

## INVESTIGATING HOW PEOPLE SELECT SOCIAL NETWORKING SERVICES

**Shiu-Li Huang<sup>1\*</sup> and Chih-Yu Chang<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Prof. Dr., National Taipei University, Taiwan (R.O.C.), slhuang@mail.ntpu.edu.tw

<sup>2</sup>Ms., National Taipei University, Taiwan (R.O.C.), maochang82@gmail.com

\*Corresponding author

### Abstract

Social networking services (SNSs) have become very popular and many Internet users use two or more SNSs. However, little research has been done to understand SNS selection behavior. This study investigates how and when Internet users select SNSs in their daily lives. We adopt the notion of media repertoire to explore how Internet users select combinations of SNSs, and we adopt uses and gratifications theory to identify the values that drive them to choose specific SNSs. We interviewed 40 people to explore the media traits, situational factors and social influences that affect users' SNS selection behavior. We adopted the means-end chain to investigate more deeply the SNS attributes and personal values that affect Internet users' SNS choice behavior. If two or more SNSs were used for the same purpose, the interviewee was asked to explain when and how the selection was made between these SNSs. The findings of this study can help SNS companies to improve SNS functions, help enterprises find suitable SNS platforms on which to communicate with consumers, and help marketing managers place advertisements for target audiences. Enterprises can align their value propositions with the personal values identified in our study. The means-end chains can help them understand the values SNS users want to achieve and the key attributes leading to those values. Enterprises should select the most suitable SNS platform for their corporate message. Moreover, to attract consumers via the SNS, enterprises can propose content that fits the benefits and values that SNS users need. Third, understanding users' SNS selection behavior helps advertisers determine the most suitable SNS on which to place an advertisement for a specific target audience.

**Keywords:** Social networking service, Media repertoire, Uses and gratification, Media selection.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Many studies have investigated media choice behavior in the organizational context (Daft et al., 1987; Russ et al., 1990; Murthy and Kerr, 2003). These studies considered this choice from the perspective of different types of media, such as electronic media and face-to-face communication. Few studies have discussed general usage of computer-mediated communication in daily life. Moreover, little research has been done to understand how choices are made when the options are all of the same media type. Therefore, this study focuses on general Internet users, rather than on companies, to investigate how and when users select social

networking services (SNSs) during their daily lives. Recent years have seen a great surge in the number of SNS users (We Are Social, 2016). Over 50% of Internet users use two or more SNSs (Pew Research Center, 2015). The present study discusses the usage of multiple SNSs. We explore how Internet users use a combination of SNSs to communicate with other users.

Although people tend to use multiple SNSs, they use them in specific combinations. This study also investigates the reasons why Internet users use only a specific set of SNSs despite the fact that there are many SNSs. Extant studies have focused on shopping and organization coordination as the purposes behind the use of multiple communication media (Venkatesan et al., 2007). Thus, further studies are needed to identify other factors that drive Internet users to use multiple SNSs in daily life. The research questions addressed in this paper are as follows: (1) What are the purposes behind using multiple SNSs? (2) Why do users always choose specific SNSs even though there are many SNSs available? (3) What kinds of gratification are obtained from different SNSs? (4) How do Internet users decide to use different SNSs?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Media Selection**

The factors that influence media selection can be divided into three categories: (1) media traits, (2) situational factors, and (3) social influences (Carlson and Davis, 1998; Watson-Manheim and Bélanger, 2007). Media richness (Daft and Lengel, 1986), media synchronicity (Dennis and Valacich, 1999), and social presence (Carlson and Davis, 1998) are the media traits that determine media selection. These media traits are suitable for explaining the selection between traditional media and computer-mediated media. However, since our study focuses on SNSs that have similar media traits (e.g., high synchronicity and social presence capability), these traits might not be suitable to explain users' SNS selection behaviors. A new set of SNS traits needs to be identified.

There are three types of situational factors: (1) individual differences, (2) facilitating factors, and (3) direct constraints (Fulk et al., 1990). First, the variables of individual differences include cognitive style, computer experience, and the individual's age (Aydin, 1987). Second, medium expertise is one of the facilitating factors. This refers to the user's familiarity with and willingness to use new communication technologies frequently; that is, a lack of the skill required to use the medium can decrease the user's perception of the medium's richness (Schmitz and Fulk, 1991). Third, constraints on media use include distance, expediency, time pressure, system access and so on (Trevino et al., 1987). When situational factors come into play, media traits play a lesser role.

