketing may have potential advantage. Electronic WOM marketing is using the Internet as the platform for a satisfied customer to promote in one-to-one and one-to-many formats. With the development of the Internet, electronic WOM marketing has become a new way for consumers to know and search new products [Gelb and Sundaram 2002]. Due to anonymity, credibility of WOM marketing can hinder its acceptance, but SNS may solve this problem. Different from traditional friend-making websites, SNS build social networks from a person's existing one. Thus, all friends on one's SNS can be said her friends or friends' friends. SNS incorporate multimedia and can have large influence. [Christiansen and Tax 2000]

Our study is based on "WOM process model" within a service purchase decision context by adding perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use from Technology Acceptance Model and system quality and information quality as research dimensions [Davis 1989; Bansal and Voyer 2000; Mckinney and Yoon 2002]. We try to explore WOM impact in these areas:

- The impact of communicators' professionalism
- The impact of communicators' reliability
- The impact of receivers' professionalism
- The impact of the interaction between communicators and receivers
- The impact of the similarity between communicators and receivers
- The perceived usefulness by users when using SNS for WOM
- The perceived ease of use by users when using SNS for WOM
- The information quality including information understandability, information reliability, and information usefulness for WOM messages on SNS
- The system quality including system access, system usability, and system navigation for SNS for WOM

2. Social Network Services and Word-of-Mouth Marketing

Researchers believe that WOM, which come from personal sources, can have greater influence on purchasing behavior than seller-initiated network marketing or consumers' self-search [Freiden and Goldsmit 1989; Gilly et al. 1998]. SNS make such effect even larger.

SNS can be defined as a web-based service which allows a user to create an open or semi-open profile, delineate the interconnection with other people, and search and view other users' profiles [Boyd and Ellison 2007]. The power of SNS is not making friends on the entire Internet. Instead, it's re-establishing friendships, knowing hidden sides of existing friends, gathering people with similar interests, and bringing in friends' friends into one's own social network. In this sense, SNS is different from online community. The nexus of online communities is the topics but

SNS are webs of people and everyone is the center of his own web. Some call SNS 6SNS for their difference from tradition friends-making websites such as MySpace, LinkedIn, or Friendster because they lack one or all of the above features. The SNS discussed here are based on Six Degree of Separation [Milgram 1967]. Simply speaking, it means that any two people know each other indirectly by 6 hops according to Milgram.

Word-of-mouth is information interaction between communicators and receivers [Arndt 1967]. It was proved that WOM can impact consumers' purchasing behavior. Some even believed that commercials improve visibility but WOM affects decisions. It is because commercials can reinforce consumers' attitudes but WOM can convince them change their attitudes; WOM is empowered by consumers themselves, not by sellers which have conflict of interest; WOM messages are straightforward and have less information loading [Arndt 1967; Richins 1983; Herr et al. 1991; Bone 1995; Duhan et al. 1997].

We can summarize the Internet and SNS features which can foster WOM as follows:

1. The Internet is ubiquitous so WOM messages can travel all over the world and fast.
2. The Internet contains different platforms so WOM can exist with different forms and serve different audiences. SNS go further by forming different groups and thus creating different market segments. This can allow WOM circulate in the appropriate segments.
   So communicators know the WOM are seen by interested people, which encourage them to dissimilate WOM.
3. The communicators and receivers on the Internet do not have to meet face-to-face simultaneously, and the interactivities are non-linear (can be one to many or many to many) so the travel of WOM is exponential.
4. The communicators and receivers can easily find the other parties by searching the Internet.
5. True opinions can be solicited since commenting on the Internet can be anonymous.
6. The key of WOM is the familiarity between the communicators and the receivers, and SNS extend this effect due to 'weak tie.' Traditionally WOM occur among people who know one another well (strong ties). SNS brings weak ties into a person's personal network by adding friends' friends, or by connecting friends which are not seen often.
7. Consumers usually take human interaction as an important source of information [Katona and Mueller 1954; Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955; Robertson 1971; Thorelli 1971; Price and Feick 1984]. SNS provide human interaction on the Internet and thus can foster WOM.

