

SOCIAL LIFE CONNECTS THE WORLD: MALAYSIAN YOUTH'S USAGE BEHAVIOUR OF SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

Wong Fei Mun

UCSI University, Malaysia

Lean Mei Li

University of Malaya, Malaysia

Prasana Rosaline Fernandez

Taylor's University, Malaysia

The recent trend of using social network sites (SNS) is a globally widespread phenomenon. SNS such as Facebook, Friendster, MySpace and Twitter are popular among millions of users around the globe. SNS are used to build relationships, to communicate and share information, multimedia contents and daily happenings, and to increase their social networks for personal or business purposes. Thus, this study aims to investigate the main reasons for using SNS among Malaysian youth and their usage behaviour. In particular, this study also intends to look into their attitude towards SNS, and their overall usage experience. The investigation for this study is guided by the theoretical framework of Uses and Gratifications. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses, using survey and personal interview research, are employed to examine the uses and usage behaviours of SNS among Malaysian youth.

Keywords: social network sites, usage behaviour, Malaysian youth, marketing, advertising.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The trend of using social network sites (SNS) is a globally widespread phenomenon. SNS such as Facebook, Friendster, and Twitter have approximately 465 million, 115 million, and 4 to 5 million global users respectively (Gonzalez 2010; Friendster 2010; HubSpot 2008). The Report by comScore shows that more than 770 million users visited SNS in July 2009, and SNS reached almost 70 per cent of the total global online audience (Nguyen 2010). In USA, 73 per cent of wired American teens and 47 per cent of online adults use SNS (Lenhart et al. 2010). Approximately 24 per cent of the Malaysian population are using Facebook (Gonzalez 2010). Media Metrix Report stated that 67 per cent of Malaysian Internet users are SNS users (Nguyen 2010). According to a new survey conducted by the UK Online Measurement Company (UKOM), the British spend more time on social networks and blogs than any other online activity (Burrows 2010).

SNS are web-based services providing the functions of creating a public or semi-public profile that display a list of other users with whom they are linked to (Boyd & Ellison 2007). SNS consist of various features such as a profile page which contains the individual user's personal information like location, education background, status, birthday information, and interests among other things. Other features available on SNS include photograph or image albums, list of connections that they have approved of, wall for posting comments, instant and email messaging options. Users are also able to create and join groups, as well as organise events and make announcements on SNS.

Since the introduction of SNS in 2004, there has been a rapid and dramatic growth of its usage which has changed the purpose and functionality of the Internet (Vogt & Knapman 2008, cited in Kelly, Kerr & Drennan 2010). SNS provide an engaging, interactive platform with a greater control of information flow for their users. SNS are used for developing relationships, sharing information, expanding social networks, entertainment, etc. Previous research suggested that SNS mainly support pre-existing social relations (Boyd & Ellison 2007). In addition, research found that SNS are more likely to be used by youth as an avenue for communication and hanging out with friends (Hempel 2005). Similarly, connecting with friends was found to be the main reason of SNS usage among 91% of the American teens (Lenhart & Madden 2007, cited in Boyd & Ellison 2007). Therefore, SNS now serve extensively as a large network for developing relationships and peer-to-peer communication.

The use of SNS among youth is related to the attitude towards SNS. Although past studies have shown a negative attitude towards SNS, the majority viewed SNS favourably (Hirst et al. 2009). Recently, SNS have been adopted as a new medium for advertising by those who see it as a golden opportunity to reach their target market. Although past studies generally indicated a negative attitude towards advertising (Alwitt & Prabhaker, 1994; Zanot, 1981, cited in Wang et al. 2002), the attitude towards advertising on SNS should be re-evaluated since it is a new medium consisting of novel and interactive applications. Eun and Kim (2009) argued that consumers' attitude toward Web advertising may not be the same as their attitude toward the Web as a medium itself. Ducoffe (1996, cited in Eun & Kim 2009) claimed that media context have a significant influence on the advertising value. The factors affecting attitude toward advertising are 'Entertainment', 'Informativeness', 'Interactivity', 'Irritation', 'Credibility', and 'Demographic' (Wang et al. 2002).

The extensive use of SNS is not only a trend among consumers. Likewise, the increased usage of SNS can be observed in many organisations. Many firms such as Whole Food Market, Johnson & Johnson, and McDonald's, are using SNS to increase brand image (Dragger et al. 2009). Professional service firms also utilise SNS as a marketing tool to execute social media marketing plan in order to achieve the firms' goals (Dragger et al. 2009). Thus, advertisers adopting SNS should provide relevant and added value commercial message to their advertisements (Kelly, Kerr & Drennan 2009).

The massive use of the SNS sparked the interest of conducting this research to understand the use of SNS and SNS usage behaviours. Previous research has limited exploration about SNS, especially in the Malaysian context because usage of SNS only surfaced in recent years. Hence, this study was conducted to gain a profound knowledge about SNS usage with the hope of contributing to the current body of knowledge of computer-mediated communication and advertising. The understanding will hopefully help marketers decide whether SNS should be used as a platform for advertising. Therefore, the following research questions were proposed based on literature:

- i. What is the main reason of SNS use among Klang Valley youth?
- ii. What is the level of attitude among Klang Valley youth towards SNS?

- iii. Is there a significant difference between the intensity of SNS use and the attitude towards SNS?
- iv. What is the level of attitude among Klang Valley youth towards advertising on SNS?

Research Objectives

The objectives are to:

- i. investigate whether development of social relationship, peer-to-peer communication, development of personal identity, or entertainment is the main reason of SNS use among Klang Valley youth,
- ii. identify the level of attitude among Klang Valley youth towards SNS,
- iii. examine if there a significant difference between the intensity of SNS use and the attitude towards SNS, and
- iv. identify the level of attitude among Klang Valley youth towards advertising on SNS.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Uses of SNS and SNS Usage Behaviours

Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe (2007) from Michigan State University conducted an online survey to study the association between the use of Facebook and social capital's development and maintenance. The sample of the study was 800 undergraduate students from Michigan State University. The response rate of the survey was 35.8%. Findings revealed that 94% of the respondents are Facebook users. The reported average time spent on Facebook was between 10 and 30 minutes each day. Regression analyses showed that there was a robust association between the use of Facebook and indicators of social capital, particularly the bridging type.

Similarly, Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert (2009), from Georgetown University, USA, investigated college students' experiences on Facebook to determine the time spent, reasons of using, and usage styles on the most popular social networking site. 92 undergraduates completed a 7-day diary like measure and a 7-day activities checklist to document their Facebook activities. It was subsequently followed by an overnight survey about their Facebook use. Results showed that students' daily use of Facebook is approximately 30 minutes on average. The usage pattern on Facebook included creating and publishing information for their friends, and spending more time on viewing rather than posting content. The uses of Facebook were mostly for peer-to-peer communication and development of personal identity.

