

INVISIBLE PRESSURE OF THE “LIKE” BUTTON: A SURVEY ON NIGDE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This This research aimed to demonstrate the main motives of Facebook user students when clicking the “like” button and also to understand if they feel duty-bound themselves when they do not click. Survey research was conducted on 320 students of Nigde University in Turkey. We analyzed the results of the questionnaires consisting of demographic information and 23 expressions constructed based on three research questions and different approaches such as Social Interaction Theory and Theory of Reasoned Action. Results of the survey showed that first two purposes for using social media sites and Facebook are “entertainment and passing time” and “communicating with friends, family and relatives”. As a result of factor analysis young people click “like” button on Facebook because of feeling required rather than the contents of the postings of their friends.

Keywords: Social media, Facebook, like button, posting

INTRODUCTION

The changes caused by the Internet in our lives are the subject of the new studies which expand the literature on the subject continuously. Varied researches have been conducted worldwide on social media which is a very important part of the Internet usage and particularly Facebook. It is not a coincidence that those studies have been conducted largely on young people. Because the young is the social group which mostly use the Internet and social media.

Today internet and social media sites are not only tools for communicating but also exchanging of the ideas, lifestyles and identities. Most of the young people have more

than one social media accounts but it is possible to said that Facebook is the first one among the social media networks. Young users share a wide range of information on Facebook such as their own photographs, name and the photos of the places they went, foods or drink they tried, alot of things that they like or not shortly. They express their appreciation with a single button only: "like."

Number of friends on Facebook and also number of the "like" for the postings are important indicators of the popularity for the young people. They can't help thinking that how many "likes" would get any posting before sharing it. They follow closely postings of their friends. So what are their reasons and motives for sharing something on Facebook? Do they pay attention their friends' postings before sharing? Do they think that number of the "like" is important? Do they care about if their friends follow their postings or not? And do they feel any emotional pressure on liking popular postings of their friends? In this study, we tried to find the answers of these questions.

This research aimed to provide information about the Facebook usage habits of university students and to understand the effect of "like" button. We tried to understand why Facebook users click the "like" button and if they feel duty-bound themselves when they do not click.

Social Media and Facebook

Kaplan and Haenlien (2010:61) define social media as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content".

Social networking website is a kind of virtual communities that allows people to connect and interact with each other (Murray and Waller,2007). Social networks combines the users each others. Users can create their profiles on these websites. Social network sites enable users to connect with their family members, friends, colleagues via their profiles created by themselves.

As it is known Facebook is a social media website which the users can share their notes, messages, photos, videos, and etc. on it. It was created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and his friends. Created in 2004 by a Harvard student for intra-campus socializing, Facebook quickly spread to other university campuses and soon became the most popular social networking site (Cassidy,2006). Miletsky (2010) points out that social media is an inclusive umbrella term including all of the means and applications for the purpose of socialization on the Internet. Users create their social media accounts and profiles voluntary but Acquisti and Gross (2006:2) pointed out people believe that if they haven't any account on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram they will be accepted unavailable in cyber world and feel themselves inadequate and missing. In other word it is so important to be seen on social

media for the users. The number of followers for Twitter and the number of the friends for Facebook are prominent signs of “visibility” on social media. Another sign is the number of the “likes” for postings.

The “Like” Button on Facebook

According to Global Social Media Research 2015; Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are top social websites around the world. Facebook is the leader on account of the number of active users and 64% of Facebook users actively use Facebook every day (Smith,2014). Facebook is the top website also according to the research results of eMarketer and when logging on to sites with a social network ID, users prefer to enter their Facebook login information (www.emarketer.com). Facebook is the most preferred social media site in Turkey like lots of countries in the world and because of that it has been chosen for the study.

Facebook is a social platform which people use their real names and identities and contact with their friends and acquaintances. Besides friend lists of the users mostly consist of the people who they know face to face. In this regard it might be accepted as an extension of the face to face relationships everyday life. Daily relationships have been maintained and reproduced in cyber world in a new way. So it is possible to say that Facebook is a useful tool for the continuation of the communication with close friends.

