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Abstract

This study addressed the literature gap about users of social networking sites in an east-meets-west setting with specific attention to expatriates and the country's Nationals.Dubai is the fieldwork location. Previous studies typically focused on a narrowly defined age group for the respondent sample, and little attention has been directed towards nationality. This exploratory study considered demographics, i.e., age, nationality, gender and length of time living in Dubai as well as purpose of use and views about privacy.

Following the literature review, two in-depth interviews from industry and two focus groups informed the development of the questionnaire. After pre-testing, the survey was distributed at seven venues around the city to obtain a population cross-section. Two hundred and fifty-four usable surveys were received from social networking site users.

This exploratory study identified that expatriates appear to use social networking sites as a familial link rather than a tool for communication. Comparisons for purpose and privacy noted differences across age, nationality, gender, and years lived in Dubai.

Research about social networking site use and users is still in its infancy. The sites appear to hold strong appeal for expatriates far from home and nationals who are distanced from others by society's cultural and religious values. Future research may seek to understand expatriate use with more in-depth attention to nationality segments.

Introduction

Social networking sites have been receiving increased research attention and interest. However, the noticeable shortcoming in the literature is that the respondent sample has often been drawn from the student body at university campuses in developed countries (Hargittai, 2008; Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2009; Young and Quan-Haase, 2009). In emerging markets and developing nations, research about social networking sites is also taking place (Kim et al, 2010; Shen and Khalifa, 2010) yet, arguably, it is not keeping pace with the rapid increase in members. Enrollment is swelling in the tumultuous Middle East countries where sites such as Facebook have been an important vehicle for disseminating information among the people trying to change leaders and governments (www.insidefacebook).

The purpose of this study was to learn more about the users of social networking sites in an emerging market. The fieldwork location was Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where the diverse population provided a unique opportunity to draw respondents from multiple nationalities and age groups within the context of an east-meets-west culture and emerging market setting. The result is a study that segments respondents by expatriate and national residency for similarities and differences across demographics including age that crosses two or more generations, gender, and nationality. Respondents' views about purpose of use and privacy have been addressed.

The research question was What is the reach of social networking sites in an east-meets-west emerging market? Three objectives that guided the study were: (1) to what extent do demographic factors indicate the likely use of social networking sites, (2) to what extent is purpose of use similar or different across demographically-diverse segments, and (3) to what extent is privacy a concern amongst users of social networking sites.

United Arab Emirates and Dubai

United Arab Emirates is a relatively small country made up of seven city-states including Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The economy of Abu Dhabi is recognized for its oil wealth while Dubai has increasingly shifted to being trade-based. Total population for the country is estimated at eight million (www.uaeintearct.com; 2010). More than 80 percent of residents are expatriates. The remaining 20 percent are the host country nationals called locals or Emiratis. Laws preclude expatriates from applying for UAE citizenship. Eventually expatriates must leave as residency is conditional on employment. Age ceilings exist for job tenure in most industry sectors and vary according to education levels.

Dubai's population split is demographically similar, 80 percent expatriates and 20 percent nationals, as business investment has attracted people and industry from many countries. Despite the negative financial reports about Dubai in recent years (www.uaeinteract.com; 2009), it continues to be an important hub for east-west trade and commerce.

Social networking sites – membership growth

World rankings for social networking site membership show UAE in second place (46 percent) behind The Netherlands (49 percent) and ahead of Canada (44 percent) and United States (40 percent) which are all more developed economically (Menon, 2008). The global average is estimated at 26 percent. Mobile phone penetration in UAE is approximately 352 percent (Staff Writer, 2010) with 75 percent of the population using the internet (www.internetworldstats.com). Thus, new technology has become an indisputable part of culture in the country.

In the early days of the social portals, potential users of Facebook or MySpace had challenges. For example, telecommunications officials announced that areas within the sites, such as online dating, breached cultural and religious values and would be made inaccessible (Glass, 2008). The social aspects of these sites had generated more scrutiny than the business-oriented LinkedIn and the mini-blog Twitter. Intervention by government slowed but did not stop membership growth. Some companies began to shift marketing tactics and include the social platforms to reach target customers (admin, 2010). Membership on Twitter increased dramatically from early 2009 to 2010. One estimate was 300 percent (Menon, 2009) while another counted 15,000 new accounts over the period (Shabandri, 2010).