Dunne, Lawlor and Rowley (2010) from Dublin Institute of Technology and Manchester Metropolitan University explored the reasons of young people using and joining SNS. Their study was guided by the theory of Uses and Gratifications (U and G) and employed a qualitative approach by conducting focus group with 24 secondary school girls who used Bebo. The results indicated samples used Bebo for portrayal and management of identity and personality in the public context to fulfil their personal purposes and gratifications. Dunne et al. (2010) suggested that the use of Bebo for management of identity may be an advantage for markets to adopt Bebo to facilitate members in becoming fans of or indeed become friends with a brand, which may result in personal endorsements and positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). They confirmed the suitability of U and G theoretical approach for the use in the context of online research. Besides, they suggested that future studies can look into older SNS users and their uses

and gratifications of other SNS as well as SNS users' experiences of, and attitude towards the marketing and advertising messages.

Attitude towards SNS

Hirst et al. (2009), researchers from the London South Bank University, Deakin University, Ecole de Management de Normandie, CAEN, and Yasar University conducted a pilot study to investigate the users' behaviours and abuses of online SNS. The sample of the study was 800 Generation Y students from four institutions in United Kingdom, France, Sweden and Turkey. Largely open-ended questions were used to ensure the focus of determining the respondents' usages of social network sites. Then, semi-structured questionnaire was used to measure attitude towards using SNS. Their study employed convenience sampling in collecting 239 numbers of usable questionnaires. Result indicated that 79.50% of the samples had positive attitude towards online SNS. Moreover, a significant number of respondents reported that they had migrated from MSN to Facebook and MySpace in 2007. Based on the pilot study, Facebook was the main SNS used by the respondents in which 89% reported using it. Respondents identified that online SNS were mainly used for social interaction and information searching. In addition, their study revealed that male respondents were more instrumental-oriented while female respondents tended to use online SNS to maintain social relationships.

Influence on Attitude towards Advertising

Bush, Smith and Martin (1999) from Louisiana State University and University of Memphis investigated on factors which shaped attitude toward advertising for African-American and Caucasian young adults using consumer socialisation theory. The theory suggests media use shapes the attitude towards advertising. They argued that socialisation experience using the media was found to be significantly related to the attitude towards advertising. Their hypotheses were based on the findings of strong association between social utility reasons for viewing television as a way to obtain information about lifestyles and behaviours (Mochis & Churchill 1978, cited in Bush et al. 1999). Bush et al. (1999) discovered that consumer socialisation variables of media, for instance, television viewing as a social utility, and amount of television viewing were positively related to attitude toward advertising.

Pessimistic View towards Advertising on SNS

Kelly et al. (2009) from Queensland University of Technology examined teenage attitude towards advertising on SNS in order to assist marketers seeking to advertising on SNS. They conducted a qualitative research which was inclusive of focus groups and in-depth interviews with respondents aged from 13 years to 17 years. The sample was selected as they were considered appropriate for the study due to their heavy usage of SNS. They maintained that SNS seemed to be a golden avenue for advertising due to the low cost of entry and the availability of hard-to-reach target markets, such as Generation Y. On the contrary, they identified that teenage attitude towards advertising on SNS were negative and advertising in SNS was generally unwelcomed by the users due to the personal nature of the medium. The suspicion and credibility issues of advertising in personal spaces were intensified when teenagers perceived that commercial online SNS were trying to "befriend" them. Understanding of SNS provided insights for advertisers to offer added-value to the users and avoid being "trying too hard" to enter

consumers' private social worlds (Kelly et al. 2009, p. 5). They also found that irrelevant advertising messages, lack of credibility of medium and negative experiences shared were the significant factors for advertising avoidance on SNS.

Marketing Opportunities

Alternatively, Stroud (2008), a strategic marketer from 20plus30 marketing consultancy, conducted case studies on how SNS have become an age-neutral commodity application of the web. The largest age group of MySpace and Facebook was in the 35- to 54-year-old age group (comScore 2006, cited in Stroud 2008). The findings indicated that there was an increasingly diverse range of SNS users from different age groups; hence, SNS have become an age-neutral application. The contents in SNS were usually user-generated and of added-value. Stroud argued that SNS usage will continue to grow and evolve. Thus, marketers were advised to respond to the opportunities and threats of SNS by engaging actively on SNS to understand the factors influencing the consumers' desire to network online. Additionally, companies were advised to have a persuasive plan to implement marketing practices on the large generic sites such as Facebook and MySpace, and determine the way to measure the effectiveness of advertising in SNS.

Theoretical Framework

Dunne et al. (2010) confirmed the suitability of Uses and Gratifications theoretical approach for online research context. Thus, the investigation of the present study was undertaken using the theoretical framework of U and G coined by Blumler and Katz (1974). This active-audience theory is used to explore the use of media and satisfaction of needs sought by audience (Baran & Davis 2006; McQuail 2000). It is an individualist functional theory that views audience as active users and they are conscious of their media-related needs (McQuail 2000). 'Media-person interaction scheme' was proposed by McQuail et al. (1972, cited in McQuail 2000; Jensen 2002). He argued that there are four main reasons of media use, which include information seeking (surveillance), diversion, maintenance of personal identity, and development of personal relationships (McQuail et al. 1972, cited in McQuail 2000). They were included to study the reasons of SNS use among youth for this study.

In addition, the study also considered consumption theory of media use to guide the research for answering the questions of the types of media users, portion of contents used, time, and duration of use (Jensen 2002). It helps to describe the demographics of the users which use SNS, their usage behaviour such as the types of activities engaged by them, frequency and duration of SNS usage. Such data provide commercial value for marketing (Jensen 2002). The valuable information is essential for consideration when choosing SNS as an advertising platform. (Please refer to Figure 1 below for an illustration of the proposed framework).

METHODOLOGY

Method

Quantitative approach produces more explicit data collection and facilitates data aggregation, comparison, and summarising (Babbie 2001). It can help to quantify the usage behaviours of SNS in terms of duration, frequency, and types of activities. Additionally, it can develop the

numerical measurement of attitude towards SNS and advertising on SNS based on sum scores. Hence, survey research method was employed under the current cross-sectional study to gather sufficient data from broader youth segmentation at a lower cost. Conducting surveys involves relatively reasonable cost and convenience in gathering a large amount of data from various people (Wimmer & Dominick 2006). Survey technique has been used largely in research guided by the theoretical framework of Uses and Gratifications to investigate media experience as a whole (Jensen 2002).

Conceptual Framework

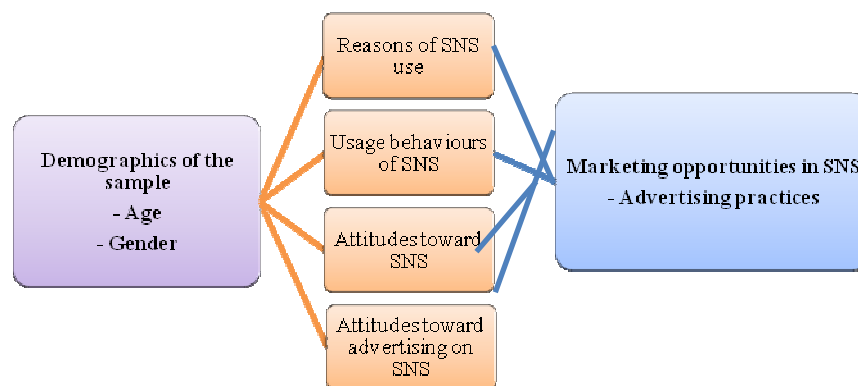


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study.