Social influence theory postulates that an individual's selection of a medium channel is subjectively and socially influenced by the opinions of coworkers. Social information processing theory has three dimensions that are different from those in theories related to media traits: (1) media properties, (2) salience of media properties, and (3) media choice processes (Fulk et al., 1987). First, the media traits perspective focuses on the capabilities of the medium (e.g., transmission velocity), which are objective attributes that can affect media selection. In contrast, the social influence perspective focuses on others' attitudes, statements and behaviors, which are subjective factors. Second, the media traits perspective postulates that individuals' perceptions of media properties and task attributes affect the salience of media properties, while the social influence perspective emphasizes how coworkers' and supervisors' assessments impact the salience of media properties. Third, the media traits perspective suggests that the fit between media traits and task requirements is the key to determining users' selection behavior, whereas the social influence perspective argues that an individual selects media based on social norms and others' past statements and behaviors.

### **2.2. Theoretical Foundation**

Different SNSs have similar media traits, therefore, media trait theories cannot sufficiently explain how users choose among SNSs. Social factors can influence media choice behavior, but extant social influence theories cannot explain why SNS users tend to use a combination of SNSs to interact with their friends. We adopt the concept of media repertoires to investigate the combinations of SNSs that users commonly use in daily life, and to advance our understanding of how and when different SNSs are selected. Moreover, we adopt uses and gratifications theory to determine the kinds of gratification that users are pursuing when they choose to use a specific SNS.

#### **2.2.1 Media Repertoire**

The concept of repertoires proposed by Orlikowski and Yates (1994) came from a collection of communication genres. The study originally investigated how members of an organization choose

communication genres routinely, and why the selection of these genres changes over time. The concept of genre repertoire has also been studied in the context of users' daily lives (Hasebrink and Popp, 2006). Media repertoire is defined as the entirety of media that a person regularly uses (Hasebrink and Domeyer, 2012). The extant studies on media repertoires in everyday life have focused on a variety of media types, including mobile phones, computers and television. Moreover, they have mainly used content preferences to explain the user's selection behavior (Taneja et al., 2012; Hasebrink and Popp, 2006). In contrast, our study explores users' regular usage of SNSs that belong to the same type of media, and we focus on users' motives and task purposes to determine how they choose a specific set of SNSs.

### *2.2.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory*

Uses and gratifications (U&G) theory was proposed by Katz, who transferred the effect of mass media from "What do the media do to people?" to "What do people do with the media?" (Katz, 1959). This theory emphasizes that people are in the dominant position to choose the media they want. Media uses are mechanisms to gratify people's expectations and needs. Prior studies have shown that U&G theory is suitable for understanding SNS usage behavior (Pai and Arnott, 2013; Ruggiero, 2000; Zhang et al., 2011).

To better understand why people need to use a collection of SNSs, we aim to identify the kinds of gratification achieved by using SNSs in repertoires. We categorize previously discovered SNS usage motivations (i.e., gratifications) into six types: socializing, entertainment, information seeking/sharing, affection, connection, and self-status seeking. We also use open-ended questions to find other motivations which might otherwise have remained undiscovered.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Means-End Chain**

A means-end chain is a model that explains how consumers select a product or service to facilitate the achievement of desired values. It represents the linkages between product attributes (the means), the consequences provided by the attributes, and the personal values (the ends) the consequences reinforce (Reynolds and Gutman, 1988). When the linkages between product attributes and the consequences and values caused by these attributes are identified, such linkages create several hierarchical structures, or ladders, which represent combinations of key perceptual elements that serve as the basis for distinguishing among products (Gutman, 1982). This approach allows us to more deeply understand the motivations behind people's selection behavior.

The means-end chain is formed in three steps (Reynolds and Gutman, 1988): (1) eliciting the distinctions of objects' attributes from respondents; (2) conducting an in-depth interview, known as laddering interview, to explore the personal consequences and values related to objects' attributes; and (3) linking the attributes, consequences and values, and then developing hierarchical value maps.