Madden et al. (2013:8) pointed out that a typical teen Facebook user had 300 friends on his/her list and it was an important platform for socializing and keeping up with the friends and they saw the Facebook as an important social status indicator. According to their study, number of “likes” is a strong proxy for social status and Facebook users would manipulate their profiles and timeline content in order to gain the maximum number of “likes”.

In February 2009, Facebook added the “like” button “as a way to give positive feedback and connect with things you care about.” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook_features). The “like” button allows people to share their ideas and to support their friends’ ideas about comments, pictures, videos, status and etc. on Facebook without having to make a written comment. Facebook users can express their feelings and ideas only clicking a “like”. In February 2016, Facebook added 5 emojis to like button. Users can express their feelings with these emojis as “Love”, “Haha”, “Wow”, “Sad” and “Angry” from now on. Valverde et al. (2013) point out that the number of Facebook users and their “likes” are more than lots of organisations’ e-mail lists. Today there are nearly 1.4 billion Facebook users and Facebook users made 4.5 billion “likes” in every day (<http://www.jeffbullas.com/2015/04/08/33-social-media-facts-and-statistics-you-should-know-in-2015/>).

Invisible Pressure of the “Like” Button

In different countries various studies conducted on the usage of Facebook “like” button. Majority of members of the rising generation make extensive use of mobile phones, email, Internet chat rooms and the mass media of course. But what is the most important thing in their lives? The answer, for most of them, comes without hesitation: my friends (Mackay,2002:74). Friends have an important role on young people’s lives. Maintaining the communication with friends is foremost reason for the using of social media and also Facebook. For example according to the survey conducted by Ellison et al. (2007) on college students in USA demonstrated that social networking sites were used for social interaction with offline acquaintances in order to maintain friendships rather than to make new friends. Previous researches found that university students are using Facebook to maintain their relationships (Ellison et al.,2007; Sheldon,2008).

The study conducted by Whiting and Williams (2013) to understand reasons of using social media according to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, identified ten reasons for using social media and Facebook. The most popular using is social interaction.

According to the study conducted by Pempek et al. (2009) Facebook users spend much more time for following the postings of other people other than sharing unlike the other websites users. In other words, they allow more time to have information about their friends. It is possible to said that people care more about the evaluations of their peers and friends than of strangers. The early literature on normative social influence suggested that conforming to the norm often was motivated by a desire to be liked by our group (Deutsch and Gerard,1955). In Turkey, according to Youth and Social Media Survey Report (2013) nearly half of the young people define social media as “socializing environment”. According to the report, among the social media users there is a group, called “consubstantiators”, which has strong ties with social media and defines their own identity mainly on this platform and being member of this virtual community gives them power. Social media means power, reputation, freedom, trendy and image for this group.

Brandtzaeg and Haugstveit (2014) carried out a research about Facebook users’ “liking” practices and they exposed six different “liking” practices as socially responsible liking, emotional liking, informational liking, social performative liking, low-cost liking and routine liking. According to the results of the research 88% of the respondents mentioned using social media for social interaction. Respondents mentioned that Facebook is “a place to interact and socialize with others” and that “social media gives them a social life”. Mehdizadeh (2010) argued that number of Facebook “likes” can be interpreted as an easy way of self-representation. According to the Goffman’s (1967) Social Interaction Theory individuals commonly seek to acquire information about others and they want to control the impressions of other people in any type of social interaction. People want to be respected and have a positive image about their personal identities. In routine liking, this is a mechanically performed procedure, a standard activity. Facebook users are using the “like” button to show

that one has read a message, regardless of whether one actually liked the content or not (Brandtzaeg and Haugstveit,2014). Another survey achieved by Lee et al., (2016) demonstrated that the most salient user motivations to click “like” were enjoyment of posted content and maintaining interpersonal relationships with others in social network systems. According to the results of the study even though some users might not enjoy postings, they may click “like” because of needs related to friendship. So a Facebook user’s “like” does not necessarily indicate he or she really “likes” it. In the light of this, it is possible to said that Facebook users do not pay much attention contents of the postings which they “like” if it is shared by a friend. So why do they “like” these sharings? Also do they feel under pressure to click “like” button for their friends’ postings because of their group affiliations? This study aims to demonstrate college students’ Facebook usage habits as well as if numbers of the “likes” of their friends for any posting has an effect on their decision of “like”. The primary goals of this study are:

