

DOES FACEBOOK FUNCTIONALITY BOOST CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AMONG MALAYSIAN YOUTHS?

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Abstract

Civic engagement is an important process in which multiracial youth embrace the responsibilities to actively participate in public life to help shape and strengthen the local community. More recently, the creative application of technology such as social media application has attracted considerable attention how to fostering youth engagement. By engaging youths through social media such as Facebook as a two-way communications tool, young people can have a say in the governance of their local communities as well as broader society. Although it is clear that social media such as Facebook is very powerful tool for communication, many of young people are unable to identify the Facebook functionality in term of developing communication strategies and to allocate the resources effectively. The main reason behind the ineptitude is deficiency of understanding the definition and the functionality of Facebook itself. With an emerging impact of social media specifically Facebook in the organizational domain, more knowledge is needed on how to design and use social media to motivate youth civic engagement. Taking this into account this study sought to find whether there is a relationship between Facebook functionality and civic engagement to boost youth civic engagement. Based on the literature reviews of civic engagement factors and the functionality of Facebook, a conceptual framework of relationship was proposed and developed to examine the relationships between the Facebook functionality and civic engagement. The study will also provide the direction and guidance to the youths in managing the functionality of Facebook in their communities and also if any benefits for them to use Facebook in communication with the public. Youths can also monitor and understand how social media such as Facebook activities vary in terms of their function and impact, so as to develop a congruent social media strategy based on the appropriate balance of functionality of Facebook for their community.

Keywords: Facebook Functionality, Civic Engagement, Youth.

1. INTRODUCTION

Civic engagement is important process in which youth embrace the responsibilities and take collection activities to address issues of public concern. In other hand they are also actively participate in public life to help shape and strengthen the local community. When the community is viewed as multicultural especially the participants are young people, they need to create better and more powerful tools for them to become civically engaged. Therefore we cannot deny the power of social media and of course the impact that it is having and becoming essential components of civic engagement strategies, especially when youth are concerned. On top of that, social networking is one of the most important recent developments in youth culture and Facebook is right now the biggest social network on the internet. Youths are using Facebook for keeping in touch and developing new contacts with friends, sharing content, engaging in self-expression and exploring identity and accessing information. In other hand, Facebook also encourage youth to participate in groups and this also will lead to youth engagement opportunities.

1. ISSUES ON FACEBOOK FUNCTIONALITY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Social media is a new and promising arena for civic engagement. The use of social media is growing rapidly and we certainly don't need to mention it, with Facebook affecting the lives of people drastically. Young people are among the most frequent users of social networks. Most of them have turned away from the mass media and primarily look to the Internet or alternative sources for their information and get benefit from virtual spaces to socialize. They want to socialize and be with friends and social networks will make it easy for them to join in (Raynes-Goldie, Kate & Luke Walker, 2008). Although, Social media such as Facebook is a most powerful communication tool among the youth, the advancement of this communication tool has led to decrement of civic engagement (the Ainin, S, Jaafar, N. I & Warren, A. M, 2014), politically apathetic and lack civic awareness (Bennet, 2008), opportunities and pathways for youth civic engagement remain limited (Camino & Zeldin, 2002).

Youth are unable to identify the Facebook functionality in engaging among them in term of developing strategies and to allocate the resources effectively. The main reason behind the ineptitude is deficiency of understanding the definition and the functionality of Facebook itself (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

In the case of Malaysia, research published on engagement is still in its infancy (Abdul Hamid and Yahya, 2011). There is only conceptual research on civic engagement through social media on issues and challenges have been done (Ainin, S, Jaafar, N. I & Warren, A. M (2014), it is not extending to specifically on Facebook and its functionalities. Due to this concern, the study is to look in depth on the relationship between Facebook functionalities and civic engagement and to produce a conceptual framework which may give better solutions especially to increase youth engagement.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPMENT ON CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Past research has provided some information on engagement. However, there is limited research published on civic engagement. Concerns that the younger generations may be less inclined to participate and engage in their communities have created an interest in the way young people are socialized and learn to engage in their communities (Flanagan, 2003). It also mentioned that the overall decline in civic life and an overall lack of participation in community service may contribute to the declining interest in community engagement. These concerns have served as an impetus for conversations regarding the manner in which students are taught to engage in the communities in which they live (Lisman, 1998).

