Social Media Functionality as the Indicators on Fostering Civic Engagement

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Abstract

The growth in the internet and social media development often seen and viewed as a radical shift in correspondence and a rehumanising aspect of communication. As a population expanded, the innovative application of social media has also drawn considerable attention to how communication is humanised and to promote civic engagement amongst digital societies. Even though social media have been praised for their potential for facilitating civic engagement, at a time most organisations are reluctant and unable to identify the functionalities of social media in developing humanise communication strategies and allocate resources to engage effectively. Therefore, a quantitative survey involved 400 respondents using purposive sampling technique has been done to investigate the usage and the functionalities of Facebooks as main predictors to build a humanise communication strategy towards promoting civic engagement. Based on multiple regression analysis, it highlighted that the group of six functionalities which are sharing, identity, groups, reputation, relationship and conversation were main contributions towards civic engagement. It is clearly explained that Facebook does not focus solely on just one function because it varies in terms of their functions and impact in promoting civic engagement. In conclusion, by analysing these predictive factors, government and organisations can understand how effective communication strategies should be developed in order to engage and promoting civic engagement among the digital communities.
Keywords: Facebook, Facebook Functionality, Civic Engagement, Digital Communities, Social Media

Introduction

Social media is a set of an online tool for social interaction and one of the Internet-based Application group that provides the base of ideological and technological of web 2.0 to create and change of User

Generated Content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In practice, social media serves as a catchall phrase for social networking services (SNS) (e.g. Facebook), social sharing services (YouTube, Flickr), a collection of web-based technologies and services (e.g. Twitter) (Hansen, Shneiderman & Smith, 2011). There is no doubt that social media give more approaches to people to express and offer perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and substance that satisfies or stimulates. Individuals are experiencing their lives through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. While social media is to design for engagement, but many users are incapable of identifying the functionality of social media in promoting civic engagement. Thus, the opportunities to look in-depth on the role of social media functions as a tool to boost communication has been regularly disregarded or mishandle (Berthon, Pitt, McCarthy, & Kates, 2007). Therefore, as social media such as Facebook expands, it is vital to identify practitioners to recognize the resourcefulness of social media and take advantage of every available opportunity to effectively reach the public mostly young people to more involvement in civic engagement.

Literature Review
Civic Engagement and Social Media
Civic engagement includes many aspects of political and non-political action. It also refers to the general involvement of people in the life of a society to promote living conditions and shape the future of society. Typical forms of civic engagement are making donations; participating in community work like cleaning the environment; voting; attending community meetings or functions; contributing ideas to social causes; contacting public officials; attending protests, and speeches; signing petitions; serving local organizations, and writing articles concerning community matters. However, as a population expanded, we turned out to be more disengaged from people around us. We started living in individual dwellings, with more noteworthy separations amongst us and participating in informal shared social occasions. The routes have changing in which we imparted and passed on information and knowledge.

Furthermore, with them came formal communication processes and needs for technologies to communicate more widely to increasingly larger groups of people. This situation will contribute to the face that the role of social media is addictive absolutely because it gives us something which this present reality needs, it gives us quickness, direction, a feeling of lucidity and value as an individual. Therefore, effective communication strategies need to develop in order to engage and improve the human experience.

Online social network sites such as Facebook, have been extensively studied through the lens of social capital because of their focus on relationship formation and maintenance. If individuals are engaging less in their communities, it will lead that there is a loss of relationships. In the field of Information Systems, there is study has conducted the use of social media as an IT artefact and its influences, offering various understandings of online human behaviour, particularly for business, psychology and sociology implications. Even though there is promising evidence that that people are adopting social media network for civic engagement (Hochheiser & Shneiderman, 2010; Zhang et al., 2010; Raynes-Goldie &Walker, 2008), research on civic engagement (behaviours) using social media remains limited (Ellison et al., 2007; Mandarano et al. 2010). Moreover, there are future research calls to examine the factors that promote online civic engagement (Young, 2011; Shneiderman et al. 2011; Gil de Zuniga, 2012) and its use for positive outcomes (Peluchtte & Karl, 2008).

As hurrying, social media such as Facebook has profound implications when applied, because it is changing the way people interact and communicate, and even the nature of the relationship. Understanding civic engagement is vital in the use of social media because more and more organisations use social media to engage individuals and communities. In the meantime, civic engagement using social media has defined as connections between people, as well as organisations, that contribute to the public good. However, based on the reviewed literature, there is a lack of understanding of how social media functionality motivates civic engagement and how new forms of civic communication that will be utilised by social media users. Without a clear comprehension of online civic attitudes and behaviours, practitioners such as activists and policymakers would lose the opportunity to tap into the social media's ability to foster civic attitudes and behaviours and also address social issues through its networks. In order to have a better understanding of social media services and to specify communication strategy needs, a honeycomb of social media functionality was utilised (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011; Simbun, 2019).