We adopted the means-end chain to investigate more deeply the SNS attributes and personal values that affect Internet users' SNS choice behavior. Furthermore, in the comparison phase, the interviewee was asked to identify the major communication purposes for which the SNSs were used. If two or more SNSs were used for the same purpose, the interviewee was asked to explain when and how the selection was made between these SNSs. In addition to the SNS attributes and personal values found in the previous phase, this phase aimed to discover other factors (e.g., social and situational factors) which affect the respondent's SNS usage. Each interview lasted about one hour and involved one interviewee, one interviewer and one note taker. Interviewees used a computer to log into the SNSs they often used, which allowed them to recall real situations in order to answer the questions during the interview.

### **3.2. Sample**

According to Taiwan's 2016 Internet Usage Report, people between the ages of 20 and 29 are the main users of social media, and people between the ages of 30 and 39 are close behind. To ensure the sample size was big enough to explain SNS users' behaviors properly, we interviewed 40 people, which exceeds the minimum requirement of 20 respondents for laddering interviews (Reynolds and Olson, 2001). We also used a snowball sampling. We sampled 20 respondents who were between 20 and 29 years of age: 10 males and 10 females, in accordance with the gender proportion noted in the report. The other 20 respondents were 10 males and 10 females, all of whom were between 30 and 39 years of age. All respondents had to meet the following qualifications: (1) at least one year of SNS usage experience, (2) regular usage of three or more SNSs, and (3) regular usage of each SNS for 20 minutes per day, which is in accordance with the average time Taiwanese spend using SNSs per day.

### **3.3. Data Analysis**

The interviews were recorded by a note taker and a voice recorder pen, and were then transcribed into text. Two researchers independently inspected the words in the sentences in order to identify attributes, consequences and values. Once these independent lists were complete, they were compared, and any conflicts were resolved by discussion. These elements were categorized into the main codes and classified into the same types of attributes, consequences and values to generate the summary coding form. Each code was assigned a unique number, allowing a ladder to be encoded via a series of numbers. A matrix was produced in which each row represents a respondent's ladder (one respondent can have multiple ladders). Next, an implication matrix was built to display the number of times each element leads to each other element. Each number was expressed with a decimal point. The digits to the left of the decimal point represent direct relations; the digits to the right of the decimal point represent indirect relations. Once an implication matrix was constructed, we identified the means-end chains which have direct and indirect relationships with attributes, consequences and values. Then, a hierarchical value map (HVM) was created by connecting the relationships among elements. An HVM consists of lines and nodes which represent the important relationships between each concept. Our HVM creates a structure that connects the attributes, consequences and values which were the key distinctions derived from the data analysis. We set the cutoff level in accordance with Reynolds and Gutman (1988) and Pieters et al. (1995) to ensure that all the linkages in the HVM were useful and informative.

The comparison phase focused on social and situational factors which affect respondents' SNS usage. Key themes (e.g., media trait factors, situational factors, social factors) and patterns of SNS usage were identified, based on the coded files. Media traits and social and situational factors were found to influence users' choice behaviors, depending on the usage purpose. This analysis discovered all the factors that affect how and when Internet users select a repertoire of SNSs for different purposes.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1. Laddering Results**

Respondents identified 7 SNSs: Facebook, LINE, Instagram, WeChat, Plurk, Dcard, and LinkedIn. We chose three SNSs (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, and LINE) to analyze means-end chains in accordance with the minimum of 20 respondents for a laddering interview (Reynolds and Olson, 2001). The HVMs indicate that each SNS has its own key attributes that lead to different consequences and values. Facebook provides the following attributes: "Search," "Comment," "Share," "Check In," "A Ton of Users," and "Instantaneousness." LINE provides these attributes: "Upload Photos," "Albums," "Free Call," "Video Call," "Stickers," and "A Variety of Stickers." Instagram provides these attributes: "Stories," "Filter and Edit," "Hashtags," and "Picture Posts." Thus, we propose the following: Internet users' SNS selection behavior is determined by SNS traits (attributes) and the benefits and values delivered by these traits.

