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A snapshot of Greek social media users

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ABSTRACT

The rise of Web 2.0 played a vital role in the business and interpersonal communication. Through this new social software consumers and businesses are continuously searching, communicating, commenting and interchanging information or even making decisions to purchase. The adoption of social media has also transformed the way of social interaction. Precisely, Papacharissi & Rubin (2000) reported as main motives of Internet “interpersonal utility, pass time, information seeking, convenience and entertainment” (2000:189). The users’ behavior varies according to psychographic and demographical factors. Despite social media’s popularity in Greece, no previous study has investigated users’ profile editing within the totality of 6 types of social media (Blogs, Content Communities, SNS, Virtual Worlds- Games, and Collaborative Projects). The purpose of this study is to delineate the profile of Greek social media users given their demographic and behavioral characteristics (e.g. Purpose of use, usual activities) within the totality of all social media applications. Results showed that Greek users are young users (18- 24 years old) with high educational level and knowledge of PC. As for the sexual and age distribution of Greeks users depending on each social media Category, it is showed that young women 18-24 years old prefer SNS in which they spend relatively high amount of time commenting and communicating and Content Communities. On the other side, Blogs and Games are used by older men (25- 35 years old). This study’s contribution is reflected both on the presentation of new theoretical insights and the provision of interesting managerial implications.

Keywords: social media, social media behavior, social media users’ patterns

A snapshot of Greek social media users

Introduction

Beyond the emergence of Web and e-mail, social media is an additional service that has increased interaction between people of different age, gender and ethnicity. Nowadays, more and more people engage in various social activities, such as virtual forums or bulletin boards on the web. In addition, they are often involved to various forms of Community Oriented social media like Facebook, Wikipedia, Blogs, YouTube, Virtual Games or podcasts (Brandtzaeg et al., 2007; Urista et al., 2007).

Moreover, given prior studies (Aaltonen et al., 2013; Noort et al., 2012; Pérez Latre & Tsourvakas, 2013) from the commercial perspective social media constitute “an ideal, cost effective, interactive and, above all, targeted communication tool for every organization thanks to its high consumer engagement offered through the E- WOM and web- interactivity” (Belenioti et al., 2015:2).

Despite social media’s popularity in Greece, little is known about the users’ behavior of adults within the totality of 6 types of Social media (Blogs, Content Communities, SNS, Virtual Worlds- Games, and Collaborative Projects). This is the first study attempts to delineate the profile of Greeks social media users according to their demographic and behavioral characteristics (e.g. Purpose of use, usual activities) within all social media applications.

This paper begins by relevant theoretical framework and the specific research question. Section 3 deals with the research methodology. Section 4 includes in depth analysis and elaboration on the results. Section 5 presents conclusions on the study and it provides implications as well as suggestions for further research.

Literature Review

Kaplan and Heinlein (2010) have categorized social media in Social Networking Sites, hereinafter SNS, (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn), Content Communities (e.g. YouTube), Virtual Games/ Worlds (e.g. Second Life), Collaborative Projects (e.g. Wikipedia) and Blogs (e.g. Wordpress).

The emergence of digital media has introduced a new era of communication on various levels. (Brandtzæg et al., 2010; Constantinides et al., 2011; Kietzmann., et al.,2011; Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Donath & Boyd, 2004). Based on the central concept of “uses and gratifications theory”, in which people use communications media to gratify needs or wants, Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) have identified five different motives for Internet use: “interpersonal utility, pass time, information seeking, convenience and entertainment” (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000: 189). Thus, the last decade more and more people use Net not only for instrumentals reasons but also for social purposes. People log in various Social Networks Sites to meet new people or keep in touch with their acquaintances, while others prefer Virtual Worlds, Blogs or Content Communities in order to entertain, gaining social capital and boost their confidence (Hoffman & Novak, 2012; Urista et al.,2007; Ellison et al.,2007; Kraut et al.,1998).

As a result, the media consumption and users’ behavior depends on a series of psychographical and demographical factors (Assael, 2005; Constantinides et al., 2011 & 2010; Brandtzaeg & Heim, 2011; Brandtzaeg, 2007). More specifically, Hargittai (2008) outlines certain factors of Internet use such as the genre, the socioeconomic status, or the way of access to the Net important predictors of the Internet. Furthermore, Chiang et al. (2010) confirm that information literacy is an important predictor of media behavior.

In spite of social media's popularity in Greece, no previous study has investigated usage patterns in the entire Social Media environment, addressing the research call of Kalmus & Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt (2009), Beemt et al. (2010) and Brandtzaeg et al. (2010). This paper attempts to address this gap by examining the following research question:

Research Question: How do Greek users behave in the context of social media?