Social media includes a variety of web-based tools and services that are designed to promote community development through collaboration and information sharing (Arnold & Paulus, 2010; Junco, Helbergert, & Loken, 2011). Social media can include blogs, wikis, media (audio, photo, video, text), sharing tools, networking platforms (including Facebook), and virtual worlds. These communication tools especially Facebook provide opportunities for individual expression as well as interactions with other users (Arnold & Paulus, 2010). Using Facebook citizens in general participate in the life of a community to foster living conditions and shape the community's future. Common forms of civic engagement are making donations; participating in community work like cleaning the environment; voting; attending community meetings or functions; contributing ideas to social causes; contacting public officials; attending protests, and speeches; signing petitions; serving local organizations; and writing articles concerning community matters. Therefore this paper is to define and to produce a conceptual framework to identify the relationship between Facebook functionality and civic engagement.

3. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FACEBOOK FUNCTIONALITY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: AN IDEA?

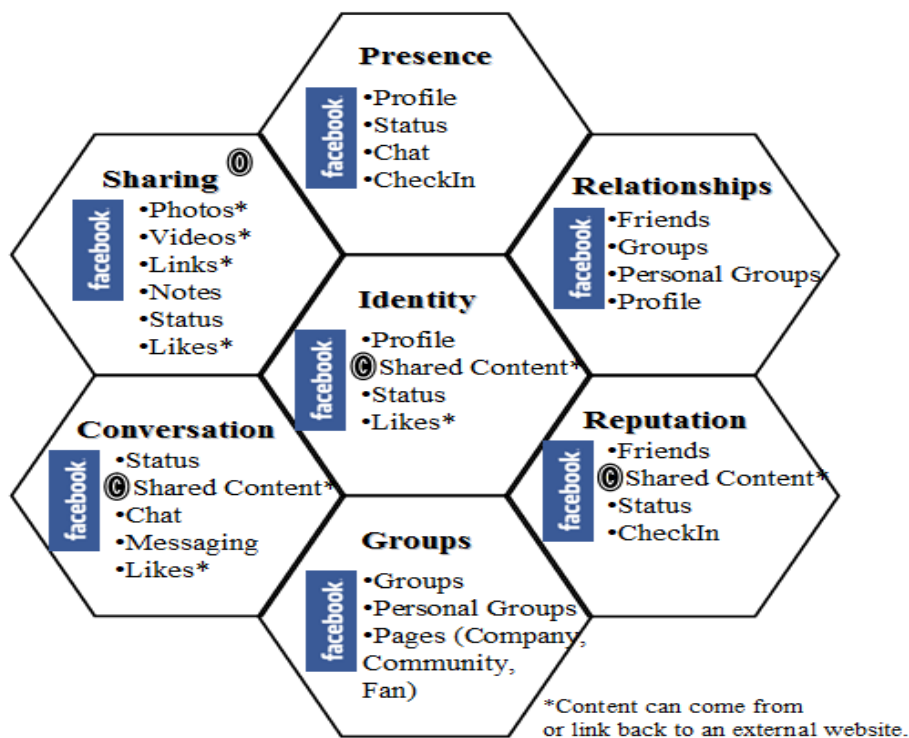


Fig. 1. Facebook features' fit on Smith's (2007) Honeycomb Model (Rana Babac, 2011)

3.1 Facebook Functionality

Facebook continues to have a tremendous impact on how people behave online; how they search, play, converse, form communities, build and maintain relationships; and how they create, tag, modify and share content across any number of sites and devices. In order to provide a foundation for understanding these Facebook service, consumers and their specific engagement needs, a honeycomb social media functional building blocks framework was recently presented (Kietzmann et al., 2011). This honeycomb model has seven blocks that helps to explain the implications that each block can have for how organization should engage with social media. **Groups** represent the extent to which users can form their own societies or sub societies. The more 'social' a network becomes the more of Facebook groups and pages of friends in their list, followers, and contacts. **Reputation** is the extent to which users can determine other users' level or themselves in term of their reputations through their shared contents, status, friend list and CheckIn on Facebook. **Relationships** represent the extent of users attached to other users. They can create relationships through profile on Facebook, adding new friends, joining other groups and also by creating their personal groups. **Sharing** represents the extent to which users' exchange, distribute, receive and sharing their photos, audio, video, notes, what they like and status through Facebook. **Conversations** represent the extent to which users communicate with other users in Facebook setting such as chatting, sharing status, sending messages, shared contents and shared what they likes through Facebook. **Identity** is the extents to which users reveal their identities in Facebook setting such as their profile (name, gender, age and qualification), their status and interest, their shared contents and any information that represent users. **Presence** represents the extent which can user identify existing of other users from their users profile, status, chatting and CheckIn status on Facebook.