### **4.2. SNS Repertoires**

Socializing refers to interacting with friends on the SNS to maintain relationships. Two repertoires are used for socializing: (1) Facebook and LINE, and (2) Facebook and Instagram. The repertoire of Facebook and LINE is most common among users between the ages of 30 and 39. Users usually post videos and pictures to interact with friends on Facebook, but send messages to interact with friends on LINE. On Facebook, users browse friends' posts and learn about their lives in a passive way, but they ask about friends' status and lives directly and proactively on LINE. To express negative emotions, users send a message to a specific person on LINE. However, to express positive opinions, users post articles everyone can see on Facebook.

The repertoire of Facebook and Instagram is commonly used by those who are 20-29 years old. On Instagram, they communicate privately, and only with intimate friends of similar ages. Communication with relatives, colleagues and new friends is done on Facebook. When users want to share posts, videos, and links, they select Facebook. To share pictures, they choose Instagram. In summary, we propose the following: People select multiple SNSs for socializing, and the selection is determined by information type (e.g., text, pictures, and video), communication role (e.g., receivers and senders), communication type (e.g., one-to-one and one-to-many), the level of intimacy between communicators, and user age.

Entertainment is activity designed to escape from pressure and feel enjoyment. Facebook and Instagram is the main repertoire for entertainment purposes. Users watch long videos (e.g., music videos) and read posts on Facebook, but watch short videos (e.g., a video of a friend's activity) and view pictures on Instagram. Users get a variety of information from fan pages and groups on Facebook, but get only friends' information

(e.g., where they play outside) on Instagram. Facebook provides different kinds of information, such as business, education, news, etc. In contrast, Instagram provides information mainly on fashion and brands, with more pictures. Facebook users use many functions including videos, votes, and live stream to escape from the pressures of daily life, but Instagram users look at friends' news feed and stories to have fun. In summary, we propose the following: People select multiple SNSs for entertainment, and the selection is determined by information type (e.g., text, pictures, short video, and long video), variety, and the form of interaction.

Information seeking refers to how users acquire knowledge and get inspiration on new ideas, and information sharing refers to providing useful information and announcing interesting events to others. Facebook and LINE is the main repertoire used for information seeking and sharing. Users searching for a variety of information use Facebook; however, when searching for specific information, they use LINE groups. Entertainment information is the most popular type of information users search for on Facebook, and job information is the most popular information type sought for in LINE groups. To collect and browse a variety of information, users turn to Facebook. In contrast, they use LINE to ask specific friends for answers and suggestions. Since Facebook users' friend lists include less-familiar acquaintances, users usually share professional information on Facebook in order to be seen as polite and to build up their personal image on the Facebook newsfeed. Other information—particularly entertainment information such as funny pictures—is shared with friends in chat rooms on LINE, because LINE groups are made up of familiar friends who can joke around with each other. Based on these findings, we propose the following: People select multiple SNSs for information seeking and sharing, and this selection is determined by information variety, subject, number of sources, and the level of intimacy between communicators.

Affection is expressing emotions when asking for support and advice from others. Facebook and LINE is the main repertoire used to garner affection. When users face daily problems (e.g., how to remove grease from T-shirts), they post requests for advice on Facebook. When users face life problems such as how to choose a job after graduation, they ask for advice by sending person-to-person (one-to-one) messages on LINE. There are two reasons for choosing one-to-one messages on LINE: (1) it is more private than posting on Facebook, and (2) it ensures a response from the receiver. Posting on Facebook does not necessarily guarantee a response. Based on these findings, we propose the following: People select multiple SNSs to garner affection, and this selection is determined by the type of problem being faced, and the need for privacy and responsiveness.