Method

For the purpose of the current study, we served a questionnaire as data collection instrument. The data collection phase was conducted in Greece. The sample consisted of 280 individuals with their age ranging from 18 to plus 65 years old, while 10 answers were excluded because they were invalid. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Table of Demographics	
Sex	%
Male	47,0
Female	53,0
Marital Status	
Single	91,5
Married	8,5
Occupation	
Student	50,7
Public Employee	9,6
Employee in Private Sector	17,4
Freelancer	12,2
Household	1,1
Unemployed	7,4

Businessmen	0,4
Other	1,1
Income	
0-500	51,9
501-750	11,1
751-1,000	21,1
1,001-2,000	13,0
2,001-3,000	3,0
Age	
18-24	44,1
25-35	47,8
36-50	8,1
Number of Children	
0	95,6
1,00	1,9
2,00	0,7
3,00	1,9
Education	
Lyceum	24,8
Bachelor	57,4
Master/ PhD	17,8

Table 1: Table of Demographics

As for the demographic criteria, factors such as age, gender, educational level, income, marital status were examined. Regarding the behavioural criteria, parameters like the attitude of users towards technology and Internet and the behaviour that each user presents in the social media context were addressed.

The convenience sample technique was employed, while a pre- test questionnaire was also distributed to 10 respondents in order to verify its credibility and its ease of comprehension.

The questionnaire had 23 questions and based on a combination of closed-ended, dichotomous and multichotomous, multiple choice intervals (Likert) – scales. The questionnaire was divided into the three parts.

An exploratory quantitative research was conducted and data were analyzed through the statistical program SPSS. Simple statistical analysis (descriptive statistics tests such as frequency, mean) was used to reveal significant results, such as socio-demographic characteristics, aptitude, motivation of use, experience and activities of Internet and social media users, intensity and types of Internet usage, the number of personal accounts, friends and way of access that panel sample members have in each social media kind.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics results indicate that a prototypically Greek user is a young woman, 18-35 (62.6%) years old which primarily prefers SNS, then Content Communities, next Blogs and Games. The 70 % of Greeks reported that they log in via PC. The majority of Greeks has three accounts and update content on daily basis. Within Content Communities, they prefer rather to consume than to create content and has one or none account. On the contrary, they have no account in Blogs and virtual Games/Worlds. Finally, Virtual Worlds/ Games are the best friends of men between 25-35 years old. The pie chart below divided into segments illustrates the aforementioned data (Figure 1).

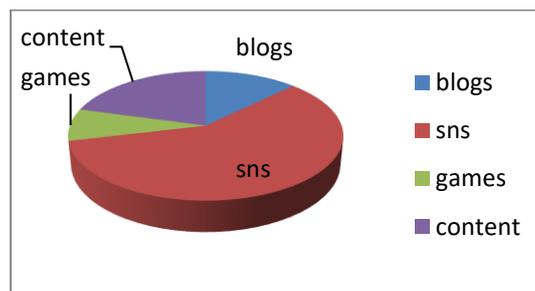


Figure 1: Preference per social media

The social media experience depends on the users' age and patterns: For instance, the 64.8% of Greeks using SNS over the last 2 years are women (37%) between 25-35 years old (33.3%). Similarly, experienced Blog users are women 25-35 years old (30.7%). Most experienced users of Virtual Games are men 18-24 years old (14.4%). Findings showed that the 47.8% of respondents are experienced content communities users, women between 18-24 years old. Interestingly, the 19.6% do not to use them at all.

With regards to the number of friends, Table 2 shows that in the case of SNS, the majority observed to have more than 300 friends (41.1%). Roughly the other half (46.6%) has between 11-250 friends. Within Blogs over half of those (62.6%) reported that they don't have any friends, while a majority of 27.4% said their friends vary from 11 to 100. Similarly, only the 2.2% revealed that they have more than 400 friends. Moreover, a minority (5.1%) encompasses bloggers between 101 -300 friends. As regards Virtual Games users, only the 8.5% has 1-10 friends. Approximately, the 6.3% observed 11- 50 friends. Only a small minority (2.6%) indicated more than 151 friends. Finally, likewise within Content Communities, the majority (18.1%) reported 0-10 friends, while users with more than 200 friends don't exceed the 3.7% of respondents.