Besides using survey method, personal interview that is qualitative in nature was also used to present a deeper understanding of SNS usage behaviour and the implications on marketing practices on SNS. Besides the advantage of customising interviews to individual respondents (Wimmer & Dominick 2006), it is also suitable to gather various responses about SNS issues.

Sampling

The population for this study was youth in Klang Valley. The chosen sample for the survey was 500 youth aged between 15 and 35 years old. The study broadened the sampling boundaries beyond the sample of students because generally, the youth are considered to be technology-savvy, heavy Internet and SNS users.

Due to the nature of the research topic, judgmental or purposive was used to select the sample. Judgmental (purposive) sampling encompasses experienced field workers selecting the sample that conforms to some criteria of the survey based on their personal evaluation (Zikmund & Babin 2010; Cooper & Schindler 2001). It is less expensive and less time-consuming in eliminating unsuitable respondents (Cooper & Schindler 2001). Inclusion criteria were SNS users who have logged into Facebook, Friendster or Twitter at least once in the past month, a Klang Valley resident and a Malaysian, and is aged between 18- and 35-years-old.

As for the interviews, three interviews were conducted with three participants who have background in marketing and social media, online entrepreneurship, and advertising. They were selected by the researchers based on the suitability of their experience and knowledge on this study. They were personally contacted for interviews to be conducted. They are Ms. Alexis Ditkowsky, Mr. Andy Tan, and Ms. Natalie Foong. They are similar in terms of their SNS use, whereby they are also SNS users. Ditkowsky, who is from USA, currently works on marketing, media, online community building projects for Ashoka's Changemaker. She has extensive

experience in managing marketing and social media programmes besides being a passionate volunteer in many organisations worldwide. Tan, who is one of the owners for Asia Business Online Services, is a young online entrepreneur who believes that SNS have helped to both run his company and promote his business. The final interview participant, Foong, was formerly the Business Unit Director in an international advertising agency, Ogilvy & Mather. Since she has been in the advertising industry for more than ten years, she has in-depth experiences about the industry.

Instrument

The questionnaire used for the study was adapted and modified from previous studies conducted by Ellison et al. (2007), Kelly et al. (2009), Hirst et al. (2009), Lenhart et al. (2010), and Beresford Research (2009). They were adapted for the study because the questions used in the previous studies have yielded valid results; therefore, they were deemed to be reliable and valid for meeting the research objectives. The questionnaire, which was self-administered, helped to eliminate researchers' influence on the findings. It consisted of five parts, containing five closed-ended questions and seven matrix questions. Three types of sampling rating scales were used in the study, which were multiple choice single-response scale, simple category scale (dichotomous), and Likert scale summated rating.

Prior to the interviews, eight open-ended questions were prepared by the researchers to answer the research questions. The questions were related to the use and usage of SNS, and the prospect of SNS to be used as a platform for marketing purposes.

Measurements

Three scales of measurement used were nominal, ordinal and interval data. Besides that, the use of five-point Likert scale resulted in the following highest and lowest sum scores (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Sum scores.

No. of Attributes	Highest Score	Lowest Score
6	$6 \times 5 = 30$	$6 \times 1 = 6$
5	$5 \times 5 = 25$	$5 \times 1 = 5$

Data analysis comprised descriptive and inferential analyses. Descriptive analyses were presented in histograms, pie charts, and cross-tabulation tables. As for the inferential analysis, the study employed bivariate analysis to test the following hypothesis using analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA) (see Table 2 below).

H₁: There is a significant difference between the intensity of SNS use and the attitude towards SNS.

Table 2: Type of analysis.

Null Hypothesis	Question	Type of Analysis	Purpose
H ₀ : There is no significant difference between the intensity of SNS use and the attitude towards SNS.	3 & 8	One-way ANOVA	To identify the difference between the intensity of SNS use (average time spent) and the attitude towards SNS.

Pretesting

Pretesting of the questionnaire was conducted with 10 respondents. The initial questionnaire contained 17 questions. After pretesting, the number of questions was reduced to 12 by combining the variables which can be asked in a single question. Besides that, respondents expressed that the 7-point Likert scale was confusing; therefore, 5-point Likert scale was used. The wording and structure of the questions were changed because of semantic ambiguity and omission of questions trend. Similarly, ambiguous instructions were refined and the specific instruction for every question was emphasised. Moreover, the structure and position of the questions were adjusted in order to be reader friendly, and to encourage the respondents to answer every question with greater depth.

Data Collection

Data was collected at selected universities and companies located in Klang Valley. 700 questionnaires were distributed. The unit non-response was 0.29% (two out of 700), and item non-response was 19.43% (136 out of 700), which resulted in only 562 questionnaires being considered for the analysis. The duration of data collection was two weeks. The data collected was tabulated and analysed using Microsoft Excel.

The interviews were conducted in the Klang Valley, and each session took about 40 minutes to complete. During the interviews, the interviewer asked eight structured questions to obtain the interviewees' opinions about SNS-related-issues. The interviewer took field notes and recorded each interview session. Responses obtained from the interview sessions were typed out using Microsoft Word to identify the similar themes.

DATA ANALYSIS

Survey Research

Profile of Respondents

The respondents' gender was disproportionate: 65.30 per cent out of 562 respondents were female while 34.70 per cent respondents were male (see Figure 2 below). The respondents' age were divided into six categories. 53.74 per cent of them (N=562) were from 20 to 24 years old, which was the highest percentage age group. The second and third highest age groups were from 15 to 19 and 25 to 29 years old, which constituted 27.76 per cent and 11.39 per cent respectively (see Figure 3 below).

Purpose of SNS Use

Analysis showed that 58.97 per cent out of 195 male respondents and 61.31 per cent out of 367 female respondents were using SNS for personal purpose. On the contrary, 40.51 per cent of male respondents and 38.42 per cent of female respondents reported using SNS for both personal and business purposes. Thus, it can be concluded that the main purpose of SNS use amongst the respondents was for personal use (see Table 3 below).

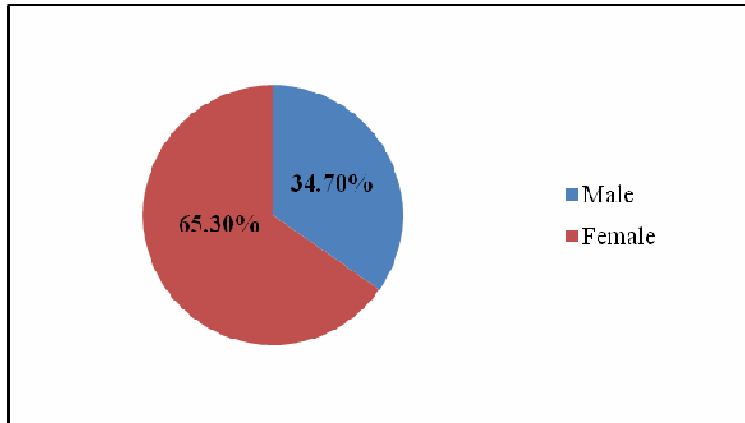


Figure 2: Distribution of gender.