Connection refers to the sense of an ongoing relationship with old friends and the establishment of relationships with new friends via the SNS. Facebook and LINE is the main repertoire used to achieve connection. Since the number of Facebook users is greater than that of LINE users, one can easily make new friends on Facebook. While users can add friends via account name, telephone number, email, etc. on Facebook, they are required to add friends via telephone number and LINE ID on LINE. Therefore, adding friends is easier on Facebook than on LINE. Thus, users usually communicate with less-familiar acquaintances on Facebook, but communicate with close friends on LINE. Users prefer using LINE groups to using the group chat rooms on Facebook messenger. Users find the LINE group interface easier to use, and they like stickers that can express real emotions, allowing the users to feel more connected with friends. There are two communication task subjects for connection: work and entertainment. If users want to turn over work affairs to colleagues, they select LINE as the communication channel. LINE informs message senders as to whether or not the receiver has read the message. To share humor with new friends, users communicate via Facebook. As such, we propose the following: People select multiple SNSs for connection, and the selection is determined by the number of users, the method of adding friends, the functions for expressing emotion (e.g., stickers), and the communication task (e.g., work or entertainment).

Self-status seeking refers to building up one's personal identity and gaining respect from others. Facebook and Instagram is the main repertoire used for self-status seeking. Users comment on public affairs or post business issues on Facebook to establish a professional identity. Users share their daily lives (e.g., food, beautiful scenery) on Instagram to establish their identity as someone who has a rich and colorful life. As mentioned above, Facebook is formed around acquaintances, and Instagram is formed around close friends. Therefore, users are used to making positive posts on Facebook and sharing negative emotions on Instagram. Users consider Facebook as a way to create an objective impression for friends because it includes basic information such as one's birthday and education, and Instagram is better used to establish a subjective impression for friends because picture posts show one's style. Based on these findings, we propose the following: People select multiple SNSs for self-status seeking, and this selection is determined by the type of identity and impression they want to create, the level of intimacy between communicators, and the user interfaces.

### **4.3. Situational Factors**

Six situational factors affect users' SNSs selection behaviors.

**Message topics:** Users prefer to post politics, business knowledge, and technology issues on Facebook, which has more SNS users, and they can share each other's opinions to expand their view. Users prefer to post food, fashion, and sightseeing pictures on Instagram, which aggregates a multitude of pictures under a single hashtag. Users prefer to announce job affairs on LINE, which includes groups of company members and a "read" function which allows all to follow the progress and schedule.

**Communicator characteristics:** Since users' Facebook friends lists may include coworkers and supervisors (e.g., colleagues, bosses, and teachers), users may be reluctant to share their daily lives on Facebook, and are more likely to post only positive events or express only positive emotions on Facebook. To express negative emotions and share sensitive issues, users choose Instagram and LINE, because Instagram is formed around close friends (since there is only one way to add friends), and LINE enables them to control who can receive the message. The roles of Facebook friends (e.g., colleagues, bosses, and teachers) are another reason why users share their daily lives on LINE instead of on Facebook, because such sharing may give the impression that they do not work hard or they can take on more work.

**Individual's age and medium expertise:** Our respondents were 20-39 years old. Based on our interviews, 97.5% of 20- to 39-year-olds use Facebook to search for various kinds of needed information. Within our sample, 80% of those age 20-29 reduce their use of Facebook and turn to Instagram because they can easily adapt to new technology and a new SNS interface. Among respondents between the ages of 30 and 39, 55% commonly use Facebook instead of the telephone to communicate. This is the result of medium expertise: users are familiar with using Facebook to connect with each other despite Facebook's lack of richness compared to the telephone. Users between the ages of 20 and 39 use LINE, but they use it for different purposes. Half (50%) of the interviewees between 20 and 29 years old ask friends out and chat with friends on LINE. In contrast, 45% of the interviewees between the ages of 30 and 39 commonly use LINE to communicate with colleagues and bosses regarding work issues.

**Task characteristics:** Different task categories affect users selecting different SNSs. When searching broadly for various kinds of information, users choose Facebook, because of its large user base. To search for specific information (e.g., restaurants, clothes, etc.), they choose Instagram because of its picture posts. When asking for opinions from relevant groups (e.g., how to educate kids), users choose Facebook groups and LINE groups. When users who are students ranging from 20 to 25 years old need to discuss reports with classmates, they use Facebook because its group function makes it easy to upload files, vote, post new materials, and comment on posts. When users go out to play and want to share their experience with friends, they use Facebook's "Check In" to tell others where they are and they use LINE's "Upload Photos" to share something with a specific person. They can also use Instagram's "Upload Photos" and "Stories" functionality in order to share with everyone.