Friends_Blogs			Friends_Virtual Games		
		Percent			Percent
Valid	0	62,6	0		78,5
	<10	17,4	<10		8,5
	11-50	10	11-50		6,3
	51-100	2,6	51-100		1,1
	101-150	2,2	101-150	Valid	3
	151- 200	0,7	151- 200		0,7
	201-250	1,5	201-250		0,4
	251-300	0,7	251-300		1,5
	>400	2,2	Total		100
	Total	100			

Friends_SNS		Friends_Content Communities		
	Percent		Percent	
Valid	0	8,9	0	62,6
	<10	3,3	<10	18,1
	11-50	9,3	11-50	7,4
	51-100	7	51-100	4,4
	101-150	8,1	Valid 101-150	1,9
	151- 200	8,5	151- 200	1,9
	201-250	6,7	201-250	1,5
	251-300	7	>400	2,2
	301-400	12,6	Total	100
	>400	28,5		
	Total	100		

Table 2: Number of Friends per Social Media

As for the number of accounts, Greek users have at least one account (47%) in SNS and usually fewer than 250 friends (46.6%). In Content Communities and Blogs the sample is divided into users without an account (40% & 58.1%, respectively) and those with only one account (47% & 28.9%, accordingly). Similarly, in Virtual Games& Worlds only the 18.1% of the sample has one account.

According to Figure 2 Greeks are content consumers, because they are keen on commenting and consuming content (55.2%). Nevertheless, they become content creators within in SNS (18.9%) and Content Communities (7%).

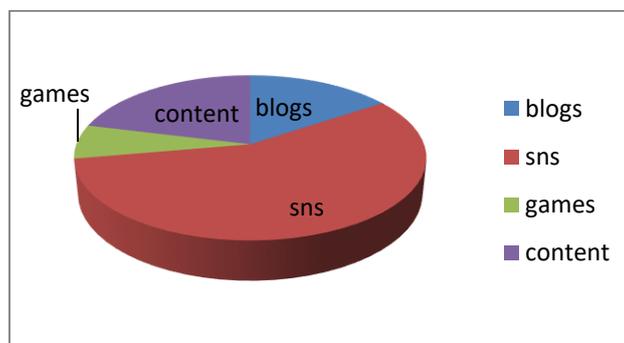


Figure 2: Frequency of Content Creation per social media

Finally, as Figure 3 shows the frequency of visit depends on the social media users: SNS have the highest percentage on a daily basis (38.9%), then Content Communities (32%) and Blogs (26%), and last Virtual Games/Worlds follow.

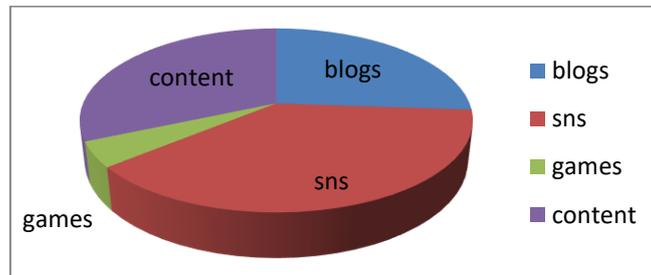


Figure 3: Frequency of use per social media

Interestingly, the usual frequency of use in Blogs and Virtual Games/ Worlds is 1-2 times per week (32.6%). On the contrary, the scale of 1-2 times per week illustrates a minority (13%) in the reality of SNS.

Conclusions, Implications and Further Research

Conclusions

This research revealed that SNS is the king of social media in Greek users, notably in young people and regular web users. In contrast, other social media applications such as Content Communities, Blogs and Virtual Worlds/ Games present less penetration. This pattern could be explained by the popularity and multi- dimensional character of this medium. SNS platforms combine communication, information and entertainment through its offered services, such as of private and public messages, maintaining or creating new ties, file- sharing through messages or playing games. This finding is in agreement with Dekay (2009), Donath & Boyd (2004) and Komito (2011).

The second major finding was that young women are prevailing. They are also heavy users of SNS because they spend relatively high amount of time commenting and communicating and Content Communities. The findings above are totally consistent

with Pew Internet (2011& 2012) and Hargittai (2007) in which young women tend to socialize more often online. On the other side, men 25- 35 years old are heavy user of Blogs and Virtual Games/Worlds.

As a result, young women between 18-24 years old use on a daily basis the SNS. In SNS they have a minimum of one account and they prefer to comment the various posts. Although Greeks tend to use more frequently Content Communities they do not have accounts there, since they prefer “consuming” and commenting the uploading content than creating.

Finally, this study has shown that Greeks have a passive behavior of “Content Consumer” commenting rarely 1-2 times / week and not creating content. These results are likely to be related to the SNS popularity and its multi-dimensional benefits, such as ease of use, interactivity and multi – tasking applications (chatting, sharing files, playing games, job and information seeking).

Implications, Limitations & Further Research

This study extends our knowledge of users’ behavior with all social media. The findings of this research provide fruitful insights for communication scholars and practitioners. A limitation of this study is that the available research studies focus only on a specific social media application, such as the SNS environment. What is now needed is a cross-national study involving psychological factors such as the 5 types of personality. A further study with more focus on comparison between users’ patterns in Greece & Turkey is therefore suggested.

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