A change in Twitter's demographics was also noted; once the domain of internet professionals, the portal was being adopted by individuals for virtual relationship building and companies were signing on to Twitter as another medium in the marketing promotion mix (Lowe, 2010). As regional interest in the social networking sites grew, two portals - d1g.com and Faye3.com - were introduced to target Middle East users (Gale, 2007).

Arabic language and culture were featured to capture the non-English speaking segments who wanted access to social networking. Facebook, however, remains popular among users in the Arab world (www.insidefacebook.com) for social interaction as well as "an organizing tool of choice for people in Arab countries attempting to promote freedom of speech, human rights, and democracy" (Kim et al, 2010, p 216).

Social networking sites – a definition for understanding

Authors boyd and Ellison (2008) make an important distinction between network and networking in their seminal article. They suggest that network implies communication open to the greater participant body and thus visible to all in the network. Networking, they suggest, is the term for accumulating or gathering contacts and associations to build relationships of varying intensity and interests. In practice, then, network would describe sites such as Facebook whose interface is social connection. Gathering contacts for business purposes suggests that networking applies to a site such as LinkedIn.

Notably, boyd and Ellison (p. 211) refer to such sites as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site." Hargittai (2008) positions the social interface sites within daily routine suggesting that "the membership of certain online communities mirrors people's social networks in their everyday lives …" (p 293).

Social engagement, whether business or personal, connects people and their associations through the virtual setting (boyd and Ellison, 2008; Ellison et al, 2007). Arguably, network and networking are interchangeable terms as they are similarly related in the context of defining social networking sites for understanding.

Users as the unit of analysis

Scholarship about social networking sites has become increasingly complex as the topic crosses various disciplines and methodologies (boyd and Ellison, 2008). Advances in technology have made it difficult for researchers to keep pace with the rapid changes (Kim et al, 2010). As a result, a common theme within the literature has been the user as the unit of analysis. For example, studies have focused on users' demographic characteristics (Hargittai, 2008; Shen and Khalifa, 2010) and psychographic interests (Liu, 2008). In addition, constructs such as privacy (Brown et al, 2008; Young and Quan-Haase, 2009), trust (Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2009), and sociability (Hart et al, 2008; Lampe et al, 2008; Viswanath et al, 2009; Ferebee and Davis, 2009; Thelwall, 2009) or social capital (Java et al, 2007; Valenzuela et al, 2009) have been the subject of empirical studies. The number of users has been identified as one of the three key elements for the value-add that social networks contribute to business revenue generation (Enders et al, 2008).

However, Hargittai (2008) says that "researchers should tread lightly when generalizing from studies about the use of one SNS to the use of another such service" (p 277). Typically, it is users who attract users (Hart et al, 2008; Java et al, 2007) rather than random interest in a site that influences selection and joining.

The premise that users are central to the success of social networking sites adds greater emphasis to characterizing the segments and factors with the potential to influence selection including the association with other users. Hargittai (2008) adds the additional caution that review of any research should consider whether non-users have been included in or excluded from the research. If excluded, this may omit a key segment from the population and impact the interpretation of results.

Using demographics to segment users

A noticeable gap in the research about social networking sites is that respondents are often drawn from a narrow age range. For example, students at universities have often been the sample which has limited empirical findings to age groups such as 18 to 19 year olds (Hargittai, 2008), between 18 and 30 (Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2009), undergraduates (Lampe et al, 2008), and 17 to 25 (Young and Quan-Haase, 2009). Gender response and nationality in studies about social networking sites are also limited (Shen and Khalifa, 2010).

However, user demographics have research potential as indicated by the unexpected result in the Valenzuela et al (2009) study leading to questions about the use of age and gender to definitely provide a "demographic portrayal of Facebook users" (p. 894). Their findings from student respondents 18-29 refute the "popular myth that Facebook is dominated by idle, young, female, upper-middle class college undergraduates" (p. 894). Pfeil et al (2009) compared teenagers' use of social networking sites to that of respondents 60 years and older. The results indicated that the friend network of teenagers was generally +/- two years to their own age whereas older respondents' network was more age diverse.

Membership in social networking sites has to some extent aligned with age demographics as members may initially join one site and then migrate to another as their interests change. Educational transitions appear to be an important element for this switching behaviour (Shih, 2009). MySpace, for example, was the domain of children and teenagers. After leaving school, users were likely to change over to sites such as LinkedIn as they entered the workplace. Additionally, site selection has also been influenced by culture and nationality demographics. Some sites, such as Friendster and Hi5 have been the preference for users whose first language is not English.

