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## **SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES IN CYBERSPACE COMMUNITY IN MALAYSIA**

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### **Abstract**

*This study is done in order to find the level of social networking sites among multiethnic users in Malaysia. Social networking sites are chosen as they bring many benefits to the users. This study used social capital theory as foundations theories for model development. The minimum sample size was determined through G\*Power analysis. The study involved 482 respondents, selected through a cluster sampling technique involving three main ethnics in Malaysia. A cross sectional survey and structured questionnaire were used for data collection. All variables were measured through scales previously used by other researchers. SPSS ver. 20 software was used in the analysis. Results of the SPSS indicated that the level of SNS, three out of four factors namely quality, intimacy, and interaction in SNS show very high level.*

Keynote: social networking sites, uses & gratification theory

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Social Network Sites are where Malaysians spend the largest share of their time online. In Malaysia, social networking sites such as Facebook has 12 948 320 users which involve of 49.50 percent of population. The figure also displays that the biggest group of users is presently 18 – 24, followed by the users in the age of 25 – 34. In term of gender, there are 54 percent male users and 46 percent female users (Malaysia Facebook Statistics, 2012). Many people in Malaysia are very friendly on Facebook.

Murray and Waller (2007) have recognized social networking sites as virtual societies which let people to link and communicate with each other on a particular matter or to just hang out together online. Social networking sites generally offer users a profile and allow them to share and upload photos, music and several types of messages they would prefer to share with other public. Moreover, these social networking sites offer social and emotional support, information resources and bonds to other users (Wellman and Gulia, 1999; Eyadat, & Eyadat, 2010). As mentioned by Rosen (2011), people who spend more time on social networking sites are better at showing empathy to their online friends and learn how to socialize.

According to Safko (2012), the big three social networks are Facebook, with over 800 million memberships; Twitter, with over 200 million memberships; and LinkedIn, with 120 million users. Burson-Marsteller Asia Pacific has released a very exciting social media report. Based from the report, 64.7 percent of Malaysian uses the internet and the top social networks are Facebook and Twitter (Kent, 2012). Most of the users are youth (Nazan et al., 2011). Figure 2.1 below show the SNS usage during leisure time by Malaysian.

## 2. The Importance of Social Networking Sites (SNS)

The supremacy of social networking sites essentially depends on its mainly purpose. When social media engagement contributes to positive changes, there is an inevitable forward movement with regard to the development of peaceful relations as well as the construction of a healthy, harmonious, and prosperous society. It is also a tool made for information transfer, and primarily the nature of the message and method of transmission either aid or hamper social growth (Moala, 2011).

According to Taske and Plude (2011), through social networking sites, users can choose which messages sort it to the inbox, block advertisements and protect work-related e-mails for other formal e-mail accounts. Moreover, users will be able to send and receive messages in real time through whatever medium or device is most appropriate for them. Facebook and Twitter can serve a very distinct purpose – to keep people connected on a personal level. People meet digitally to discuss politics, rally for a common cause and gossip about neighbors. They also help users announce their availability to other people and, potentially, services. The benefits to using social networking sites can be numerous and many such as sustaining contact with peers, developing a network with other people around one, bring together with old classmates or friends, see people with similar interests, networks for groups and organizations, distribution recent news about a person's life or getting the latest news, and so forth (Nazan et al., 2011).

There has been a progress in support groups and social networks that encourage individuals to build relationships and share problems and best practice (Leach, 2011). Furthermore, Cheong (2011) identified that social media bring several advantages associated with bigger access and interaction where people can connect in new ways. He also certainty that social networks permit the exchange of visual, textual, and video information among participants,

now known not just as ‘users’ but also as hybrid producers and consumers or ‘pro-sumers’. Users also can connect and share their faith and lives with others through blogs, music, photos, audio messages, prayers, causes and many more.

### 3. Social Networking Characteristics

Statistics show by Kemp (2012) stated that Malaysians citizens seem to choose the internet than TV, spending almost twice as much time online as they do watching television. Social networking sites drives greatly of this content consumption, and considering the scope of the average citizen’s social network, it’s perhaps unsurprising to learn that around *one third* of the country’s internet traffic is produced by social sites. The statistics also show 80 percent of Malaysian web users download online video content, 86 percent download music each month and spend about 41 000 000 hours watching online videos. Lastly, 51 percent of them have an active YouTube profile.