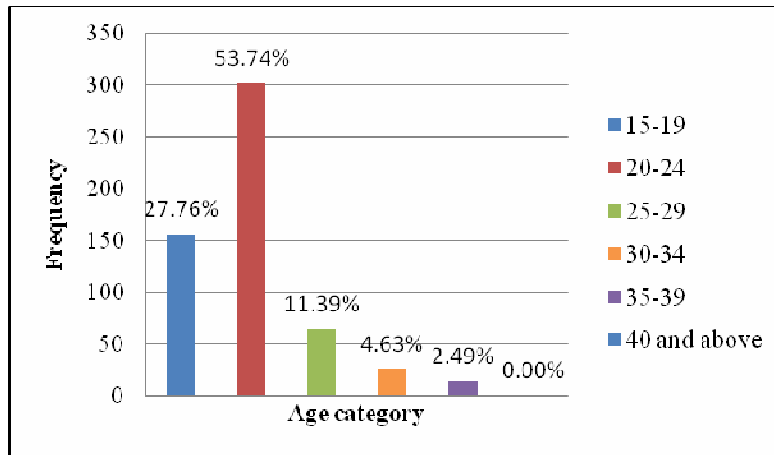


Figure 3: Distribution of age category.

Table 3: Distribution between male and female respondents for purpose of SNS use

Purpose	Male	Female
Personal use only	58.97	61.31
Business use only	0.52	0.27
Both personal and business use	40.51	38.42
Total	100%	100%

Main Reason for Usage of SNS

Findings indicated that the main reason for SNS use among Klang Valley youth is communication with friends. SNS have been used by them as a tool mainly for communicating and keeping each other updated within their social circle. 90.21 per cent of the respondents rated 'likely' and 'very likely' that they use SNS for communication with friends. The next top reason for using SNS is for entertainment purposes, in which 79.72 per cent of them reported that they were 'likely' and 'very likely' to use SNS for leisure reasons (see Table 4 below).

Table 4: Distribution for reasons of SNS use.

Reason of SNS Use	Unlikely (%)	Neutral (%)	Likely (%)
Developing relationship(s)	16.01	24.38	59.61
Communication with friends	1.25	8.54	90.21
Developing an online personality	23.13	40.75	36.12
Entertainment	5.87	14.41	79.72

Average Time Spent on SNS

Out of 562 respondents, 28.11 per cent (the highest percentage) spent on a daily average of more than 3 hours on SNS. 24.20 per cent of the respondents spent between 1 and 2 hours daily on SNS while 14.95 per cent spent between 10 and 30 minutes daily on these sites. Only 5.16 per cent of the respondents spent less than 10 minutes on SNS. Therefore it can be concluded that most of the respondents spent a substantial amount of time on SNS daily, with more than half of the total respondents spending more than one hour on SNS daily (see Figure 4 below).

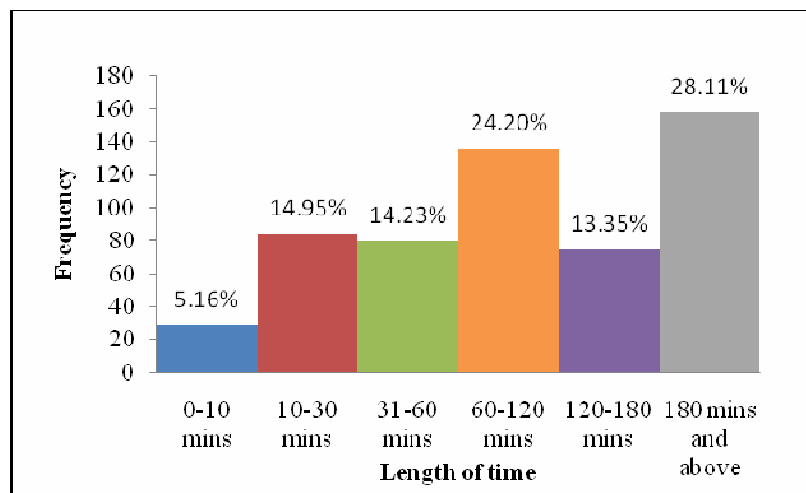


Figure 4: Average time spent on SNS.

Frequency of Logging into SNS

Findings revealed that the 99.29 per cent of all the respondents ($N=562$) had profiles on Facebook, while 58.54 per cent and 44.13 per cent of the respondents owned profiles on

Friendster and Twitter respectively. As for other SNS, 8 per cent of the respondents reported that they also used MSN, Yahoo! Messenger, Blogger, Blogspot, MySpace, Hi5, Plurk, Tagged, Deviantart, Sina, YouthSays, Youtube and LinkedIn. Results indicated that 98.46 per cent of the male respondents and 93.46 per cent of the female respondents were frequently logging into Facebook. In the study, logging into the SNS for more than one time per week is considered as frequent. There were only 1.09 per cent of female respondents who do not own a profile on Facebook. Friendster and Twitter were relatively not heavily frequented by respondents. 52.82 per cent of male respondents and 52.86 per cent of female respondents did not log into Friendster frequently. Additionally, more than half of the male and female users do not own a profile on Twitter. The majority of both male and female respondents did not visit Twitter frequently (35.89 per cent of male respondents and 35.42 per cent of female respondents). The findings revealed that the use of the SNS among the respondents was heavily weighted towards Facebook as compared to Friendster and Twitter.

Activities on SNS

The findings of the study exposed that the three main activities with high frequency among the respondents were posting comments, sending instant messages (chat), and playing games. Based on the results in Table 5, the respondents were frequently posting comments on SNS with female respondents (56.68 per cent) posting comments more frequently compared to male respondents (52.31 per cent). On the other hand, results in Tables 6 and 7 respectively showed that male respondents were sending more instant messages (51.28 per cent) and playing games (43.07 per cent) on SNS as compared to female respondents.

Table 5: Distribution of male and female respondents on the frequency of posting comment on SNS.

Post comment	Male (%)	Female (%)
Infrequent	19.49	19.89
Neutral	28.20	23.43
Frequent	52.31	56.68
Total	100.00	100.00

Table 6: Distribution of male and female respondents on the frequency of sending instant message on SNS.

Send instant message	Male (%)	Female (%)
Infrequent	20.00	22.34
Neutral	28.72	29.16
Frequent	51.28	48.50
Total	100.00	100.00

Table 7: Distribution of male and female respondents on the frequency of playing games on SNS.

Play games	Male (%)	Female (%)
Infrequent	39.49	50.95
Neutral	17.44	24.25
Frequent	43.07	24.80
Total	100.00	100.00

Attitude towards SNS

Of the total number of respondents ($N=562$), the majority had a positive attitude towards SNS ($M=20.345$, $SD=3.804$) (see Table 8 below). Analysis in Figure 5 showed that 62.10 per cent and 11.57 per cent of the total respondents scored between 19 and 24 (high score) and between 25 and 30 (higher score) respectively. Only 3.91 per cent reported a negative attitude towards SNS. Both high and higher scores indicated a positive reaction towards SNS. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents had a positive attitude towards SNS.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics of sum score for attitude towards SNS.