However, because some countries have blocked sites, they may have pushed traffic to other sites. Regulatory action was taken against Orkut by the UAE government (Bardsley, 2007) enabling Facebook to gain members. Race and ethnicity proved to be important variables in research conducted on a US campus with 18-19 year old respondents (Hargittai, 2008). The study found that "it is important to note that in this sample, users from different racial and ethnic backgrounds are not equally drawn to the various social network sites" (p.291). Thus, information about respondents' race, ethnicity, and tnationality provides key demographic information for understanding the users.

Purpose: Social engagement through "social interaction in a virtual environment" (Pempek et al, 2009, p. 228) is the underpinning premise of social networking sites. It is not unexpected, then, that research would discuss joining and belonging as the social capital derived from community membership (Ellison et al, 2007; Tong et al, 2008; Zywica and

James, 2008; Pempek et al, 2009; Valenzuela et al, 2009). Yet intensity of the membership bond or commitment is not constant. Rather, over time, intensity is likely to change (Subrahmanyam et al, 2008) where "social links can grow stronger or weaker" (Viswanath et al, 2009, p. 37). For example, strength of attachment may be determined by such constructs as playfulness - defined by Sledgianowski and Kulviwat (2009, p 75) as "the degree to which a current or potential user believes that the social network site will bring him/her a sense of enjoyment and pleasure."

While much attention has been directed to the social aspects of the networking sites, information about purpose and the extent to which users make activities such as messaging and communication into daily routines remains a gap in the literature (Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2009). The need for further research was noted in an earlier UAE-based study that found Facebook participation to be greater among females than males according to purpose categorized as informational, social, entertainment, and development pursuits (Shen and Khalifa, 2010).

However, beyond the academic literature, social issues appear to be shifting purpose of use and thereby opening gaps that will require research attention. For instance, health awareness (Nielsen Wire, 27 April 2009) and up-to-the-minute entertainment news (Nielsen Wire, 8 July 2009) were early focal points for information through social networking sites. More recently, the rallying of crowds for street demonstrations and protest support (Social Capital Blog, 2011) reveals a lack of knowledge about how social networking sites are being used during times of societal tensions and conflicts. The suggestion is that purpose may be shifting from being primarily communication to becoming sources of information for users to engage interactively in the message and the medium. Although this shift is already established, the need to understand purpose among users in emerging markets remains.

Privacy: Signing on to a social network site is done with the knowledge that "communication is facilitated through information posted in the profile (the user's personal page), which often includes a photograph of the member and personal information describing interests, both of which provide information about one's identity" (Pempek et al, 2009, p. 228). As a result, privacy has increasingly become a topic of interest. One view of privacy has been noted in studies about the degree of access and openness (Buchanan et al, 2007; Lewis et al, 2008; Debatin et al, 2009; Fogel and Nehmad, 2008; Young and Quan-Haase, 2009) and the extent to which users consider privacy when activating and/or corresponding within the social networking site domains.

A study addressing gender differences regarding privacy found that women are more concerned than men (Fogel and Nehmad, 2008). However, the Young and Quant-Haase research suggests that young people who are the drivers of social networking have instituted access barriers that strengthen privacy checks and balances.

For instance, students indicated that emails through Facebook were sent person to person rather than as wall postings. Additionally, students said that they had blocked users, deleted unwanted messages, and/or removed images or pictures that might expose or identify them.

Another approach has addressed privacy from the perspective that information in a personal profile conveys preferences leading to possible connections with others who share the preferences (Liu, 2008). Privacy settings allow the user to fit within a category or segment of hobby or leisure activity. Lewis et al (2009, p. 83) explain this privacy approach as "simply another taste, in keeping with the broader menu of cultural preferences that characterizes an individual."

Thus, privacy may be a barrier to prevent others from gaining access to a personal profile, or it may be a gateway to reach others who share the same interests. In practice, this ambiguity may be less evident given that other issues such as social acceptance and culture may influence users. This may well be the case in markets such as Dubai and UAE where interaction between genders must adhere to religious, cultural, and legal protocols. The settings for privacy on social networking sites may be less a reflection of personal choice and more a response to cultural norms.