3.2 Civic Engagement

Over ten years, researchers and scholar are developing their interest to do research on engagement (Kahn, 1992; Schaufeli et al., 2003; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Leiter, 2005; Latib, A. L et al., 2014). Civic engagement is not restricted or related to politics only. The reference to civic suggests that any kind of involvement in the affairs of government, politics, administration, or organizations could be regarded as civic engagement. On top of that, engagement is much more than participation, even observant participation. It goes further than that since it demands more than membership in an organization, paying dues, occasional

attendance of meetings and reading the materials provided by the institution or organization. It also refers to how citizens in general participate in the life of a community to foster living conditions and shape the community's future. The merging of community building and youth development has been at the core of recent youth engagement literature (Nitzberg, 2005; Kubisch, 2005; Cahn & Gray, 2005; Lynn, 2005; Brennan, Barnett, & Lesmeister, 2006). It has identified that youth must be fully engaged and involved in change efforts at the community level if they are to learn to function as effective members of society (Nitzberg, 2005). Community building, for individuals, focuses on building the capacity and empowerment to identify opportunities for change within or outside of the community.

3.3 Relationship between Facebook Functionality And Civic Engagement: An Idea?

3.3.1 Sharing

Social media includes a variety of web-based tools and services that are designed to promote community development through collaboration and information sharing (Arnold & Paulus, 2010; Junco, Helbergert, & Loken, 2011). These tools provide opportunities for individual expression as well as interactions with other users (Arnold & Paulus, 2010). Social media can include blogs, wikis, media (audio, photo, video, text), sharing tools, networking platforms (including Facebook), and virtual worlds. Facebook is not used only for sharing personal details, but is also an active construction of one's perception of who one is. Facebook have developed in a direction from mainly featuring forms of self expression and social relations and being networked. Further, youths are engaged in media making as part of the everyday, from the posting and sharing of photos, uploading video and sharing interest by joining specific groups.

Current research has indicated that using social media as an educational tool can lead to increased student engagement (Annetta, Minogue, Holmes, & Cheng, 2009). By encouraging engagement with Facebook, students develop connections with peers, establish a virtual community of learners and ultimately increase their overall learning (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012).

[H1] Higher in exchange, distribute and receive content among youths on Facebook will be positively related with civic engagement among them.

3.3.2 Presence

The increasing presence of youth in the development process and the establishment of youth-adult partnerships have created an environment where communities are more receptive. The active involvement of youth highlights their value and provides an opportunity to erase negative stereotypes. Recent research has focused on such positively held adult notions of youth and their relationship to encouraging youth involvement. Zeldin (2002) reported that many adults perceive adolescents as being capable of contributing to their communities, performing well in community positions, and taking proactive approaches to their life development. This receptiveness opens the door to long-term youth involvement, while also facilitating greater appreciation for the youth contribution to the community by adults (Camino, 2000).

[H2] There is a positive relationship between presence function and civic engagement by using Facebook.

3.3.3 Group

Of course the way you present yourself depends on the group you're in. You're constantly adopting group values, and acting toward those values. When we look at Facebook we see that those values are quite explicit. When you write something, the group is able to like and comment on your post. In a homogeneous group it's clear what the values of the group are and how you have to present yourself. With Facebook becoming more and more diverse, the group values become more opaque/ambiguous. It's no longer possible to conform yourself to the values of the group, because there is no longer one group. The way you present yourself in a professional setting is totally different than in a personal setting, but with Facebook those different world become mixed up. 'As the user composition of Facebook becomes more diverse, it will become more challenging for individuals to manage their personal identity within a website originally designed for the college years, but increasingly open to the post-college and professional years' (Dimicco 2007: 384).

[H3] There is a positive relationship between group function and civic engagement by using Facebook.