3. Research Model

The importance of SNS in WOM marketing is to integrate the reliability from strong ties and the generalizability from weak ties. People tend to trust their friends in the strong ties but strong ties are narrow and difficult to expand. On the other hand, weak ties may extend information circulation but due to the fact that people in weak ties are remotely connected, trust may be a concern. Thus, how to make people trust WOM in extended space is a crucial question and SNS provide the answer. SNS connected friends in strong ties, and then extend the ties to weak ties. In addition, all comments and activities on SNS are named. Thus, people on SNS can get acquainted with those who are in weak ties through their friends in strong ties and then the trust expansion problems are not dilemma anymore. The 'tying mechanism' can also solve authentication problem. Ellison found that people with more friends on SNS tend to offer more reliable personal profiles [Ellison et al. 2007].

Thus, we believe SNS can facilitate WOM marketing. The effect of SNS on WOM marketing can be divided into two generic categories: impact and broadcast.

3.1. Impact of SNS on WOM Marketing

Impact can come from three sources: senders' attributes, receivers' attributes, and the relationship between senders and receivers. We assume that if SNS can improve these dimensions, they can improve WOM marketing.

1. Senders' expertise. It is the perceived professionalism by the receivers [Bristor 1989]. Studies have discovered that higher WOM impact comes with higher professionalism [Arndt 1967; Bansal and Voyer 2000; Gilly et al. 1998; Kiel and Layton 1981; Reingen and Kernan 1986; Silk 1966]
2. Senders' credibility. The higher is the credibility, the higher WOM impact is [Hass 1981].
3. Receivers' expertise. It is the knowledge, experience, and technology the receivers hold in an area. It can affect receivers' attitude toward searching product information [Bansal and Voyer 2000]. However, there is no consensus if the impact is positive or negative [Brucks 1985; Furse et al. 1984; Johnson and Russo 1984; Punj and Staelin 1983].
4. The strength of the social network between the receiver and the sender. A social network can be defined as special connections among social actors [Fischer 1977]. It contains three major elements:
   a. Actors: individuals in the social network. They may belong to multiple networks.

b. Relationships: the association among actors based on the 'content' they have in common, whether going to a 'direction' or not, and can be measured by its 'strength.'
c. Ties: the portfolio of relationships among actors [Carton and Wellman 1999].

5. Similarity between senders and receivers. Communications can occur and persuasion can be strengthened when the senders and receivers share similarity including age, gender, education, social status and so on [Bickart and Schindler 2001; Bither and Wright 1977; Feldman and Spencer 1965; Hass 1981; Moschis 1976; Rogers 1983].

3.2. Broadcast Effect of SNS on WOM Marketing

Broadcast effect is determined by the usage and quality of the SNS platform where WOM is conducted:

1. Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. These dimensions are from Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) [Davis 1989]. They are considered as factors influencing intention to use which in turn influencing the behavior.
2. Information quality and system quality. Quality can improve end user satisfaction [Doll 1988]. It contains two distinct concepts – information quality and system quality [Delone and Mclean 1992]. Information quality is the quality of the content circulating in the network. It can be measured as information understandability, information reliability, and information usefulness [Mckinney and Yoon 2002]. System quality is the quality of the facility users employ. It also impacts on user satisfaction [Rai, Lang, and Welker 2002][Roldán and Millán 2000]. System quality can be measured as system access, system usability, and system navigation.

Based on the above discussion, the measures of SNS features which may affect WOM marketing are listed in Table 1. The measurements will be used in a survey for the experiment participants.