Methodology

Information about social networking sites in emerging markets generally and the Arab world specifically is limited. Thus, this study began as exploratory research guided by the question What is the reach of social networking sites in an east-meets-west emerging market?

Review of the literature was conducted throughout the study as the topic is moving and changing fast. Initial fieldwork involved two in-depth interviews with respondents from industry with different perspectives about reaching potential consumers through social networking sites. The first respondent held a senior position at the Dubai branch of a well known international information services and research organization.

The interviewee's knowledge was based on the company's strategic alliance with Facebook involving research to obtain customer perceptions and views about advertisements on the site and brand recognition measurements. The second respondent markets to reach and recruit students for a major educationsl institution in the emirate. Information from the first respondent was valued for the marketplace insight while the second respondent offered views about demographics, particularly age segmentation for reaching target markets. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Two focus groups were conducted for the study. Respondents were selected by judgment and convenience. Six persons were in the first focus group, ages 16 – 20; nationalities were Saudi Arabian/Puerto Rican, Portuguese, Canadian, Indian, American/Palestinian, and Pakistani. This focus group represented the student-age respondents in the study. The second focus group was four working persons 25-39. Their nationalities were Emirati/Filipino, Emirati, Indian, and Filipino. Extensive notes were taken. The second group was recorded and transcribed.

The questionnaire was developed from the secondary and primary data collection. The instrument was constructed in three parts according to the study's three objectives. Part one contained demographics as well as the social network site(s) used. The option "not applicable" was included for respondents who did not use the sites. The need for this

option was identified in the focus groups which noted that not everyone has social network accounts. Part two focused on the purpose of use, the second objective.Part three addressed respondents' privacy concerns, the study's third objective.

The questionnaire was piloted with six respondents prior to being used in the field. Minor changes were suggested and implemented. The final instrument was distributed at locations in seven districts of the city to obtain a cross-section of the resident population. Surveys were self-administered and person-administered using convenience and judgment sampling. Two hundred and seventy-five (275) usable questionnaires were obtained. Twenty-one respondents (8 percent) indicated they did not use Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or MySpace. Data from those respondents was not used in the analysis. SPSS software was used for the non-parametric tests, including cross-tabulations, chi-square and Kruskal-Wallis.

Findings

Demographics
The first objective asked: to what extent do demographic factors indicate the likely use of social networking sites. In addition to describing the respondents who participated in the study, the concern was also whether the sample was representative of the resident population – expatriates and nationals. This section of the survey asked about gender, age, education, and occupation. Nationality was an open-ended question which made it possible to later group the respondents into similar geographic and cultural backgrounds. Years lived in the country was also asked. The second part included information about respondents' use of social networking sites: choice and preference, whether a site was used for business or personal reasons, length of time since joining, and time on the sites each day.

Respondents
The gender split for the study respondents was males, 51 percent, and females, 49 percent. The age ranges were combined to three categories: 25 years of age and younger (54 percent), 26 – 34 years (32 percent), and 35 years and older (14 percent). The level of education reached by respondents was high school (26 percent); undergraduate (55 percent); graduate, including PhD (15 percent), and professional degree (4 percent). The country emphasizes higher education which is seen in the high percentage of respondents currently in or having completed university studies. For marital status, the split was 70 percent single and 30 percent married.

The survey question about nationality was open-ended to collect specific information about the respondent's home country. Results were collapsed to six segments based on geography as well as cultural considerations according to Dubai and UAE population demographics. These included: India and Pakistan (29 percent); UAE (7 percent); Americas (north and south) and Oceania (Australia and New Zealand (11 percent); Middle East, North Africa, Iran and GCC [ ] (23 percent); Asia excluding India and Pakistan, Philippines and African countries bordering the Arabian Peninsula [ ] (18 percent); UK and Europe (12 percent).

Responses for occupation were grouped into seven categories: student (41 percent); manager (17 percent); executive (24 percent); entrepreneur (3 percent); professional (7 percent); non-working (2 percent); and other (6 percent).

How long respondents had lived in Dubai was also asked given the UAE's youth as a country (founded in 1971). People come to Dubai for work. Many stay short term while others become settled and renew their contractual employment. Responses for duration in the country were: less than one year (6 percent); 1-2 years (8 percent); 2-5 years (28 percent); 6-10 years (16 percent); 11-15 years (11 percent); 16-20 years (11 percent); and 21-30 years (20 percent). For data analysis, 5 years and less in Dubai was recoded to one segment (42 percent). This reflects the transient nature of the population where the typical employment contract is two years or less.

