



Social Identity: Facebook, Twitter and Identity Negotiation Theory

An analysis of identity and relationships on Facebook and Twitter

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Purpose

Social networking sites function as socio-technical systems, blurring the separation between technology and social interactions.

The objective of the study was to:

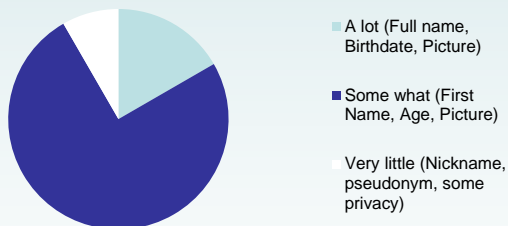
- observe how identity is expressed on Facebook and Twitter, how it differed on each site
- examine the identity negotiation that occurs on Facebook and Twitter during social relationships
- look at the new social networking term 'catfish' and examine how it occurs

Preliminary Survey

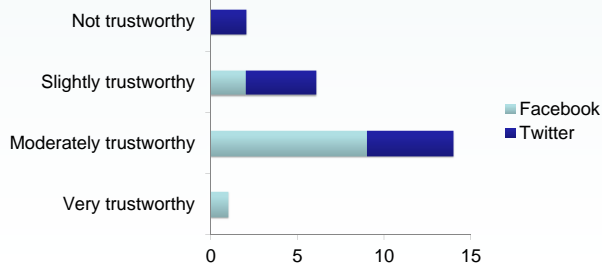
- Focused on Facebook and Twitter usage, the amount of personal information they post on each site, and the trustworthiness of the information on other pages.
- 12 participants

Results

Amount of Information on Profiles



Trustworthiness of Profiles



Background

Facebook is currently the top social networking site; with 1 billion profiles.

Twitter has 500 million registered handles, making it the second most popular social networking site.

Identity Negotiation Theory is a sociological theory which explains the process and importance of identity management and its role in relationships and communication. Once an identity is established, people expect it will remain constant throughout social interactions.

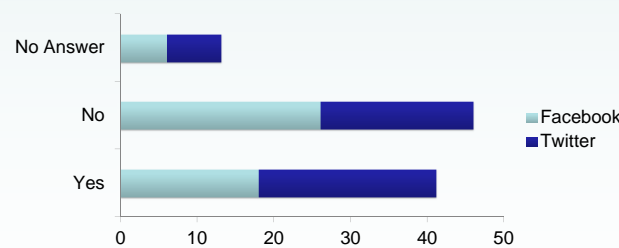
Catfish is a term for profiles on social networking environments made for a fake or pseudo-identity.

Social Identity Survey

- 50 participants
- Focused identity, communication and connections on Facebook and Twitter.
- Use in data gathered from the preliminary survey
- Open-ended and multiple-choice questions.

Results

Belief the profile is a Mirrored Representation on Identity



Method

- Two surveys were used to conduct research; a preliminary survey and an in-depth social identity survey.
- Participants were active Facebook and/or Twitter users.

Findings

Identity on Facebook
Facebook profiles provide a snapshot image of who a person is in relation to who they know. Users understand that people are more likely to be honest on their Facebook profiles but the information may be limited or doesn't paint a holistic picture of a user because many users are cautious of who can view the posts.

Identity on Twitter
Twitter profiles allow users to express multiple aspects of their identity. Users don't feel the pressure of maintaining an image or impressing an audience. Twitter users feel more comfortable meeting someone they developed a connection with on Twitter.

• The identity negotiation process that occurs on Facebook and Twitter is unique in that it relies primarily on the information on profile and honest communication, rather than gathering information from traditional social cues such as body language and first impressions.

• Catfish occurs when a person creates a profile for a pseudo-identity and uses it to create and maintain relationships.

• Catfish is most likely to occur on Twitter, because it is conducive to pseudo-identity profiles and people are more likely to make new connections.