Table 1. Measurements

Dimension	#	Measurement
Sender's expertise	A1	The information provide on that website has domain knowledge.
	A2	The information provide on that website has domain expertise.
	A3	The information provide on that website has domain experience.
Sender's reliability	B1	The information provide on that website is trustworthy.
	B2	The information provide on that website is honest.
	B3	The information provide on that website is reliable.
	B4	The information provide on that website is sincere.
Receiver's expertise	C1	I know the information about this product/service.
	C2	I have experiencing in purchasing this product/service.
	C3	I am an expert in purchasing this product/service.
	C4	I have studied the information about this product/service.
Strength of tie between receiver and sender	D1	I know the sender well.
	D2	I can share secrets with the sender.
	D3	I can provide assistance to the sender.
	D4	I have interaction with the sender.
Similarity between sender the receiver	E1	My buying behavior is similar to the sender's.
	E2	I have similar interest as the sender.
	E3	I notice similar products/services as the sender.
Perceived usefulness	F1	This website helps me find people's comments on products/services.
	F2	This website improves the speed on finding people's comments on products/services.

Table 1. Continued

Perceived ease of use	G1	This website's interface is clear and easy to navigate.
	G2	I can easily get familiar with this website.
	G3	It is easy to learn how to use this website.
	G4	I do not feel difficult in using this website.
Information understandability	H1	The information provided on this website is easy to understand.
	H2	The information provided on this website is easy to read.
	H3	The information provided on this website is clear.
Information reliability	I1	The information provided on this website is reliable.
	I2	The information provided on this website is consistent.
	I3	The information provided on this website is correct.
	I4	I feel comfortable in citing the information presented on this website.
Information usefulness	J1	The information provided on this website is helpful.
	J2	The information provided on this website is useful.
	J3	The information provided on this website is valuable.
System access	K1	This website can quickly respond my demand.
	K2	This website can quickly load pictures and texts.
System usability	L1	This website is well designed.
	L2	This website is well structured.
	L3	This website has good user interface.
System navigation	M1	I can get the context of the linked pages on this website.
	M2	I can use fewer clicks to get the information I need on this website.

4. Research Design & Construct

To test if the above 13 dimensions are the features of SNS which can impact WOM marketing, we conducted two experiments. In these experiments, participants are divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental groups were asked to use SNS (Facebook and MySpace) searching product/service information, and the control groups used non-SNS. The two non-SNS sites are Mobile01 and PTT, the largest online communities in Taiwan. Since we have three categories and each category requires SNS and non-SNS groups, we totally have 6 groups. All participants are students who had no prior experience in using SNS, totally 116 persons. We started the experiment in March 2009.

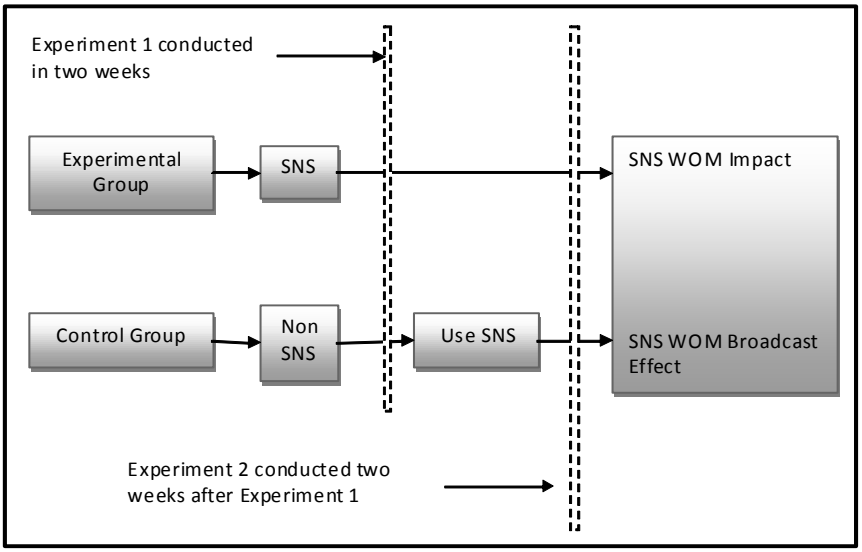

Figure 1. Experiment Construct

Figure 1 shows the experiment construct. The groups were asked to conduct the tasks for two weeks. Then, they were given the survey with the questions as in Table 1 in addition to questions for demographic data. Then, tests will be done for hypotheses H1A to H1M as shown in Table 2 for Experiment 1.