**Table 2.1: Social Networking Characteristics, adapted from (Pettenati and Ranciri, 2006)**

<b>Goal</b>	Relation constructed on individual interests, debate, confront on specific topics; multiplicity and heterogeneity of joining wellbeing and inspirations
<b>Belonging</b>	Impulsive and self-governing motivation
<b>Duration</b>	Non-defined
<b>Cohesion and enabling factors</b>	Great level of trust (relevance of reputation), sense of accountability, high technological skills, distributed reflexivity and evaluation (non autonomous, nor heteronymous but socially spread) Type of relation: share/evaluate

### 4. Social Networking Sites (SNS) Factors

Based on an extensive literature review and empirical studies, Reza Pishghadam et al., (2011) have developed a few factors in measuring social solidarity. The factors affecting social network sites use in order to gain solidarity are:

**Interaction:** This factor refers to an occasion when two or more people or things communicate with or react to each other. Through interaction by multiethnic in SNS, they can discover their similar attitude, opinions and values (Edelmann, 1993). The social networking sites today is the only accepted network that allows people to globally keep in touch with each other (Kushairi, 1997). As stated by Cheong (2011), SNS can increase access and interaction where clergy and congregation can connect in new ways. Solidarity society contains a high degree of social interaction within communities (Kearns and Forrest, 2000).

**Involvement:** refers to the act or process of taking part in something. At the involvement stage, a sense of mutuality of being connected develops in SNS. During this stage, people experiment and try to learn more about the other person (Devito, 2009). As stated by Devito (2009), during this stage a sense of mutuality of being connected develops. SNS can be seen when people link up with friends and family, either by adding them as a friend, following them or tagging them in photos.

**Quality:** This factor refers to the level of enjoyment, comfort, and health in someone's life. The quality in SNS that makes a relationship interpersonal is interdependency; that is the actions of one person have an impact on the other (Devito, 2009). Contact quality and frequency of contact with friends enhance group attitude (Tropp and Pettigew, 2005). According to Sabbagh (2003), people who characterized by a good or highly positive climate friends, respectively, to situations of strong solidarity. Hargie et al. (2003) suggested, the more similar the values and common interest of friends in SNS are, the more likely they are to become friends. SNS can be used as a form of social and prayer support as they provide an avenue for connections (Cheong, 2011).

**Intimacy:** Finally, intimacy refers to things that are said or done only by people who have a close relationship with each other. It is a feeling that you can be honest and open when talking about yourself, that you can express thoughts and feelings you wouldn't reveal in other relationships (Devito, 2009). Exchange of essential resources in SNS such as love, respect, unselfish attitude will contribute to strong solidarity (Sabbagh, 2003). As stated by Wellman and Gulia, (1999) and Eyadat and Eyadat (2010), SNS can provide social and emotional support, information resources and ties to other people. Through this stage, communication becomes more personalized and easier (Gudykunst and Nishida, 1984).

## 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed the quantitative study approach (explanatory study) to identify the level of social networking sites among SNS multiethnic users in Malaysia. For sampling, by referring to Krejcie & Morgan table, 30 million population in Malaysia or 12 million SNS users can be equal to 384 sample of respondents with 95% confidence (The Research Advisors, 2006). The study involving 482 respondents, selected through a multistage sampling techniques which are cluster sampling and purposive sampling. A cross sectional

survey and structured questionnaire were used for data collection. The data were keyed in and analyzed by SPSS (Abdul Rauf Ridzuan et al., 2015.)

In this study, the sample size used was also determined by two technique namely G\*Power analysis (Erdfelder, Faul and Buchner, 1996), and Green (1991) recommendation on using Multiple Regression Analysis. Using G\*Power analysis, specifically for *F* – Test in Multiple Regression analysis , the total suggested sample is 138 (effect size  $f^2 = 0.15$  (medium);  $\alpha = 0.05$ ; power = 0.95; number of predictors / independent variables = 5). The value of Alpha and power were acceptable for social sciene research. G\*Power is a general power analysis program that perform high precision statistical power analyses for the most common statistical test in social science research. Moreover G\*Power is design for sample size calculation based on specific statistical analysis used in the particular study (Erdfelder et al., 1996).

For this research, the study involved with 484 respondents. The data was collected through a survey questionnaire. A likert scale was used for the students to answer questions relating to the SNS factors. Data was key in and analyzed using SPSS version 20.

## 6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 6.1: Pattern of Social Networking Sites (SNS)

The data from table 1 below illustrates that the most popular SNS used by respondents is Facebook which is 80.9%. It shows that Facebook is still the most popular use by SNS users in Malaysia. The result also showed the same result found by Kent (2012) and Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development (2012). According to Malaysia Social Media Statistics (2014) and Kent (2012), 64.7 percent of Malaysians use the internet and the top social networks are Facebook and Twitter. Overall, Facebook is still the most popular in SNS.

**Table 1: Distribution of most usage SNS (n = 482)**

Most Usage SNS	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Facebook	390	80.9
Twitter	88	18.3
LinkedIn	4	0.8

Based on the table 2 below, 73.1% of the respondents have friends in their social networking sites between 1 – 500 people. In term of spending time, 42.1% of them used SNS between 1 – 2 hours per day in average. In contrast, research done by Survey Malaysian (2010) found that Malaysian has an average of 233 friends in their SNS and average time spends on SNS is 3 hours 17 (Malaysia Social Media Statistics (2014).