1. to gain a new viewpoint about youngs’ liking behaviours
2. to determine which factors motivate them using “like” button
3. to demonstrate effective reasons for sharing of any posting.

RESEARCH METHOD

For the purposes of the study we formed three research questions as follows:

1. What are the motives of the youngs for using Facebook’s “like” button?
2. Are numbers of the “like” and friends who shared any posting effective on users’ sharing decision?
3. Do they feel themselves emotionally required/duty-bound about “liking” of their friends’ postings?

Then we constructed 23 expressions based on the research questions and the approaches as Ajzen and Fishbein’s Theory of Reasoned Action–TRA (1975); Social Presence Theory (Short, Williams and Christie,1976); Goffman’s Social Interaction Theory (1967); Sit and Merrilees’ Hedonic Model (2005) and Brandtzaeg and Haugstveit’s liking practices study (2014). These 23 expressions were grouped under 6 variable factors as expected liking, social interactive liking, hedonic liking, routine liking, informational liking and social liking.

According to Ajzen and Fishbein’s (1975) Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) people may bahave acceptable for reference groups expect him/her. The TRA offers insight in terms of predicting behavior based on intention to behave in a certain way at a future point in time (Ajzen and Fishbein,1980). Social Presence Theory (Short and et al.,1976) states that social presence of a person is related to the intimacy which he or she built up with the others who has interactions in different social networks and the higher the social presence, the larger the

social influence that the communication partners have on each other's behavior. According to Gefen and Straub (2004) in virtual environment such as Facebook, the presence of other is important because it implies direct or indirect human contact. "If one knows that significant other individuals (e.g., friends, family members) approve of engaging in a particular behavior, one's attitude is more likely to translate into behavior (Smith and Hogg,2008:348)". According to the study carried by Chin and Lu (2015) if a large number of readers used previously "liked" button, it possibly affect the readers' intentions and behaviors. There are many researchers suggested that maintaining interpersonal relationships is the primary motive for using Facebook (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe,2007; Sheldon,2008; Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert,2009) and also "like" button.

According to Goffman's (1967) Social Interaction Theory, people want to express themselves and also to develop a positive social identity. When they express themselves in a way, they gain gratification. Tajfel (1972:292) pointed out that "social identity represents the individual's knowledge that he/she belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of his group membership."

According to Sit and Merrilees' (2005) Hedonic Model, hedonic motivation is an important human inclination that determines behaviors and a part of human being. This motivation has also been noted in regard to the Internet in general and social networking websites specifically (Sledgianowski and Kulviwat,2009). According to the study carried by Chin and Lu (2015) hedonic motivation had a strong impact on readers' attitudes. So it is possible to said that hedonic motivation has a positive relation with clicking the "like" button on Facebook. Use of "like" button appears to be functioning more as a response action, and less a thoughtful behavior (Lee et al.,2016:337).

According to Brandtzaeg and Haugstveit's (2014) liking practices study, Socially Responsible Liking is based on the desire to actively help and contribute; Low-cost Liking been referred to as a type of slacktivism; Informational Liking is a practice motivated by information retrieval and Emotional Liking is typically based on spontaneous feelings and compassion; Routine Liking shows that one has read or seen a message, posting or photo.

DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected through a survey which was divided into two parts. In the first part, students answered the questions about their demographic information (e.g. age and gender) and also their activity on the Internet. In the second part of the survey, 23 expressions used a five-point Likert scale from "1=strongly agree" to "5=strongly disagree". It took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to answer the questionnaire. At the preparation stage of the questionnaire, a literature review was made primarily and similar studies were examined. The results of scale reliability of the studies and usage of the scales in different researches were reviewed.

Besides a pre-interview was made with 10 students who had Facebook accounts and were selected by convenience sampling method from the population. In this conversation questions about their criteria to click “like” button on Facebook were asked.

Survey research was conducted on 320 students who were selected with convenience sampling method in Nigde University. Students were from 5 different faculties as School of Communication, School of Economics and Administrative Sciences, School of Agricultural Sciences, School of Engineering and School of Architecture. The survey was conducted between the date of 11-22 April 2016. The preliminary survey was made for the efficiency of the content and the sufficiency for the analysis and 302 questionnaires were accepted suitable for the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the results, 160 (53%) of 302 students who participated to the survey was female and 142 (47%) was male. Also 53% of the participants were studied on social sciences and 47% were studied on physical sciences. When having looked at the spent time of the participants on social media websites, it has been seen that 22% (66 persons) of the students spend more than 3 hours per day and approximately 60% (180 persons) of them 1-3 hours every day.

The most used social media accounts of the participants are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram respectively. It is similar to the worldwide. Results about purposes of the social media were shown at Table 1. Our findings have been supported to the results of various researches, such as Lee et al. (2016), Mackay (2002), Ellison (2007) and Sheldon (2008), which found that purposes of using social media and Facebook were “entertainment” and “maintaining relationship with friends”.

Table 1: Purposes of Social Media Usage

Purpose	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Entertainment and passing time	125	41,4
Communicating with friends, family and relatives	63	20,9
Gaining information	46	15,2
Following the agenda	37	12,3
Sharing pictures, videos, stories and etc.	26	8,6

76% of the participant students who studied physical sciences have been using Facebook actively and this rate rises to 90% among the students who studied social sciences. “School friends” is at the top of the friend lists of participants and “relatives” is the second group in

the lists. So it might be said that students have used Facebook for the purposes of keeping in touch with their real life acquaintances. Proportion of the building friendships with people who they meet in virtual environment is only 6%.

In the study, we tried to reduce the items of measurement to the certain number of factors by factor analysis. Cronbach's Alpha model has been used to test validity and reliability of the results statistically before the factor analysis of the variables which consisting of second part of the questionnaire. According to the results reliability value was $\alpha = 0,904$. In the study, KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) test to measure the sample efficiency and Barlett as the universe integrity check have been conducted as the parts of the factor analysis. Result of the Barlett test was 0.00 and valid at significance level. The result of KMO test was 0,88 and showed that efficiency of the sample size. Varimax, maximum rotation technique of the variance, was used for the analysis. As a result of factor analysis, 23 variables were grouped under 6 factors and they have been explained 64,3% of the total variance. Factor loads and reliability coefficients of the variables were shown at Table 2.

As seen in Table 2, there are 6 factor groups for clicking "like" button on Facebook as expected liking, social interactive liking, hedonic liking, routine liking, informational liking and social liking. First four factors' Cronbach's Alpha values were above 0.70, fifth and sixth factors values remained below 0.70.

When evaluating the factors expected liking has the highest reliability coefficient ($\alpha=0,860$) value. In this factor group, "I feel duty-bound/required myself if I don't click like for a posting of my friends who like my postings" and "I try to like of postings of my friends who like my postings frequently" expressions scores are quite high. So it might be said that young people click "like" button on Facebook because of feeling required rather than the contents of the postings of their friends. This findings are coherent with the results of the study conducted by Lee et al. (2016) found that people might click "like" even though they don't approved the content of the postings.

