

Strictly by the Facebook: Unobtrusive Method for Differentiating Users

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1. How do we capture Facebook use?

- 1) How is perceived Facebook importance associated with attitudes toward Facebook?
- 2) How is perceived importance of Facebook related to actual Facebook use?
- 3) How is perceived importance of Facebook related to different types of Facebook use?

2. Background

- Ample research uses survey measures to gauge how long, how often, and for what purposes people use Facebook or to differentiate different types of Facebook users, such as those who use it less intensively or more intensively [1].
- Studies suggest that self-reports of actual Facebook use are not accurate [2].
- Facebook logging techniques are often expensive and invasive; yet, there is a need for a way to easily identify different types of Facebook users.
- This research explores whether one survey item--Facebook importance--can distinguish Facebook users' actual use (e.g., how long they use Facebook, how often, and for what activities).

3. Method

Undergraduate students (N=62) were tracked for 7 days using the Kidlogger computer monitoring software and the AWARE Framework phone monitoring app.

 Computer and phone logs	 Survey questions (see Table 1)	
 Facebook activity logs	"I log on to Facebook to feel connected" "I log on to Facebook out of boredom." "I use Facebook to share my accomplishments." "I use Facebook to share my frustrations." (1=Strongly Disagree; 5=Strongly Agree)	Key item: "Rate how important each of these sites is for you: Facebook." (1=Not at all important; 5=Extremely important)

4. Snapshot of a Week on Facebook



Daily: More than 29 minutes on Facebook



Weekly: More than 8 posts/photo uploads/status updates



Weekly: Up to 25 Unique message threads (mean ~8)



4 to 1,207 Facebook friends (mean = 437.7)

- Average age = 19.3 years (SD=1.24 years); N=5 logged no Facebook use
- Spent on average 29.34 (SD=39.68) minutes on Facebook per day over 25.51 (SD=31.71) average daily visits; average 1.37 minutes per visit
- Generated about 8.5 posts over the week of the study and engaged in nearly 8 different unique conversation threads via Facebook Messenger

5. Facebook Importance and Activity

Table 1. Predicting Facebook importance based on reasons for use

Purpose for Using Facebook	Coefficient
I log on to Facebook to feel connected	0.412*** (0.095)
I log on to Facebook out of boredom	0.360** (0.129)
I use Facebook to share my accomplishments	0.159 (0.129)
I use Facebook to share my frustrations	-0.193 (0.146)

Control variables included gender, race, and age. Standard deviation (SD) in parentheses. Table 2 provides results of four separate regressions.

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

- Reasons for using Facebook: Facebook importance is related to feeling connected and not being bored but not related to sharing accomplishments or frustrations (Table 1).

- Relationship between Facebook importance and use: Facebook wall activity predicted Facebook importance; however, amount of time on Facebook and frequency of checking did not predict importance (Table 2).

Table 2. Predicting Facebook importance based on Facebook activity

Facebook Activity	Coefficient
Facebook duration (computer and phone)	0.0001 (0.0001)
Facebook visits	0.003 (0.004)
Facebook wall activity	3.014* (1.322)

6. User Differences

- Using Facebook importance to compare participants more than 1 SD above (N=9) and below (N=11) the mean (M=3.35); no differences in frequency or duration of Facebook use found.
- Those rating Facebook as very important tended to be *producers*, generating more content and using Facebook to broadcast and feel connected.
- Those rating Facebook as unimportant tended to be *consumers*, producing less and spending less time on Facebook.

Producers
(N=9)



rate Facebook as very important

30.7

visits per day
(SD=37.7;
range=0.6-85.8)



are tagged in >4 photos per week

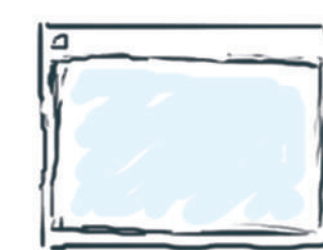
Consumers
(N=11)



rate Facebook as unimportant

12.9

visits per day
(SD=12.9;
range=0-80.4)



engage in little Facebook activity



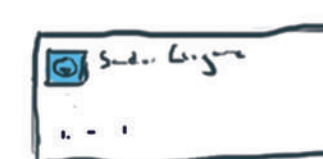
on average spend 39.7 minutes on Facebook



on average spend 14.8 minutes on Facebook (N.S.)



M=7.8 wall posts and status updates



M=2.1 wall posts and status updates



use Facebook to feel connected



use Facebook to share their accomplishments

7. Conclusions

- A single item rating Facebook importance is a simple question for distinguishing between producer-types and less active consumer-types.
- Facebook "importance" is associated with the social activities students engage in (such as messaging) as well as the purposes for using it (e.g., to feel connected or to relieve boredom) rather than duration on Facebook.
- Data drawn from college students and may not generalize to other populations; college students use social media extensively for social/academic purposes [1,4].
- Future studies should explore these methods with other populations and further examine the types of users that this question identifies as well as whether Facebook "importance" predicts outcomes.

References

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