Which social networking sites & why

Respondents were asked to tick all the social networking sites they use. Percentages indicated that some respondents are members of more than one site: Facebook, 98 percent; Twitter, 21 percent; LinkedIn, 21 percent; and MySpace, 6 percent. Respondents gave reasons for use as personal (97 percent) and business (27 percent). Site preference choice was Facebook (90 percent). The non-users (8 percent) indicated their reasons as not interested (48 percent), don't want personal information published online (38 percent), no time (33 percent), and it is culturally frowned upon (5 percent).

Time on site was questioned from two perspectives. The first was length of time since joining: less than 1 year (15 percent), 1-2 years (24 percent), 2-4 years (39 percent) and more than 4 years (22 percent). The second was length of time spent on social networking sites each day. Respondents indicated less than 1 hour (37 percent), 1-2 hours (26 percent), 2-4 hours (14 percent), more than 4 hours daily (10 percent) and not every day (13 percent).

When respondents were asked which personal information they include on their profile, the percentage of yes responses were: photograph, 68 percent; email address, 63 percent; relationship status, 47 percent; and mobile (cell) telephone number, 19 percent. Those who reveal no personal information were 10 percent of respondents.

Table 1 shows the results for content on sites cross-tabulated with four demographic categories: age, nationality, gender, and years lived in Dubai. Those 35 years and older were less likely to include their phone number and their photograph. The number of those who reveal nothing was higher in the 26-34 age group followed closely by the 35+ segment. UAE nationals were more likely to add their phone number (43 percent) than other nationality groups. Respondents from the UK and Europe might add their photograph (63 percent) but were less likely to include their phone number (11 percent), email address (44 percent), and/or relationship status (33 percent). This nationality group had the highest percentage (22) who reveals nothing.

Generally, females were not as willing to provide information compared to males with the exception of including a photograph. This percentage was similar for the genders: males, 69 percent, and females, 68 percent, include a picture on their profile. The highest percentage of yes responses for including a phone number on the personal profile was given by those who have lived in Dubai the shortest time (22 percent) and the longest (26 percent).

Chi square goodness of fit tests were significant for gender and mobile (cell) telephone number, $p = .000$, gender and email address, $p = .010$, and gender and reveal nothing, $p = .015$.

Table 1: Percentage Yes responses for site content cross-tabulated with demographics

		Mobile (cell) number on site	Email on site	Relationship status on site	Photograph on site	Reveal nothing
Age	<25	21	65	47	72	7
	26-34	20	58	46	68	15
	35 +	12	68	47	56	12
Nationality	India, Pakistan	19	71	46	66	6
	NA, SA, AUS, NZ	11	58	42	73	8
	UK, Europe	11	44	33	63	22
	Africa, Asia	15	55	51	79	11
	Iran, MENA, GCC	25	70	53	66	8
	UAE	43	57	43	57	14
Gender	Males	33	70	50	69	5
	Females	7	59	43	68	15
Years in Dubai	< 5 yrs	22	58	46	65	11
	5-10	16	67	44	72	9
	11-15	4	61	43	64	11
	16-20	19	77	50	85	8
	20+ yrs	26	62	50	66	8

Purpose

The second objective asked: to what extent is purpose of use similar or different across demographically diverse segments (see **Table 2**). Based on comments from the focus groups, interviews and secondary research, six reasons were selected for statements about purpose.

Answer options were Likert scale with 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. Strongly agree and agree combined showed the following overall results: keep in touch with family/ friends back home, 91 percent; because my friends and family are on the sites, 89 percent; to find information about other people, 69 percent; consider social networking sites to be a key tool for advertising/promoting products and events, 58 percent; I can make new friends, 47 percent; and allows me to build business relationships, 37 percent.

These results along with mean and standard deviation for each reason are shown on Table 2. A follow-up question about the likelihood that respondents would click through on advertisements had 11 percent saying frequently or often; 21 percent said sometimes; 32 percent answered rarely; and 37 percent indicated they would never click through.

When cross tabulated with age, respondents under 25 indicated less agreement with the purpose "to build business relationships." However, for age, responses for "make new friends' were lowest - 45 percent - for those under 25 followed by 47 percent for respondents 35 and older, and 50 percent for the 26-34 group. The older group of respondents, 35+ years of age, also expressed less agreement with the statement that social networking sites are a key tool for advertising and promotion of products and events (42 percent).