	SE	Median	Mode	SD	Sample Variance	Kurtosis	Skewness	Range	Min	Max	Sum	Count	Conf. Level (95%)
20.345	0.160	21	20	3.804	12.369	1.461	-0.530	24	6	30	11434	562	0.315

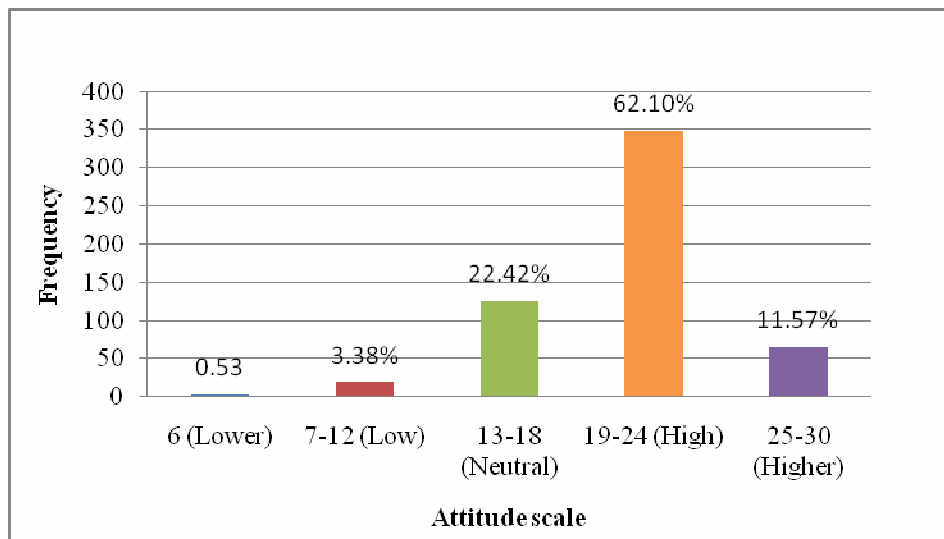


Figure 5: Attitude towards SNS.

Attitude towards Advertising on SNS

On the attitude towards advertising on SNS, the majority had neutral and negative attitude ($M = 15.770$, $SD = 3.293$, $N=562$) (see Table 9 below). Analysis in Figure 6 showed that the score group with the highest percentage, 48.75 per cent, was between 11 and 15 (neutral score), followed by 39.15 per cent of them scored between 16 and 20 (high score). About 7.83 per cent of them had a higher score for their attitude towards SNS. High and higher scores indicated negative attitude towards SNS. Thus, it can be concluded that most of the respondents had either a neutral or negative view towards advertising on SNS.

Table 9: Descriptive statistics of sum score for attitude towards advertising on SNS.

M	SE	Median	Mode	SD	Sample Variance	Kurtosis	Skewness	Range	Min	Max	Sum	Count	Conf. Level (95%)
15.770	0.139	15	15	3.293	10.844	0.503	0.283	20	5	25	8863	562	0.273

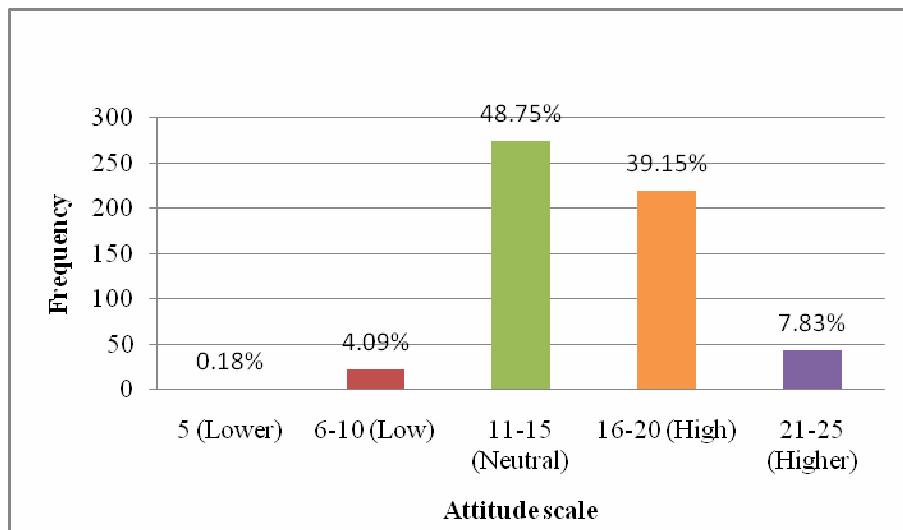


Figure 6: Attitude towards advertising on SNS .

Difference between the Intensity of SNS Use and the Attitude towards SNS

H₁: There is a significant difference between the intensity of SNS use and the attitude towards SNS.

Based on the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), $F(5, 556) = 14.33$, p -value is 0.0000 ($p < 0.05$). Thus, it can be concluded that the test statistic was significant at that level (see Table 10 below). The mean attitude score towards SNS were not the same for the six different intensity of SNS use. Thus, the null hypothesis of equal population means is rejected. The alternative hypothesis, H_1 is accepted.

SUMMARY: Difference between intensity of SNS use and attitude towards SNS

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>
Less than 10 minutes	29	463	15.9655	27.8916
Between 10 – 30 minutes	84	1642	19.5476	10.7326
Between 31 – 60 minutes	80	1613	20.1625	15.2264
Between 1 – 2 hours	136	2733	20.0956	11.9093
Between 2 – 3 hours	75	1552	20.6933	8.7560
More than 3 hours	158	3431	21.7152	13.1222

Table 10: Anova: Single Factor.

ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	926.4819	5	185.2964	14.3278	0.0000	2.2302
Within Groups	7190.5501	556	12.9326			
Total	8117.0320	561				

Interview Research

From the interviews conducted with the three participants, it was found that the primary motivation for youth to engage in SNS included connecting or networking with peers, gratifying their need for information and entertainment. Tan (2010, personal communication, 12 November) also highlighted that the initial primary motivation was peer pressure, which later transformed into gratification for entertainment. Youths used SNS as a channel to share information and social updates via photo sharing and comments, as well as a channel for self-expression (see Excerpt 1 below).

“A fun way to connect with friends and people they want to meet ... an entertaining way to use the time to update and know what is happening around.” (Ditkowsky 2010)

“Peer pressure ... If people keep talking about it, people, especially youths would want to be a part of it.” (Tan 2010)

“Good to network among their peers.” (Foong 2010)

Excerpt 1

Ditkowsky (2010, personal communication, 8 November) and Tan (2010, personal communication, 12 November) concurred that the usage experience on SNS affects the level of attitude towards SNS. Positive experiences are good for shaping positive attitude, and vice versa. Privacy concern was also emphasised during the interview as a major factor affecting the attitude level of the SNS users. Foong (2010, personal communication, 18 November) contended that the

level of attitude is dependent upon the privacy feature of SNS, which forms part of the usage experience on SNS (see Excerpt 2 below).