Table 2. Hypotheses

Item	**Hypothesis**
H1A	Information providers are regarded with higher expertise on SNS than on non-SNS.
H1B	Information providers are regarded with higher reliability on SNS than on non-SNS.
H1C	Information receivers feel to have higher expertise on SNS than on non-SNS.
H1D	Information providers and receivers perceive to have stronger ties on SNS than on non-SNS.
H1E	Information providers and receivers perceive to have higher similarity on SNS than on non-SNS.
H1F	Perceived usefulness is higher on SNS than on non-SNS.
H1G	Perceived ease of use is higher on SNS than on non-SNS.
H1H	Information understandability is perceived higher on SNS than on non-SNS.
H1I	Information reliability is perceived higher on SNS than on non-SNS.
H1J	Information usefulness is perceived higher on SNS than on non-SNS.
H1K	System access is perceived higher on SNS than on non-SNS.
H1L	System usability is perceived higher on SNS than on non-SNS.
H1M	System navigation is perceived higher on SNS than on non-SNS.
H2A	Information providers are regarded with higher expertise after using SNS.
H2B	Information providers are regarded with higher reliability after using SNS.
H2C	Information receivers feel to have higher expertise after using SNS.
H2D	Information providers and receivers perceive to have stronger ties after using SNS.
H2E	Information providers and receivers perceive to have higher similarity after using SNS.
H2F	Perceived usefulness is higher after using SNS.
H2G	Perceived ease of use is higher after using SNS.
H2H	Information understandability is perceived higher after using SNS.
H2I	Information reliability is perceived higher after using SNS.
H2J	Information usefulness is perceived higher after using SNS.
H2K	System access is perceived higher after using SNS.
H2L	System usability is perceived higher after using SNS.
H2M	System navigation is perceived higher after using SNS.

Experiment 2 was conducted after Experiment 1 was finished. The control groups then were asked to use SNS. After two weeks, they were surveyed by the same questionnaire. Then, H2A to H2M were tested.

Experiment 1 is a randomized control-group posttest design without pretest/posttest comparison, which is Experiment 2. Thus, the two experiments meet Campbell and Stanley's definition of true experimental design [Campbell and Stanley 1963].

5. Reliability and Validity Tests

To improve content validity, we first designed our questionnaire following literature as show in previous sections. Then, we invited MIS experts to evaluate the questionnaire. They are two MIS professors, two MIS Ph.D. candidates and six MIS graduate students who have SNS experience for 2 years. Two-year experience is high since SNS was introduced to Taiwan in 2006 and our experiment was started in March 2008. All experts agreed that the

questionnaire "can measure what it is supposed to measure" and that "all dimensions are essential to the evaluation of SNS." Thus, face validity and content validity were achieved.

Reliability means whether several items that propose to measure the same general construct produce similar scores. We used Cronbach's α. Guilford suggested that an α value greater than 0.7 means that the reliability is adequate [Guilford 1965]. If the α for a version of the scale was less than 0.7, we eliminated one or more items to improve reliability. The only scale which has an α value less than 0.7 is System Access (α = 0.549). We found that deleting any items did not improve the α value, so this item was removed.

We also examined factor loadings to determine construct validity and for data reduction. The presence of items with low factor loadings indicates that the items cannot converge at a common point on the same dimension. Such items were eliminated from the questionnaire. As a general rule, a standardized loading of 0.71 (0.5 squared) was selected as the cut-off point, because it means that 50 percent of the item variance is explained by the latent factor.