**Table 2: Number of friends and frequency of SNS usage analysis**

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Average number of Friends in SNS		
1-500	352	73.1
501-1000	93	19.3
1001-1500	16	3.3
1501-2000	16	3.3
2001-2500	5	1.0
Average Used of SNS		
1-2 hours (low)	203	42.1
3-4 hours (average)	117	24.3
5-6 hours (high)	162	33.6

## 6.2 Level of interaction among SNS users with other ethnics

The descriptive statistics for the respondents' interaction with other ethnics in SNS are shown in Table 3 below. All 482 respondents answered these questions. The mean scores, and standard deviations are reflected in table 4.8 and discussed in the subsequent section. The results showed that respondents who have good personality tend to interact with other ethnics in SNS (M=2.84). The result also indicated that the respondents believe that their group identity play the major role in order for them to communicate with other ethnics (M=2.71). The respondents also interact to find the similarity in opinion (M=2.69). The findings showed the same results with Hargie et al. (2003). Their research found that interaction is shaped partly by their individual personal characteristics. The more similar the quality values and common interests of colleagues are, the more likely they are to become friends. Interaction on SNS with all ethnics is the lowest mean (M=2.60).

**Table 3: Interaction on SNS**

Interactions	Mean	Std. Deviation
Interaction based on own personality	2.84	.77
Based on group identity	2.71	.81

To find the similarity in opinion	2.69	.86
To maintain the relationship	2.67	.86
To strengthen the relationship	2.64	.83
To find the similarity in attitude	2.60	.82
Interact with all ethnics	2.60	.80
Overall	2.68	.63

### 6.3 Level of involvement among SNS users with other Ethnics

In Social Capital Theory, sociability and involvement among multi-ethnic in SNS can enhance social solidarity. Table 4 showed respondents tend to get involved activities in SNS when they were invited to attend some events (M=2.53) and for involving outdoor activity (M=2.44). It shows that SNS can be important tool for multi-ethnic users to use to do activities in internet and in reality. Devito (2009) posited that during the involvement stage, a sense of mutuality of being connected develops in SNS. During this stage, people will experiment and try to learn more about the other person. In addition, a study conducted by Bernard (1999) also found that people tend to spend their time with their colleagues and friends in SNS. Engaging with multi ethnic friends is important in developing good team relations. However, feeling comfortable with multi-ethnic friends is in the lowest mean (M=2.10).

**Table 4: Involvement on SNS**

Involvement	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attending to events invited through SNS	2.53	.89
Involving outdoor activity	2.44	.90
Chatting through SNS	2.38	1.0
Involve with variety activities	2.37	.91
Involving social activity	2.35	.95
Involving cultural activity	2.31	.96
Involving political activity	2.29	.94
Comfortable with multi-ethnic	2.10	.98

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Overall	2.44	.65
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#### 6.4 Level of intimacy among SNS users with other Ethnic

Based on social solidarity theory, solidarity is described by the purpose of promoting group goals in his own right, provided the actor perceives positive attitude such as trust, be harmony and openness from others towards him. Based from table 5, data analysis shows that intimacy can be realistic when SNS users practise openness (M=2.90), when SNS can create harmony (M=2.83), when harmony exist with multiethnic friends (M=2.82), multiethnic friends have good background (M=2.82) and multiethnic friends become close friends (M=2.80). At the intimacy stage, people establish a relationship in which they become closest friend, lover or companion. Communication becomes more personalized and easier (Gudykunst and Nishida, 1984). Furthermore, a research done by Nazan et al., (2011) found that by being openness, people easily come together to reestablish connection with the people they had forgotten and to get in touch with the people they knew. The lowest mean is to have close relationship with multiethnic friends in SNS (M=2.67). The original 8 items were reduced into 6 items due to the redundancy of some questions.

**Table 5: Intimacy through SNS**

Intimacy	Mean	Std. Deviation
Openness can unite everyone	2.90	.77
SNS creates harmony in my environment	2.83	.79
Harmony exist when mix with multi-ethnic friends	2.82	.81
Multi-ethnic friends have good background	2.82	.72
Multi-ethnic friends become close friends	2.80	.81
Have close relationship with multi-ethnic in SNS	2.67	.82
Overall	2.76	.67

## 10. CONCLUSION

Based from table 6, the mean score achieved for all respondents on this dimension is 2.67. The highest mean for SNS factors is quality (M=2.77), followed by intimacy (M=2.76) and interaction (M=2.68). It shows that quality in SNS is the main factor people use social networking sites. According to social capital theory, social networks and quality sociability on SNS will help to develop solidarity among multiethnic in Malaysia. Previous researches



also have demonstrated that both contacts quality with multi ethnic members enhance intergroup attitudes (Tropp and Pettigrew, 2005).

**Table 6: Descriptive statistics of the SNS Factors**

Constructs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Quality people SNS	482	2.77	.56
Intimacy through on SNS	482	2.76	.67
Interaction on SNS	482	2.68	.63
Involvement on SNS	482	2.44	.65
Overall		2.67	.63

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