**Message characteristics:** To communicate sensitive information (e.g., family problems and unemployment) and negative emotions (e.g., anger and disappointed), users between the ages of 30 and 39 choose LINE, and those between the ages of 20 and 29 choose Instagram, because friends on LINE and Instagram are closer than those on Facebook. To express opinions on a formal issue (e.g., opinions on news) and positive emotions (e.g., happiness and enjoyment), 20- to 39-year-olds choose Facebook because they want to get praise and more feedback from Facebook's large user base. When sharing the same happy event on Facebook and LINE simultaneously, users make a short Facebook post of the event results, and share the process of such an event via long messages with a specific person on LINE.

**Time pressure:** Users between 20 and 29 years old select Facebook to discuss reports. However, if the message is urgent or they need to meet the deadline, users change their SNS choice. They usually have both a Facebook group and a LINE group for the same members in case they need to communicate instantly. For example, to change a plan or fix something on a report, group members use LINE's "Free Call" function to have an immediate discussion on the issue. After discussing, they update the schedule on Facebook. Users between 30 and 39 years old choose LINE to discuss work issues. When confronting problems, they are used to sending email or calling directly on the phone, rather than using SNSs.

Based on these findings, we propose the following: Message topics, communicator characteristics, the individual's age and medium expertise, task characteristics, message characteristics, and time pressure influence users' selection of SNSs.

#### **4.4. Social Factors**

Three social factors affect users' SNSs selection behaviors.

**Network externalities:** Network externalities is defined as the increase in value and benefits obtained from products or services caused by the extended number of users (Katz and Shapiro, 1985). "Large user base" is the main social factor that drives users to choose Facebook. One benefit is that Facebook's large user base creates more information and more friends which can be easily searched by users. The large user base also causes society's more salient individuals (e.g., writers, fan page editors, Internet celebrities, etc.) to choose Facebook to build up their identities. Such celebrities find news and posts on Facebook to be more diverse and more quickly updatable in comparison to television and newspapers. In addition, Facebook's algorithms identify and display celebrity posts related to users' interests, based on the users' previous viewing behavior. Therefore, celebrities invite people to become fans via Facebook, where such interactions can increase their exposure and impact on society.

**Subjective norms:** Subjective norms refers to how a person's behaviors are affected by his or her perception of the opinions and behaviors of important others such as parents, friends, colleagues, etc. (Schepers and Wetzels, 2007). Friends are the key social factor that influences users' selection of Facebook. People are encouraged by their friends to use Facebook so that they can talk about a common topic and increase the entertainment value. Moreover, friends tell their friends to follow stores on Facebook because they can shop in the same stores and share shipping fees. Colleagues, customers, friends, and official accounts are social factors that influence users to choose LINE. LINE is usually used for work communication. Office workers discuss issues with colleagues in LINE chat rooms. Albums and notes can be used to record the messages exchanged during the discussion. In addition, customers induce office workers to choose LINE as the communication channel. Customers find searching message history on LINE to be a convenient way to find information, such as a product's price during a specific transaction. Users are encouraged by friends to use LINE groups in order to make free groups calls and discuss things with each other in real time.

**Companies (official accounts) and celebrities:** Official accounts are another social factor that causes users to increase their LINE usage. Official accounts may give free stickers as a reward for adding them as LINE friends. Users get not only free stickers but new information from official accounts. Such accounts also have reward cards that entice consumers to accumulate points for gifts. This encourages customers to continue to visit the physical stores of official accounts, reducing the chances of losing customers. In addition, official accounts make it easy for consumers to ask questions. Official accounts, Internet celebrities, and foreign celebrities are social factors which influence users to select Instagram. "Post pictures" is Instagram's primary characteristic. Brands that offer such things as cosmetics and clothing can take advantage of this Instagram feature to promote their products via their official accounts. In addition, official accounts allow users to ask questions about the products directly—or even place orders—using Instagram's message box. This marketing strategy makes it convenient for Instagram users to buy commodities. Some Internet celebrities use Instagram as their only SNS platform, because their personal homepages are comprised of hundreds of pictures which show their unique style and build up their personal image. Users usually collect brand and fashion pictures from these Internet celebrities to imitate their style or stimulate design ideas for work. Furthermore, the accounts of foreign celebrities (e.g., Korean celebrities) are easier to find on Instagram than on Facebook because of Instagram's English ID. Users who are eager to follow and browse foreign celebrities' information are increasingly likely to turn to Instagram.