Cross tabulation with nationality indicated a high percentage of agreement for the purpose statements "friends and family are on it" and "to keep in touch with friends and family." Respondents from the Americas and Oceania indicated 96 percent agreement with the statement "because friends and family are on social networking sites" and 100 percent agreement with "to keep in touch." The purpose "to keep in touch" had the highest agree responses from all nationalities including UAE locals.

The lowest agree responses for the six purpose statements were "to make new friends" and "build business relationships." In the first instance, 16 percent of respondents from the Americas and Oceania and 33 percent of those from the UK and Europe indicated agreement. In the latter case, only 14 percent of UAE nationals agreed. Notable results with gender were the lesser agreement from females (39 percent) than males (54 percent) for the purpose statement "to make new friends."

For building business relationships, both genders gave similar agree responses: males, 38 percent, and females, 36 percent. When cross tabulated with years in Dubai, the purpose statement "to make new friends" received the lowest number of agree responses compared to "friends and family are on it" and "to keep in touch."

The independent samples Kruskal-Wallis test had significant results for age with "to build business relationships" ($p = .000$) and using social networking sites because they are a "key tool for advertising/promoting products and events" ($p = .010$). When nationality was considered, two variables that had significant p values with the Kruskal-Wallis test included: using social networking sites to make new friends, $p = .012$, and keeping in touch with family and friends, $p = .038$. Gender and make new friends and gender with build business relationships also had significant Kruskal-Wallis test results at $p = .002$ and $p = .013$, respectively.

Privacy

To what extent is privacy a concern among users of social networking sites was the third objective guiding the study (see Table 3). Five Likert scale statements, with 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree were used. Strongly agree and agree overall results were noted as follows: social networking sites are a privacy concern, 68 percent; I worry that my privacy will be compromised by information posted by others, 60 percent; I fear that strangers who view my profile are invading my privacy, 56 percent; I trust that social networking sites will not misuse my personal information, 41 percent; and I fear that what I publish online can be used against me in a job interview, 34 percent. These results along with mean and standard deviation for each statement are shown in Table 3.

When the privacy statements were cross-tabulated with age, the percentage agreement that

Table 2: Percentage agreement with purpose of use statements cross-tabulated with demographics

		Friends & family are on it	Make new friends	Build business relationships	Keep in touch with family & friends	Find info about other people	Key tool for advertising & promotion
Overall results	Percentage	89	47	37	91	69	58
	Mean	1.69	2.82	3.08	1.52	2.10	2.54
	SD	.981	1.289	1.392	.737	.949	1.366
Age	<25	89	45	23	90	69	55
	26-34	89	50	54	92	69	69
	35 +	88	47	47	97	67	42
Nationality	India, Pakistan	90	53	31	90	74	58
	NA, SA, AUS, NZ	96	16	42	100	68	56
	UK, Europe	85	33	30	93	58	41
	Africa, Asia	87	53	47	87	68	64
	Iran, MENA, GCC	90	49	42	92	68	62
	UAE	79	57	14	93	71	57
Gender	Males	91	54	38	92	68	61
	Females	87	39	36	91	70	55
Years in Dubai	< 5 yrs	89	52	42	94	67	56
	5-10	98	37	42	88	67	56
	11-15	89	39	36	93	67	56
	16-20	89	48	19	89	74	48
	20+ yrs	82	46	32	88	72	70

privacy is a concern was consistent for the three categories: those under 25, 66 percent; 26-34 years, 69 percent; and 35+ years, 74 percent. Fear that information may be used against them in a job interview was also similar across the three categories: those under 25, 32 percent; 26-34 years, 37 percent; and 35+ years, 36 percent. The oldest and youngest age groups were least trusting about sites and information misuse: those less than 25 years (37 percent) and 35+ years (35 percent) expressed agreement that they distrust sites.

Cross tabulation with nationality showed that UAE nationals and those from Africa, Asia countries were more likely to agree that social networking sites are a privacy concern with 79 percent and 77 percent respectively. Percentage agreement about fear that strangers viewing respondents' profile is a privacy invasion was highest for those from the UK and Europe (63 percent) with the Iran, MENA and GCC segment a close second with 62 percent. UAE Nationals were more likely to worry that their privacy would be compromised when information was posted by others (71 percent) and those from India and Pakistan were least likely to be concerned that information posted would be used against them in a job interview (25 percent). Respondents from the Americas and Oceania indicated their lack of trust with only 27 percent agreeing that the sites would not misuse personal information.