“Yeah, that follows ... Negative experiences such as annoying features are off-putting.” (Ditkowsky 2010)

“Yes. It will definitely affect one's attitude... One of the most important negativity about social networking sites is the lack of privacy.” (Tan 2010)

“It depends. It shouldn't be used to violate other people's privacy.” (Foong 2010)

Excerpt 2

Ditkowsky (2010, personal communication, 8 November) also revealed that SNS provide a platform for enterprises to market themselves to the consumers through various avenues. Firstly, SNS are inexpensive, user-friendly, and interactive tool to be used by enterprises to market themselves to the consumers. SNS also generate free word-of-clicks as users share information about certain brands, and promotions of products and services on SNS with their friends. Hence, financial budget can be diverted for other marketing tools such as production of videos and advertising. As a result, SNS offer an opportunity for various enterprises, especially non-profit organisations and new small and medium enterprises, to gain access to a wide number of consumers, and generate awareness for their causes and products. As SNS are more interactive and personalised as compared to web pages, SNS are used by enterprises to ensure greater acceptability and accessibility by the audience. Due to the engaging feature of SNS, they can be employed to generate a large number of followers or brand advocators, who choose to “like” or be part of the “Group” or “Fan Page”. Besides that, the users' demographic information collected by SNS companies is essential for companies that target SNS users. From another perspective, SNS are employed to empower consumers to take ownership and make own decision (see Excerpt 3 below).

“Inexpensive, free but require time investment ... probably spend on production of videos, pictures and advertising ... to get the words out and to develop followers ... good opportunities to social enterprises and non-profit organisations because they often have very lean marketing budget ... Use SNS to update content, keep it fresh and engaging without having to deal with challenging website management ... make themselves more acceptable and accessible to the audience and having the component of personal page to personalise connections - more personal, and closer.” (Ditkowsky 2010)

“Promote their product to consumers ... create groups or pages to capture potential market and run various marketing campaigns through these groups and pages for those who “like” their brand or company ... advertisements can be catered to specific user demographics.” (Tan 2010)

“Promote about company's best offer. It empowers consumers to take ownership and make own decisions.” (Foong 2010)

Excerpt 3

As SNS usage is considered to be an upward trend among online users, Ditkowsky (2010, personal communication, 8 November), Tan (2010, personal communication, 12 November) and Foong (2010, personal communication, 18 November) strongly supported the idea of using social network sites as an advertising platform. Tan (2010, personal communication, 12 November)

argued that SNS contain somewhat basic demographic details of the users for better targeting strategies to the advertisers. Furthermore, various applications, games, and contests can be created to attract attention, build branding and develop loyalty. Ditkowsky (2010, personal communication, 8 November) added that SNS can be used to achieve advertising objectives such as generating awareness and establishing a strong brand, as well as a good platform for groundwork to be performed for future engagement with audience, and growth of customer database. She contended that one of the important components of advertising on SNS is the ease of tracking the users' experience, and ease of conducting an evaluation of the advertisement's effectiveness using the performance metrics available (see Excerpt 4 below).

They recommended using Facebook as the leading social media channel for marketing efforts. Ditkowsky (2010, personal communication, 8 November) claimed that Facebook ensures better exposure among online users. Besides that, she also commented that YouTube can be effective for viral marketing as YouTube can host entertainment and fun contents that can be shared among online users. Furthermore, she claimed that though the response of viral marketing tools such as YouTube can be unpredictable, it is considered as free advertising as online users share the videos among their friends by embedding the links on other SNS.

“SNS are more for brand awareness, making it more accessible, creating a sense of connection ... platform of more like the groundwork for the future engagement through other means as opposed to just advertising and hard-sell to push the tickets of events ... building goodwill ... to track the user's experience. When you click on an ad of a web, they follow a particular path and follow a particular source code or lead to complete the transaction of ticket online.” (Ditkowsky 2010)

“Demographic data collected allows advertising campaigns to be targeted directly to its target market ... create games or applications which relate to their brand and promote them in SNS ... attractive prizes attract more people to spread the word for them through SNS ... a cost effective measure to successfully run an advertising campaign.” (Tan 2010)

“A moving trend that helps marketers to reach their consumers.” (Foong 2010)

Excerpt 4

They recommended using Facebook as the leading social media channel for marketing efforts. Ditkowsky (2010, personal communication, 8 November) claimed that Facebook ensures better exposure among online users. Besides that, she also commented that YouTube can be effective for viral marketing as YouTube can host entertainment and fun contents that can be shared among online users. Furthermore, she claimed that though the response of viral marketing tools such as YouTube can be unpredictable, it is considered as free advertising as online users share the videos among their friends by embedding the links on other SNS.

The future relationship between SNS and marketers are presumed to be expanding and SNS are predicted to be an integral component in the marketing strategies. Many professionals in the field have been busy setting up accounts in SNS in order to be the part of this dynamic network, particularly in reaching and appearing to be relevant to the younger generations. Ditkowsky (2010, personal communication, 8 November) argued that there could be a need for the companies to restructure their marketing department by ensuring social media component and specialists are integrated into the organisation. On the other hand, Tan (2010, personal communication, 12 November) stated that the relationship between SNS and marketers is a win-win situation. Marketers utilise SNS to build awareness whereas increased traffic helps SNS firms to generate more advertising clients and larger amount of advertising revenues (see Excerpt 5 below).

“It is something like “Why are you not getting out there on Facebook, Twitter?” instead of “Why are you spending time to Facebook, Twitter?”... It has become a big part of marketing job now ... restructuring of marketing department to make sure social media components and social media specialists are integrated and fit into the organisations.” (Ditkowsky 2010)

“There will be a strong bond between SNS and marketers ... new businesses rely on SNS to build their brand awareness ... established businesses can leverage on the traffic of SNS to run successful campaigns ... advertising help SNS to generate huge revenues for their businesses ... a win-win situation.” (Andy 2010)

“It will expand further for sure.” (Foong 2010)

Excerpt 5

DISCUSSION

The research findings support the notion that peer-to-peer communication is the main reason for SNS usage among youth in the Klang Valley. Similarly, Ditkowsky (2010, personal communication, 8 November) and Foong (2010, personal communication, 18 November) agreed that peer communication or networking among peers is the main reason of SNS use among youth. This implies that the youth want to do more than send emails or browse the web. SNS offer its users the opportunity to form groups for discussion, share files and most importantly to interact and communicate directly. Therefore, the finding reinforces the results from previous studies (e.g. Boyd & Ellison 2007; Hempel 2005; Pempek et al. 2009 and Hirst et al. 2009) on SNS and its usage where it is shown that peer-to-peer communication is the central reason for its rapid growth.

The findings have further implicated entertainment as another emerging trend for the usage of SNS. Entertainment plays a significant role in the usage of SNS as the youth of today are active audience who seek satisfaction and instant gratification through media. This is evident in the Uses and Gratifications theoretical framework which stated that users play an active role in choosing media which gives them the best satisfaction. The interviews revealed that entertaining features of SNS are also the contributors of SNS use, as argued by Ditkowsky (2010, personal communication, 8 November) and Tan (2010, personal communication, 12 November). The ease of use, interaction and social aspects of the SNS could be a pulling factor for the youth of today in using this media for entertainment.