In summary, we propose the following: Social influence from network externalities (e.g., user base), subjective norms (e.g., friends, colleagues, customers), and companies (official accounts) and celebrities determine SNS selection.

#### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

We combined media repertoire and uses and gratification theory to understand how and when a series of SNSs selected by users. A soft laddering interview process allowed us to create HVMs for Facebook, LINE and Instagram, resulting in the identification of the key features of each SNS and how these features lead to personal benefits. We identified not only media trait factors but also situational and social factors that affect SNS selection for different purposes. Fig. 1 summarizes our findings. Propositions are proposed on the basis of the research findings, which provide directions for future research.

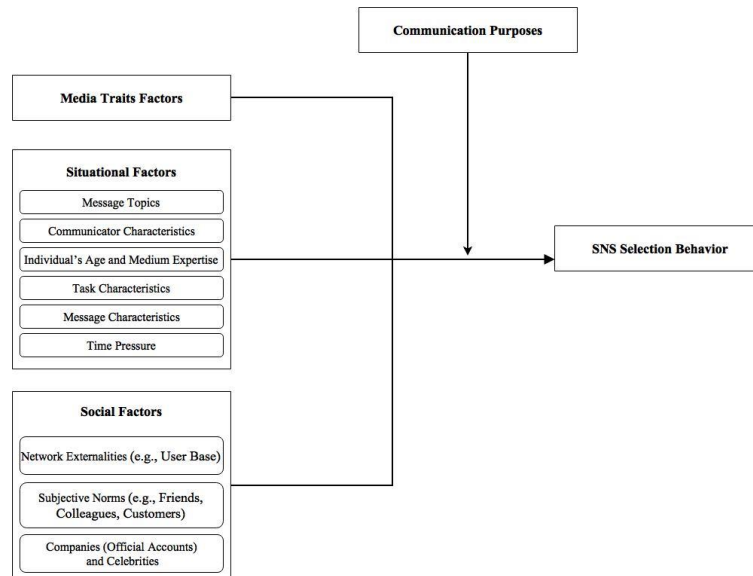


Fig. 1. Research framework for SNS selection behavior.

Enterprises can align their value propositions with the personal values identified in our study. The HVMs can help them understand the values SNS users want to achieve and the key attributes leading to those values. Enterprises should select the most suitable SNS platform for their corporate message. In other words, while many enterprises have a Facebook fan page, a LINE official account, and an Instagram official account all going at the same time, they should select the right SNS platform based on their industry type and their users' selection behavior. Moreover, to attract consumers via the SNS, enterprises can propose content that fits the benefits and values that SNS users need. LINE is used for job communication, and Facebook and Instagram are used for entertainment. Therefore, LINE is suitable when using a rational appeal to attract users, and Facebook and Instagram are more suitable for attracting users via an emotional appeal. Third, understanding users' SNS selection behavior helps advertisers determine the most suitable SNS on which to place an advertisement for a specific target audience.

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was financially supported by the Ministry of Science and Technology of Taiwan, R.O.C. (Grant NO. MOST 106-2410-H-305-021).

## REFERENCE LIST

- Aydin, C.E. (Year), "The effects of social information and cognitive style on medical information system attitudes and use". In: Proceedings of the Annual Symposium on Computer Application in Medical Care, 1987 New York. American Medical Informatics Association, pp. 601.
- Carlson, P.J. and Davis, G.B. (1998). "An investigation of media selection among directors and managers: From "self" to "other" orientation." MIS Quarterly 22(3), 335-362.
- Daft, R.L. and Lengel, R.H. (1986). "Organizational information requirements, media richness and structural design." Management Science 32(5), 554-571.
- Daft, R.L., Lengel, R.H. and Trevino, L.K. (1987). "Message equivocality, media selection, and manager performance: Implications for information systems." MIS quarterly 11(3), 355-366.
- Dennis, A.R. and Valacich, J.S. 1999. Rethinking media richness: Towards a theory of media synchronicity. Proceedings of the 32nd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences. Los Alamitos.
- Fulk, J., Schmitz, J. and Steinfeld, C. 1990. A social influence model of technology use, Newbury Park, CA,



Sage Publications.