Table 3: Percentage agreement with privacy statements cross tabulated with demographics

		Sites are a privacy concern	Strangers invading privacy if view my profile	Privacy compromise when info posted by others	Info used against me in job interview	Trust sites not to misuse my info
Overall results	Percentage	68	56	60	34	41
	Mean	2.21	2.46	2.39	3.13	2.85
	SD	.963	1.109	1.071	1.322	1.102
Age	<25	66	58	59	32	37
	26-34	69	51	63	37	51
	35 +	74	62	59	36	35
Nationality	India, Pakistan	69	54	59	25	43
	NA, SA, AUS, NZ	65	54	65	35	27
	UK, Europe	56	63	56	40	41
	Africa, Asia	77	53	57	28	53
	Iran, MENA, GCC	63	62	60	46	33
	UAE	79	50	71	43	50
Gender	Males	65	49	58	41	48
	Females	70	64	62	27	34
Years in Dubai	< 5 yrs	61	54	49	33	43
	5-10	58	47	57	27	47
	11-15	71	82	71	32	39
	16-20	85	59	74	22	37
	20+ yrs	78	54	71	50	34

Gender results showed higher agreement responses amongst females cross tabulated with sites are a privacy concern (70 percent); worry that strangers invade privacy if viewing a respondent's profile (64 percent); and privacy is compromised when information is posted by others (62 percent). Females (27 percent) were not as concerned as males (41 percent) about information on social networking sites being used against them and fewer females (34 percent) than males (48 percent) trusted that sites would not misuse information.

Fear that privacy would be compromised when information was posted by others was least worrisome for those who had lived in Dubai the shortest time: less than 5 years (49 percent) and 5-10 years (57 percent). The results from those who had lived longer in Dubai indicated greater agreement about the privacy compromise: 11-15 years, 71 percent; 16-20 years, 74 percent; and over 20 years, 71 percent. Cross tabulations of years lived in Dubai with trust that sites would not misuse information trended to less agreement as the years increased: less than 5 years, 43 percent; 5-10 years, 47 percent; 11-15 years, 39 percent; 16-20 years, 37 percent; and over 20 years, 34 percent.

Results for the Kruskal-Wallis independent samples test had significant p values for gender and I fear that strangers who view my profile are invading my privacy ($p = .017$); information that I publish online may be used against me in a job interview ($p = .049$); and I trust social networking sites not to misuse my information ($p = .010$). Years lived in Dubai and I fear that my privacy may be compromised by information posted by others, ($p = .031$), and information that I publish online may be used against me in a job interview ($p = .031$) also had significant p value results for the Kruskal-Wallis independent samples test.

Table 4: Percentages for most secure networking site

		Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn	MySpace	Not Applicable
Overall results		56	5	11	2	26
Age	<25	67	7	5	3	18
	26-34	50	4	18	0	28
	35 +	28	3	16	3	50
Nationality	India, Pakistan	57	10	17	3	18
	NA, SA, AUS, NZ	70	0	13	4	13
	UK, Europe	48	4	7	4	37
	Africa, Asia	63	5	7	0	25
	Iran, MENA, GCC	50	3	16	2	29
	UAE	50	0	0	0	50
Gender	Males	56	9	8	2	25
	Females	57	2	13	2	26
Years in Dubai	< 5 yrs	61	3	14	1	21
	5-10	45	10	7	2	36
	11-15	70	4	8	7	11
	16-20	64	12	4	4	16
	20+ yrs	44	4	13	0	39

Respondents were asked to tick one answer only for the question Which, in your opinion, is the most secure social networking site? Answer options included the four sites - Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and MySpace - as well as a “not applicable” option that security was not applicable to any of those listed. The results indicate that Facebook is viewed as the most secure site with results for security is “not applicable” as the second highest percentage (see Table 4). The results show that LinkedIn had the third highest percentage for views about security, followed by Twitter. MySpace was very clearly last amongst respondents who answered this question.