We began by performing the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test for sphericity to determine if the scales were adequately factorable [Kaiser 1974]. A KMO score greater than 0.8 means that the items have small partial correlations. In fact, the KMO score was 0.81275. Bartlett's test was significant ($p < 0.05$) for all scales, showing that the correlation matrices of items are not identity matrices. These two results combined confirm that the scales are factorable [Kaiser 1974]. We next did a factor analysis to obtain factor loadings as shown in Table 3. Item I4 has factor loadings lower than 0.7 and cannot be classified into any factor, so we removed it from our final analysis.

Table 3. Factor Loadings for the Psychological Scales

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
B2	**0.939**	0.208	0.438	0.025	0.314	-0.004	0.119	0.283	0.476	0.008	0.372	0.344
B3	**0.919**	0.151	0.489	0.118	0.352	0.059	0.222	0.265	0.564	0.089	0.46	0.382
B4	**0.89**	0.289	0.466	0.113	0.351	0.062	0.249	0.243	0.368	0.063	0.394	0.283
B1	**0.848**	0.224	0.645	0.066	0.481	-0.038	0.168	0.29	0.566	0.047	0.487	0.513
G3	0.228	**0.943**	0.268	0.031	0.447	0.078	0.411	0.418	0.287	0.015	0.303	0.318
G4	0.271	**0.912**	0.274	0.138	0.492	0.117	0.507	0.479	0.359	0.098	0.445	0.325
G2	0.15	**0.852**	0.214	0.162	0.35	0.033	0.462	0.339	0.177	0.068	0.25	0.483
G1	0.349	**0.844**	0.322	0.103	0.603	0.292	0.484	0.464	0.536	0.125	0.396	0.375
A1	0.405	0.224	**0.93**	0.258	0.516	0.054	0.269	0.153	0.205	0.202	0.453	0.319
A2	0.461	0.214	**0.907**	0.237	0.497	0.059	0.222	0.253	0.321	0.244	0.433	0.306
A3	0.558	0.288	**0.849**	0.11	0.554	-0.028	0.081	0.186	0.152	0.208	0.469	0.323
C3	-0.036	-0.019	0.04	**0.926**	-0.043	0.308	-0.066	0.093	0.031	0.603	-0.049	0.031
C4	0.162	0.198	0.165	**0.897**	0.07	0.228	0.082	0.162	0.139	0.452	0.101	0.112
C2	0.036	0.047	0.101	**0.859**	0.129	0.302	0.053	0.174	-0.102	0.54	-0.042	-0.035
C1	0.206	0.318	0.477	**0.689**	0.4	0.126	0.216	0.28	0.094	0.523	0.22	0.404
F1	0.339	0.469	0.638	0.053	**0.929**	0.108	0.398	0.234	0.329	0.081	0.555	0.391
F2	0.28	0.465	0.526	0.11	**0.924**	0.154	0.368	0.235	0.296	0.101	0.501	0.444
D1	0.038	0.142	-0.009	0.284	0.063	**0.871**	0.248	0.084	0.317	0.247	0.09	-0.028
D2	0.028	0.017	0.075	0.338	0.214	**0.86**	0.158	0.103	0.332	0.339	0.241	-0.044
D3	0.132	0.124	0.017	0.166	0.11	**0.825**	0.21	0.269	0.145	0.318	0.099	0.251
D4	0.018	0.195	0.123	0.248	0.28	**0.801**	0.252	0.06	0.047	0.325	0.234	0.045
H2	0.226	0.572	0.352	0.136	0.439	0.218	**0.926**	0.405	0.331	0.048	0.373	0.324
H3	0.214	0.398	0.266	0.042	0.431	0.232	**0.915**	0.471	0.349	-0.077	0.403	0.203
H1	0.179	0.584	0.202	0.063	0.419	0.253	**0.862**	0.376	0.231	0.131	0.304	0.369
L3	0.349	0.506	0.273	0.142	0.35	0.15	0.492	**0.861**	0.398	0.059	0.298	0.317
L2	0.445	0.583	0.436	0.04	0.611	0.128	0.281	**0.752**	0.367	0.091	0.562	0.475
L1	0.282	0.644	0.37	0.132	0.512	0.224	0.453	**0.717**	0.255	0.14	0.446	0.615
I3	0.526	0.303	0.238	0.11	0.326	0.212	0.319	0.307	**0.903**	0.108	0.322	0.333
I2	0.401	0.336	0.244	0.103	0.308	0.273	0.264	0.282	**0.886**	0.032	0.44	0.205
I1	0.636	0.311	0.387	0.06	0.511	0.158	0.413	0.282	**0.762**	0.057	0.539	0.517
E2	0.134	0.13	0.198	0.649	0.179	0.376	0.007	0.114	0.121	**0.916**	0.041	0.114
E3	0.163	0.086	0.295	0.517	0.22	0.373	0.153	0.183	0.161	**0.858**	0.239	0.074
E1	0.158	0.233	0.312	0.583	0.255	0.411	0.03	0.07	0.133	**0.839**	0.149	0.153
J2	0.507	0.419	0.717	-0.045	0.727	0.05	0.417	0.088	0.587	-0.183	**0.797**	0.388
J3	0.546	0.391	0.685	-0.043	0.689	0.08	0.444	0.199	0.61	-0.235	**0.796**	0.4
J1	0.468	0.432	0.678	-0.047	0.721	0	0.442	0.113	0.5	-0.203	**0.737**	0.431
I4	0.475	0.438	0.426	-0.085	0.52	0.06	0.439	0.234	0.451	-0.18	0.549	0.302
M1	0.359	0.381	0.217	0.121	0.306	0.097	0.535	0.391	0.352	-0.027	0.35	**0.832**
M2	0.367	0.448	0.378	0.186	0.196	0.135	0.368	0.582	0.323	0.116	0.659	**0.803**