- Fulk, J., Steinfeld, C., Schmitz, J. and Power, J.G. (1987). "A social information processing model of media use in organizations." *Communication Research* 14(5), 529-552.
- Gutman, J. (1982). "A means-end chain model based on consumer categorization processes." *Journal of Marketing* 46, 60-72.
- Hasebrink, U. and Domeyer, H. (2012). "Media repertoires as patterns of behaviour and as meaningful practices: A multimethod approach to media use in converging media environments." *Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 9(2), 757-779.
- Hasebrink, U. and Popp, J. (2006). "Media repertoires as a result of selective media use: A conceptual approach to the analysis of patterns of exposure." *Communications* 31(3), 369-387.
- Katz, E. (1959). "Mass communications research and the study of popular culture: An editorial note on a possible future for this journal." *Studies in Public Communication* 2(1-6).
- Katz, M.L. and Shapiro, C. (1985). "Network externalities, competition, and compatibility." *The American economic review* 75(3), 424-440.
- Murthy, U.S. and Kerr, D.S. (2003). "Decision making performance of interacting groups: An experimental investigation of the effects of task type and communication mode." *Information & Management* 40(5), 351-360.
- Orlikowski, W.J. and Yates, J. (1994). "Genre repertoire: The structuring of communicative practices in organizations." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 39(4), 541-574.
- Pai, P. and Arnott, D.C. (2013). "User adoption of social networking sites: Eliciting uses and gratifications through a means-end approach." *Computers in Human Behavior* 29(3), 1039-1053.
- Pew Research Center. 2015. Social media update 2014 [Online]. Available: <http://www.pewresearch.org/> [Accessed October 31 2016].
- Pieters, R., Baumgartner, H. and Allen, D. (1995). "A means-end chain approach to consumer goal structures." *International journal of research in marketing* 12(3), 227-244.
- Reynolds, T.J. and Gutman, J. (1988). "Laddering theory, method, analysis, and interpretation." *Journal of Advertising Research* 28(1), 11-31.
- Reynolds, T.J. and Olson, J.C. 2001. *Understanding consumer decision making: The means-end approach to marketing and advertising strategy*, Psychology Press.
- Ruggiero, T.E. (2000). "Uses and gratifications theory in the 21st century." *Mass Communication & Society* 3(1), 3-37.
- Russ, G.S., Daft, R.L. and Lengel, R.H. (1990). "Media selection and managerial characteristics in organizational communications." *Management Communication Quarterly* 4(2), 151-175.
- Schepers, J. and Wetzels, M. (2007). "A meta-analysis of the technology acceptance model: Investigating subjective norm and moderation effects." *Information & management* 44(1), 90-103.
- Schmitz, J. and Fulk, J. (1991). "Organizational colleagues, media richness, and electronic mail: A test of the social influence model of technology use." *Communication Research* 18(4), 487-523.
- Taneja, H., Webster, J.G., Malthouse, E.C. and Ksiazek, T.B. (2012). "Media consumption across platforms: Identifying user-defined repertoires." *New Media & Society* 14(6), 951-968.
- Trevino, L.K., Lengel, R.H. and Daft, R.L. (1987). "Media symbolism, media richness, and media choice in organizations a symbolic interactionist perspective." *Communication Research* 14(5), 553-574.
- Venkatesan, R., Kumar, V. and Ravishanker, N. (2007). "Multichannel shopping: Causes and consequences." *Journal of Marketing* 71( ), 114-132.
- Watson-Manheim, M.B. and Bélanger, F. (2007). "Communication media repertoires: Dealing with the multiplicity of media choices." *MIS Quarterly* 31(2), 267-293.
- We Are Social. 2016. Digital [Online]. Available: <http://wearesocial.com/uk/special-reports/digital-in-2016> [Accessed August 15 2016].

Zhang, Y., Tang, L.S. and Leung, L. (2011). "Gratifications, collective self-esteem, online emotional openness, and traitlike communication apprehension as predictors of facebook uses." *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 14(12), 733-9.