Table 2: Factor Analysis Results

Factor	Approach	Expression	Factor Load	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
Factor 1: Expected Liking	Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)	I feel “duty-bound/required” myself if I don’t click “like” for a posting of my friend who like my postings.	0,829	0,845
		I try to “like” of postings of my friends who like my postings frequently.	0,757	
		I feel “sorry/guilty” myself if I don’t click “like” to an important posting for my friends.	0,748	
		I follow the number of “likes” for postings of my friends.	0,608	
	Social Presence Theory	I follow popular and most “liked” postings of my friends.	0,532	
		I think that it is important my “liking” for my friends.	0,503	
Factor 2: Social Interactive Liking	Social Interaction Theory	I think that it is important/right to click “like” for popular postings which have lots of “likes.”	0,847	0,794
		I think that postings which have lots of “likes” are good.	0,802	
		I believe I am expected to click “like” for postings which have lots of “likes.”	0,770	
		I follow and try to “like” my friends’ postings which have lots of “likes.”	0,423	
Factor 3:	Hedonic Model /	I “like” my friends’ postings about their feelings, thoughts and status.	0,731	0,753

Hedonic Liking	Emotional Liking	I “like” my friends’ postings consisting of emotional and impressive sentences or stories.	0,706	
		I “like” my friends’ entertaining postings/videos.	0,600	
		I believe that I express myself when I click “like” any posting.	0,492	
		I am happy to make sharing about myself.	0,459	
Factor 4: Routine Liking	Routine Liking	I click “like” without reading or watching of postings exactly.	0,785	0,703
		I think that it has become a habit for me to click “like” my friends’ postings after taking a quick look.	0,784	
		I try to follow and “like” my friends’ postings about their daily life activities.	0,663	
Factor 5: Informational Liking	Informational Liking	I become happy to have information about my friends status.	0,797	0,627
		I follow status of my friends daily.	0,773	
		I “like” my friends’ informational postings/videos	0,715	
Factor 6: Social Liking	Socially Responsible Liking / Low-cost Liking	I believe that it is important to click “like” in order to show my support for postings of my friends.	0,705	0,609
		I become happy to “like” postings of my friends about social issues and problems.	0,694	

Score of the expression which is under Social Interactive Liking factor as “I think that it is important/right to click like for popular postings which have lots of likes” is high. It has been shown that youngs give importance to the opinions of their friends and if a posting has alot of likes it might be so good for them.

Third factor, hedonic liking, has been revealed that participant students follow the status of their friends and showed their interest by clicking “like”. Score of the expression of “I am happy to make sharing about myself” is not high. It might be evaluated as youngs prefer to follow the status of their friends rather than sharing information about themselves. This finding has been supported by the results of the study of Pempek et al. (2009) which found that people used Facebook to follow the postings of others.

Routine Liking is forth motive for “liking” according to the value of reliability coefficient. Results have been shown that young people click “like” and pass to other posting quickly most of the times and they make a habit clicking. Also Lee at al. (2016) pointed out that people may click “like” even if they do not like the content.

In fifth and sixth factors, expressions about the following and liking of the informational and social sharings scores are high. However, the reliability coefficients of these factors are significantly lower than other factors.

CONCLUSION

In this study, examination of the motives for clicking “like” button on Facebook of the youngs was aimed primarily. According to the analysis results main motives for “liking” were grouped under 6 factors as expected liking, social interactive liking, hedonic liking, routine liking, informational liking and social liking. Expected liking and social interactive liking have the highest reliability scores. In the light of the findings, it is possible to said that main and leading motive for “liking” of Facebook user students is feeling of being “expected/required” rather than the contents. In other words, young people need to “like” to popular postings. Youngs who use Facebook forthe purposes of entertainment and following friends, get more pleasure from tracking the status and sharings of others.

Like other studies, there are several limitationswhich affect the reliability of findings. Primarily, this study was descriptive, rather than experimental. Secondly, sample size was smalland limited to Nigde University’s students. Results from this group are not generalizable to all Facebook users. Future researchers might focus on groups other than university students. Future researches should be conductedacross the other universities and cities, and also gender, age, occupation or living place differences should be considered.

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