Fletcher (2010, p. 16) highlights that more than 1 in 4 people have a Facebook account and “are comfortable living so much of our life on Facebook”. This is proven true as 99.29% of the respondents in this research use Facebook more than Friendster and Twitter. The majority of the respondents, too, have indicated that they spend more than 3 hours or between 1 and 2 hours daily on SNS. This indicates that the youth in the Klang Valley are heavy users of SNS. Similarly, Facebook was also recommended by the three interview participants to be used as the leading social media channel for marketing efforts. This suggests that there is a shift in the way SNS users socialise as now they are more accustomed to “openness” online. This “openness” is with reference to the willingness to share uncensored personal and intimate details with their friends and acquaintances or even strangers via SNS. This trend implies that there is a positive attitude towards SNS.

This positive attitude towards SNS could be due to the various functions of SNS, such as interacting with their peers online regardless of time and distance, allowing them to acquire

knowledge and skills, and having a sense of belonging to a community. Likewise, the interviews also revealed that usage experience on SNS affects the level of attitude among the users, and privacy issue was raised by Tan (2010, personal communication, 12 November) and Foong (2010, personal communication, 18 November). This supports Hirst et al.'s (2009) claim that the use of SNS among Generation Y students was for seeking information. Consumption of media is a form of social utility for consumers' socialisation in obtaining information about lifestyles and behaviours (Bush et al. 1999). Therefore, the respondents' positive view of SNS could be due to the opportunity to obtain knowledge and the use of SNS as a social utility.

However, there is a significant difference between the intensity of SNS use and the attitude towards SNS. Overall, the attitude towards SNS by the respondents with greater intensity of SNS use was different from attitude towards SNS held by the respondents with lower intensity of SNS use. The attitude towards SNS could be determined by the amount of time spent on SNS. It could be that users are only able to gratify their media-related needs through SNS. Therefore, there is a possibility that heavy SNS users have a more positive attitude towards SNS than light SNS users.

The consumption patterns among male and female differ as the regularity for types of activities engaged by the male and female respondents was different. For instance, male respondents were more likely to play games (43.07 per cent) and send instant messages (51.28 per cent) on SNS as opposed to their female counterparts. Female respondents (56.68 per cent) were more likely to share their latest updates and connect socially with their friends through posting comments on SNS. Thus it can be concluded that SNS usage among females is more social relationship-oriented while the use of SNS among male respondents is outcome-oriented (Hirst et al. 2009).

Generally, the attitude towards advertising on SNS were not favourable. 48.75 per cent of the respondents had neutral attitude while only 7.83 per cent viewed these advertisements positively. Although the present study did not show a majority of respondents with a negative attitude towards advertising on SNS, the respondents were nonetheless sceptical as they perceived such advertisements as an invasion of privacy. Hence, they exercised caution when clicking on advertisements. This could be attributed to the lack of trust on online media as a result of hacking, virus transfer, scams and frauds throughout the years.

IMPLICATIONS

SNS function like an online community bringing together people with similar interests in hobbies, religion or politics. With SNS the youth in Klang Valley are exposed to diversity as they are able to network with people across the globe. Facebook is the most popular social networking site and as Fletcher (2010, p. 19) mentioned "Facebook did not invent social networking, but the company has fine-tuned it into science" giving the users an emotional connection. This explains why the youth of today spend a considerable amount of time on SNS. In addition, SNS have become a one-stop-centre for peer-to-peer communication as well as a source of entertainment. Hence, marketers should take advantage of this trend to connect with this target market via SNS by incorporating entertainment aspects such as games, audio and graphics in the advertisements. For example, applications incorporating fun and engaging features such as games can be created and published on SNS to build and develop loyalty.

The power of SNS is not limited to creating brand awareness and promoting products and services but these sites can also serve as a platform for increasing customer database and generating goodwill for future interaction between organisations and consumers. Moreover, online usage can be tracked using various performance metrics making the evaluation process, and alteration to any marketing campaign more accurate and effortless. For instance,

personalisation of content according to the needs and wants of SNS users can be done easily when an interactive advertisement on SNS has a low response rate.

The behavioural pattern among male and female users differs in SNS activities and this observation can be tapped and employed to enhance the advertising effort. Since SNS, particularly Facebook, are viewed positively and used extensively by the respondents, marketers should try to advertise on these sites if the medium suits the gender specific target market, product nature and organisation.

There is also an urgent need for marketers to work on building credibility for advertising especially on SNS. This can be effectively accomplished by providing added-value features in the form of enhanced privacy control. Privacy is a major concern among online users as well as marketers and as such every effort should be made to ensure that the users' privacy is protected. Any negative experiences as a result of privacy issues on SNS will most likely contribute to negative attitude towards SNS.

Social media is beginning to play a significant role in an organisation's operation, particularly in the marketing department. As a result organisations should restructure to accommodate social media and specialists in SNS to benefit from the growing usage of SNS in communication. In the interview, Ditekowsky (2010, personal communication, 8 November) highlighted that appropriate channels have to be chosen by the organisation that venture in SNS, and consistency of messages, tone and visuals has to be in accordance to the overall organisation's vision as they portray an organisation's image. She further indicated that it is important that organisations which use SNS as their marketing platform be committed in terms of time, money and human resources in updating their account frequently with fresh and relevant contents. It is important to have fresh and interesting contents to keep SNS users alert, pay close attention and follow the organisation's updates regularly.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study, which looked beyond the profiling of SNS users, sought to understand why youth use and join SNS, and their usage behaviours. Data were collected from 562 Klang Valley youth aged between 15 and 35 years old. The findings were helpful for making marketing decision. Peer-to-peer communication was found to be the main reason of SNS use among Klang Valley youth. Entertainment was reported as one of the main uses of SNS as youth tend to seek satisfaction through diversion. Moreover, there is a significant difference between the intensity of SNS use and the attitude towards SNS. There is a positive attitude toward SNS due to the opportunity of obtaining knowledge and the use of SNS as a social utility. However, attitude towards advertising on SNS are neutral and negative as respondents distrust online media. Overall, marketers who plan to use SNS as a platform for advertising should create entertaining and informative advertisements in order to capture the attention of the users. Facebook should be selected as the main channel as it was widely used. Lastly, credibility for advertising on SNS should be enhanced in order to boost the trustworthiness among the users.

The limitation to this study was the restriction of the sample to Klang Valley youth, and therefore, it was not representative of all Malaysian youth. Another limitation was the sample, which only comprised youth aged between 15- and 35-years-old. The use of non-probability sampling involved a certain degree of biasness. The choice of selecting participants is based on the researchers' evaluation (Cooper & Schindler 2001). In non-probability sampling, sampling error and any range within which to anticipate the population parameter is hard to be estimated (Cooper & Schindler 2001). Moreover, respondents could have misreported their behavioural and demographic information as the questionnaires were self-administered by the respondents.