3.3.4 Identity

Many scholars have written about the importance of identity for youths' civic development (Crocetti, Jahromi, & Meeus, 2012). There is work on identity status and civic engagement (Crocetti et al., 2012; Hardy et al.,

2010). Moral and political identities were positively related to overall involvement in youth engagement (Tenelle J. Porter, 2013). Social media especially Facebook is not only for developing an online identity between users, it's also popular stages for self-expression, communication and self-promotion (Van, D. J, 2013). Facebook wall and photos will determine your identity. Facebook have been described as anonymous, because while people have some level of privacy, the information they post is linked to their real identity (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008). The question what you post depends on the way you want to present yourself. You consider how you want others to see you. Facebook is a good tool to build up a kind of identity and to communicate this to others for example we have photos of teenagers who try out new hairstyles or show off their new clothes and they get positive or negative feedback from their friends. Youth is a time when you build up your identity. You look at who you are and what defines you as a person and what kinds of friends and hobbies you have. Youth use these sites to help shape their identities. It looks at how young people express themselves visually on social networking sites. Facebook's new layout scrupulously combines the various needs for self-expression, self-communication and self-promotion through one and the same interface. With the imposed Timeline format, users may release more 'social' and personal data than they would like, but it also gives them an instrument to carefully craft their public profile.

[H4] There is a positive relationship between identity function and civic engagement by using Facebook.

3.3.5 Reputation

Popularity is not viewed as an indicator of liking by peers but rather is seen as a reputational construct involving power and status in the group (Lease, Kennedy, & Axelrod, 2002; Xie, Cairns, & Cairns, 1999). When we look at facebook we see that those values are quite explicit. When you write something, the group is able to like and comment on your post. Popular postings that get a lot of comments show up at the "top news" pages, while postings without any group interest end at the "most recent" page between all the mafia wars and farmville updates.

[H5] There is a positive relationship between reputation function and civic engagement by using Facebook.

3.3.6 Relationships

Social media tools especially Facebook are woven into many young people's day-to-day lives. Young people are in conversation and communication with their peer groups using a wide variety of different media and media devices every day. In Facebook, creating communities such as interest group or join other groups where youth are encouraged to be engaged allows youth to adapt to and overcome adversities. By developing positive relationships with adults in the community, youth will value the community and the relationships they have developed (Brennan, Barnett, and Lesmeister 2007).

[H6] There is a positive relationship between relationships function and civic engagement by using Facebook.

3.3.7 Conversation

Social media like Facebook can be utilized to bring youth's awareness and engagement with social causes. It is important for youth to be empowered with education and training to build their self-esteem and ensuring that their decisions are important and their ideas taken seriously to overcome the barriers. For successful youth involvement, it is important to involve their families and traditional and religious leaders in the process. Facebook would be able to enhance the participation of youths in engaging themselves for various activities such as online discussions, posting their opinions on current issues example on promoting health and environment awareness.

[H7] Effective communication among youth on Facebook will be positively related to higher civic engagement among them.

4. FINDINGS: A TENTATIVE RESEARCH CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 2 presents the study's research conceptual framework, developed based on the honeycomb of Facebook framework. The framework considers that the honeycomb Facebook are the key factors affecting civic engagement, where the composing constructs of Facebook functionality are sharing, presence, conversations, identity, relationship, reputation and groups.

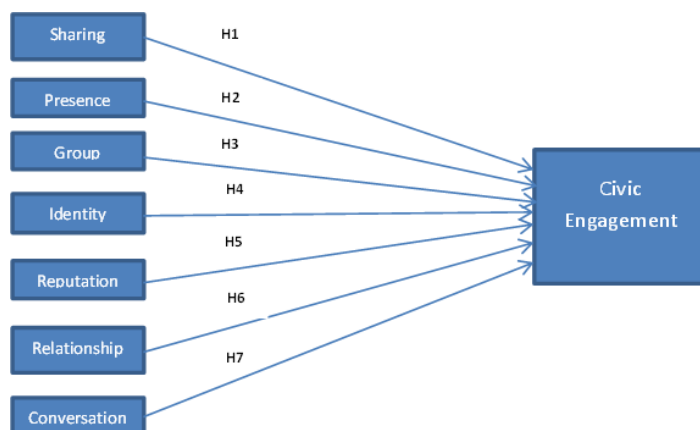


Fig. 2. Tentative Research Conceptual Framework

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the conceptual framework on relationship between Facebook functionality and civic engagement was developed. These findings are linked to existing theoretical concepts, and directions for future research on related area. This conceptual framework will also can be a fundamental guideline to show whether the Facebook functionality has relationship with civic engagement

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was financially supported by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) Malaysia under Fundamental Research Gant Scheme (FRGS) Universiti Selangor (Grant NO. FRGS 2015-1).

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