The modified questionnaire then was given again to the participants after they conducted the tasks, i.e., searching product or service information as shown as the dotted lines in Figure 1.

6. Hypothesis Tests

We first tested data normality and equal variance for t tests. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test [Kolmogorov 1933] was used for normality and under 1% significance level, the data show normal distribution.

We then tested the Independent and Identical Distribution (iid) hypothesis. Levenes test was used and under 1% significance level, the data show equal variances. Several t tests then were employed to test the hypotheses. Under one-tail test with 5% confidence level, t value should be greater than 1.69 to accept the null hypotheses. Table **4** shows the results.

Table 4. Hypothesis Tests of Experiment 1

#	Dimension	t-statistic	p-value
A	Sender's expertise	-1.944	0.0528
B	Sender's reliability	-0.664	0.5072
C	Receiver's expertise	1.119	0.2640
D	Strength of tie between receiver and sender	-0.430	0.6675
E	Similarity between sender the receiver	0.681	0.4964
F	Perceived usefulness	-1.324	0.1865
G	Perceived ease of use	-3.535	0.0005
H	Information understandability	-3.465	0.0006
I	Information reliability	-0.180	0.8573
J	Information usefulness	-2.422	0.0160
L	System usability	-3.060	0.0024
M	System navigation	-1.817	0.0702

The results of Experiment 1 are very intriguing. For item A, G, H, J, L, and M, the performance of non-SNS groups is better than that of SNS groups. We will try to provide explanations in Section **7**. The results of Experiment 2 are similar as Table 5 shows.

Table 5. Hypothesis Tests of Experiment 2

#	Dimension	t statistic	p-value
A	Sender's expertise	-1.265	0.2069
B	Sender's reliability	-1.230	0.2197
C	Receiver's expertise	0.873	0.3834
D	Strength of tie between receiver and sender	-0.260	0.7950
E	Similarity between sender the receiver	0.702	0.4832
F	Perceived usefulness	0.815	0.4157
G	Perceived ease of use	-1.833	0.0678
H	Information understandability	-1.500	0.1347
I	Information reliability	0.926	0.3552
J	Information usefulness	-1.367	0.1726
L	System usability	-1.035	0.3015
M	System navigation	-0.490	0.6245

The results of Experiment 2 are similar. For Hypothesis G, non-SNS groups had better performance than SNS groups. There is not much difference for other hypotheses.