Future studies should consider wider demographic and geographic aspects, and probability sampling to increase the reliability and to be able to generalise the findings over the population. The sample size of respondents could be increased to approximately 1000 respondents in order to yield more accurate results. Besides, studies about the use of SNS for organisations, the effects of SNS use, and factors influencing the attitude towards advertising on SNS can be conducted. Longitudinal study on usage behaviour of SNS should be undertaken to compare the usage behaviours of respondents within few years time by tracking secondary school students and following them after they have graduated from universities and colleges. Moreover, social effects of SNS use among online users could also be explored by future researchers.

REFERENCE

- Babbie, E. 2001, *The practice of social research*, 9th edn, Wadsworth Publishing, Belmont, California.
- Baran, S. & Davis, D. 2006, *Mass communication theory: foundation, ferment, and future*, 4th edn, Wadsworth/Thompson Learning, CA.
- Beresford Research 2009, *Use of online social networks: results of US user survey (June 2009)*, viewed 30 June 2010, <http://beresfordresearch.com/_beresfordtest/pdfdocuments/Use%20of%20Online%20Social%20Networks%20White%20Paper%20%28Beresford%20Research%29.pdf>.
- Blumler, J. G. & Katz, E. 1974, *The uses of mass communications: current perspectives on gratifications research*, Sage, Beverly Hills, CA.
- Boyd, D. M. & Ellison, N. B. 2007, 'Social network sites: definition, history, and scholarship,' *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 13, no. 1, article 11, viewed 14 May 2010, <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html>>.
- Burrows, D. 2010, *Brits spend most time on social networks but email and portals survive*, *Marketing Week*, viewed 26 May 2010, <<http://www.marketingweek.co.uk/news/brits-spend-most-time-on-social-networks-but-email-and-portals-survive/3013588.article>>.
- Bush, A. J., Smith, R. & Martin, C. 1999, 'The influence of consumer socialization variables on attitude toward advertising: a comparison of African-Americans and Caucasians,' *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 28, No. 3, Autumn, pp. 13-24.
- Cooper, D. R. & Schindler, P. S. 2001, *Business research methods*, 7th edn, Irwin/ McGraw-Hill: New York.
- Dragger, M. L., Gloven, G. C., Kelsall, A. E. & Davis, J. R. 2009, 'Impact of social media on the marketing of professional services: analysis and best practices,' *University College University of Denver Capstone Project*, viewed 26 February 2010, <<https://ectd.du.edu/source/uploads/18213055.pdf>>.
- Dunne, A., Lawlor, M. & Rowley, J. 2010, 'Young people's use of online social networking sites – a uses and gratifications perspective,' *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 46 – 58.

- Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C. & Lampe, C. 2007, 'The benefits of Facebook "friends:" social capital and college students' use of online social network sites,' *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 12, no. 4, article 1, viewed 7 May 2010, <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol12/issue4/ellison.html>>.
- Eun, H-Y. & Kim, H-S. 2009, 'An affectability consumer's attitudes toward advertising based interactive installation in public transportation,' in *Proceedings of the International Association Society of Design Research Conference*, 18 – 22 October 2009, Seoul, Korea, pp. 99 – 112, viewed 7 July 2010, <<http://www.iasdr2009.org/ap/Papers/Orally%20Presented%20Papers/Behavior/An%20Affectability%20Consumer%20Attitudes%20toward%20Advertising%20based%20Interactive%20Installation%20in%20Public%20Transportation.pdf>>
- Fletcher, D. 2010, 'Facebook: friends without borders,' *Time* 31 May, pp.16 – 22.
- Friendster 2010, About Friendster, viewed 25 May 2010, <http://www.friendster.com/info/index.php>>.
- Gonzalez, N. 2010, Facebook marketing statistics, demographics, reports, and news, viewed 25 May 2010, < <http://www.checkfacebook.com/>>.
- Hempel, J. 2005, 'The MySpace generation,' *Business Week* December 12, pp. 88 – 96.
- Hirst, A., Bednall, D. D., Ashwin, S. M. & Icoz, O. 2009, 'The use and abuse of online social network sites by Gen Y in the EU: can marketing make a difference?,' in *ICBME 2009: Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Business, Management and Economics*, 22 – 24 October 2009, Yasar University, Izmir, Turkey, viewed 20 May 2010, <<http://wbiconpro.com/10.Marie.html>>.
- HubSpot 2008, State of the Twittersphere. Q4 2008, viewed 26 February 2010, <http://cdnqa.hubteam.com/State_of_the_Twittersphere_by_HubSpot_Q4-2008.pdf>.
- Jensen, K. B. 2002, 'Media effects: quantitative traditions', in *A handbook of media and communication research: qualitative and quantitative methodologies*, ed. K. B. Jensen, Routledge, London, pp. 138 – 55.
- Kelly, L., Kerr, G. & Drennan, J. 2009, "'Try hard": attitudes to advertising in online social networks,' in *Proceedings of the Australia and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference*, 30 November - 2 December 2009, Melbourne, Victoria, viewed 26 February 2010, <<http://www.duplication.net.au/ANZMAC09/papers/ANZMAC2009-275.pdf>>.
- Kelly, L., Kerr, G. & Drennan, J. 2010, 'Avoidance of advertising in social networking sites: the teenage perspective,' *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, vol. 10, no. 2, Spring, viewed 7 July 2010, <<http://jiad.org/article129>>.
- Lenhart, A., Purcell, K., Smith, A. & Zickuhr, K. 2010, Social media & mobile internet use among teens and young adults, Pew Internet & American Life Project, Pew Research Center, viewed 27 May 2010, <<http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Social-Media-and-Young-Adults.aspx>>.
- McQuail, D. 2000, *McQuail's mass communication theory*, 4th edn, Sage Publication Ltd, London.

- Nguyen, J. 2010, The state of social networks: worldwide, US, Asia Pacific and Malaysia, comScore, Inc., viewed 7 July 2010,
http://www.comscore.com/layout/set/popup/request/Presentations/2010/The_State_of_Social_Networks_in_Asia_Pacific_with_a_Focus_on_Malaysia_PDF_Request?req=slides&pre=The+State+of+Social+Networks+in+Asia+Pacific%2C+with+a+Focus+on+Malaysia
- Pempek, T. A., Yermolayeva, Y. A. & Calvert, S. L. 2009, 'College students' social networking experiences on Facebook,' *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 227–38.
- Stroud, D. 2008, 'Social networking: an age-neutral commodity—social networking becomes a mature web application,' *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 278–92.
- Wang, C., Zhang, P., Choi, R. & D'Eredita, M. 2002, 'Understanding consumers attitude toward advertising,' in *Proceeding of Eighth Americas Conference on Information Systems*, 9 – 11 August 2002, Dallas, Texas, pp. 1143-8, viewed 7 July 2010,
<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.12.8755&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.
- Wimmer, R. D. & Dominick, J. R. 2006, *Mass media research: an introduction*, 8th edn, Wadsworth Publishing Co., Belmont, California.
- Zikmund, W. G. & Babin, B. J. 2010, *Business research methods*, 8th edn, Harcourt College Publishers, Orlando.