Discussion

The research question asked What is the reach of social networking sites in an east-meets-west emerging market? Considering that only 8 percent of respondents in the convenience judgment sample did not use social networking sites, arguably use has reached well into the emerging market that is the UAE and Dubai. The age range and the nationality mix of respondents support this view.

This study has two main respondent groups: expatriates (93 percent) and nationals (7 percent). This differs somewhat from the population which may be the result of the small sample size (254 respondents). However, the percentages of each nationality group, according to geography and culture, are a reasonable representation of the diversity of the expatriate residents. Thus, distinctions that can be drawn through the similarities and the differences contribute to knowledge about users leading to results that may be generalized to other expatriate populations in emerging markets.

When purpose of use is considered, the findings suggest that expatriates turn to social networking sites because family and friends are members and to keep in touch with family and friends. Meeting new friends or using the sites for information about people or products and events are of less consequence. The high percentage of agree responses for family and friend contact may also reflect that all expatriates are transient according to the residency laws. Thus, expatriates appear to use social networking sites as a familial link rather than a tool for communication.

For UAE nationals, the country's indigenous people, the findings indicate that they too use the sites for contact with friends and family. However, this may be due to society's pressures that genders do not mingle prior to marriage. The notable result from this segment is that they are not likely to use social networking sites to build business relationships. It is likely that they network through direct contact in face-to-face settings or by telephone. As the results show, UAE nationals were more likely to add a phone number (43 percent) to their personal profile than other nationality groups.

Agreement about making new friends and building business relationships was lower among those from developed countries with western cultures. This suggests that western culture expatriates were not enumbered by the host country's Muslim society in meeting new friends and, thus, reliance on social networking is not as evident as with those from eastern culture countries.

The respondents in this study span an age range across at least two generational cohorts. The findings show that the age group 26-34 is more likely to use social networking sites for building business relationships as well as for information about products and events than those younger and older. They had less trust in sites not misusing personal information which would explain that they did not express concern that posted information might be used against them in an interview. Apparently, they take more care with content – maybe because they are actively in the job market.

Gender responses indicated that females appear more concerned about privacy issues than males. Females were less likely to turn to social networking sites to make new friends than males. The data implies that females were more guarded than males about the way they use the sites. The unanswered question is whether this hesitation is linked to living as an expatriate rather than in their home country. Research that focuses specifically on female expatriates would incerase knowledge about this exploratory finding.

The fourth demographic that was used for the cross tabulations was the number of years respondents had lived in Dubai. This was used to consider whether their approach to purpose of use and privacy changed as years increased. One finding was that using social networking sites to make new friends had higher agree responses from those who had moved to the emirate within the previous five years and those who had lived here for sixteen years or more. It is not unexpected that newcomers would use the sites for this purpose. However, the interesting point is that those of longer tenure also used the sites for making new friends. Because expatriates come and go, the need to replenish social circles comes as friends leave. The data supports this real-life issue.

Finally, respondents indicated Facebook as their social networking site of choice. This was not surprising given that respondents join for familial reasons – their friends and family are already members, and they use it to keep in touch. The site appears to hold strong appeal for expatriates far from home, and nationals distanced from others by society's cultural and religious values.

Limitations and future research

An obvious limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size. The results of non-parametric tests might have had more significant outcomes had more respondents been reached. However, care was taken to collect questionnaires at several venues across the city to achieve a good cross-section of the populace.

One of the questions on the survey asked respondents to indicate the length of time they had belonged to any social networking site. The answer options began at six months and increased incrementally. This question was not used for cross tabulation for two reasons.

The first is that social portals are a relatively new phenomenon and joining has taken place only within recent years. Second, respondents' recall about when they had joined social networking sites may not have been sufficiently specific to facilitate distinctions across the data analysis.

Missing from the research were questions about whether expatriates had joined social networking sites since moving to Dubai and greater focus on those who did not belong to any social portal. As Hargittai (2007) noted, information from non-users is also important and not including them in the data risks losing a valuable respondent segment. However, the omission provides an opportunity for carrying this research topic forward.

In addition, the question that asked if respondents click through on advertisements could have been developed. This was an opportunity to identify the extent to which expatriates use social networking sites when seeking information about their home away from home. Extending the questions to include whether the sites are used as a word of mouth reference would also have added value.

This is an exploratory study that has contributed to the literature with information about expatriates and nationals in an emerging market. Future research may seek to better understand expatriate use with more in-depth attention to nationality segments.

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