7. Conclusion

The results of our study were beyond our expectation. Based on the popularity of SNS and their theoretical foundations, many would expect that SNS performance should be better. Our results show the opposite. To clear our confusion, we conducted a series of interviews after the experiments. The methods follow the content analysis by Merriam [Alan 2003; Merriam 1998]. We dissected the interviews and clustered similar concepts. Then, the experts who were invited for checking content validity described in Section 5 were invited again to check the concepts and make inferences. We have found that participants thought the SNS interfaces are not easy to get acquainted. This is especially true for MySpace. Many found they had trouble to add friends. They also found Facebook interface was not friendly. This might be because of language and lack of 'killer software' to attract users and let them ignore the interface inconvenience. When our study was conducted, Chinese Facebook was not implemented. Things would be changed after Chinese Facebook appeared and many games were built on it.

The participants could tell there was much product and service information but it was scattered among users. There was no search engine similar to Google helping them locate the information. They felt that SNSs were good to identify 'people' but not 'information.' Compared to these two SNSs, Mobile 01 and PTT list the product or service first and people make comments in the product or service categories. Participants felt it was easier for them to search information although PTT is a very basic system. Facebook has too many functions and users were confused.

Non-SNS contained more word-of-mouth comments but SNS had more links to comments posted on non-SNS. That means SNS might have much information but did not have much user-generated content. It may be because SNS are social sites and the purpose is to get people familiar with other people. Mobile 01 and PTT are different. They are designed for users to provide product or service information. Some comments on Mobile 01 are so-called "open box" comments. Users write step-by-step comments along with opening new product boxes. Participants believed such comments are helpful.

Although SNS integrate many Web 2.0 services such as blogs, online communities, and twitter-like promotions and so on, they did not make use of those services. Most comments on Facebook are short and sometimes not even relevant. They are like personal scripts instead of professional comments. MySpace has 'groups' which contain some discussions but there are too many groups and they are not organized.

Facebook requires users to provide identifications and to be one's friends in order to read her comments. These made information sharing inconvenient. So, information provided by someone who does not have any connections with the users is not accessible.

However, SNS still have some merits from the participants' points of view. SNS contain more information and the information is more diversified. Information on Facebook usually is provided by the companies. They also create 'fan' pages to promote their products. MySpace can extend product information by hyperlinks. Both Facebook and MySpace are international platforms but non-SNS online communities are usually domestic. What is lacking on SNS is 'user-generated' content which is the source of word-of-mouth marketing.

Participants believed information on SNS is more reliable. Since people in one's network are either offline friends or friends' friends, they already have certain trust. Since people have real identifications there, other people can accumulate trust based on their activities there. Non-SNS do not have this trust mechanism and some information there is obviously incorrect. There were malicious arguments on non-SNS. Participants even sensed some information on non-SNS is commercial and they did not know where such information came from. The design of SNS is human-oriented. This may give SNS users higher level of enjoyment. It may not be the best for word-of-mouth marketing, but it certainly has the features successful word-of-mouth marketing platforms should have. For example, there are groups, fan pages, and so on which help circulate information. It makes friendship even closer and enlarges social circles.

Although our study did not show SNS as preferred WOM sites, participants indicated that they would use SNS in the future. Historic data have proven users' interest in Facebook. In Taiwan, Facebook was introduced in 2006 but did not gain momentum until the Chinese interface was fully built in June 2009. Since then, the number of users has increased from 700 thousand to 2.8 million per month. According to the CheckFacebook report, a number of other countries, including Lithuania, Kuwait, Vietnam, have shown similar growth [Hassanein and Head 2005; Lu and Wang 2008].

8. References

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