Facebook Functionality and Civic Engagement
The honeycomb model (Figure 1) helps to clarify the consequences of each block and the interaction of Facebook users. The seven roles involved are groups which reflect the extent to which users can form their communities or sub-companies, reputation the extent to which users can decide the level of other users or themselves by sharing information, status, friend's list, while relationships which are the extent of users attached to other users (Kietzmann et al., 2012)

The *conversations* demonstrate how users interact with other Facebook users, such as talking, exchanging status, sending messages, sharing contents and sharing what they want. *Identity* is the contents to which users disclose their identity, such as profile (name, gender, age and qualification), status and interest, content exchanged and any information representing the users, in Facebook settings. *Presence* means that users can recognise other users on Facebook through their profile, status, chat and check-in status (Kietzmann et al., 2012).
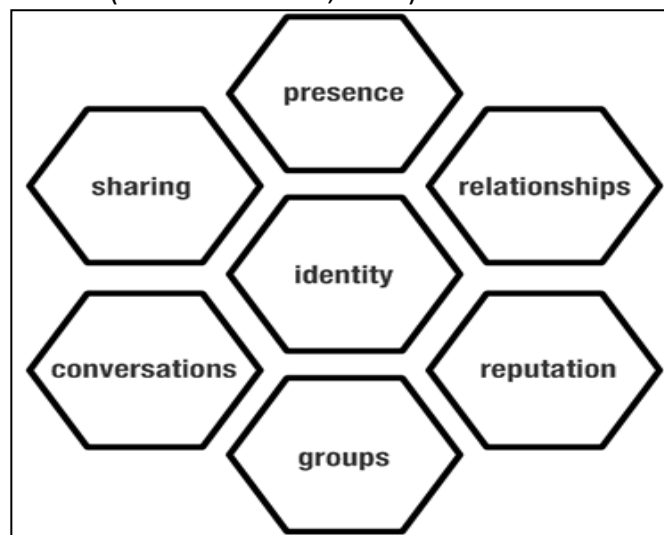

Figure 1. Facebook Honeycomb Model (Smith, 2007)

Based on the theoretical viewpoint, this study predicted an online civic engagement like Facebook that explicitly refers to Facebook's features itself and provides new perspectives in the area

of civic engagement. Therefore, all these predictor factors, which lead to civic engagement, have been identified and highlighted in seven hypotheses.

> H1: There is a relationship between identity function on Facebook and civic engagement
> H2. There is a relationship between sharing function on Facebook and civic engagement
> H3. There is a relationship between group function on Facebook and civic engagement
> H4. There is a relationship between relationship function on Facebook and civic engagement
> H5. There is a relationship between conversation function on Facebook and civic engagement
> H6. There is a relationship between reputation function on Facebook and civic engagement
> H7. There is a relationship between presence function on Facebook and civic engagement

Methodology

A survey among 384 stratified Malaysian youth was conducted. Data were collected through survey instrument to explore each of the constructs in civic talk on Facebook functionality usage and civic engagement. The sample is chosen based on purposive sampling and must be Facebook active user for more than six months. A set of the questionnaire consisted of three sections which are user profile (7 items), patterns of Facebook usage (14 items), Facebook Functionality (Group, eight items; Presence, eight items, Reputation, eight items; Relationship, eight items; Identity, eight items; Sharing, eight items; Conversation, eight items) and Civic Engagement (14 items) were asked to respondents to rate their opinion using a 4-point scales ranging from 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree and 4=Strongly agree.

Facebook Functionality (Group, eight items; Presence, eight items, Reputation, eight items; Relationship, eight items; Identity, eight items; Sharing, eight items; Conversation, eight items) and Civic Engagement (14 items) were asked to respondents to rate their opinion using a 4-point scales ranging from 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree and 4=Strongly agree. The pre-test found that the Alpha Cronbach values Identity (0.826), Relationships (0.842), Groups (0.866), Presence (0.753), Sharing (0.831), and Conversations (0.745), Reputation (0.763) and Civic Engagement (0.824). Therefore, the reliability of the research instrument was acceptable. PLS-SEM was applied using to analyze direct effects between predictive factors and civic engagement.

Results and Discussion

In this study, seven predictive factors of Facebook functionalities has analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling *(PLS-SEM)* to determine which of all these predictive factors will contribute to civic engagement. Based on direct effect analysis (Figure 3), this study has found that *sharing, group, conversation, reputation* and *relationship* of Facebook functions have statistically significant in contributing towards civic engagement. However, *identity* function (β=-0.099, p>0.05) has positive but not significant effects on Civic engagement. This results indicated that there is no relationship between civic engagement and identity. Even though they have shared much about themselves such as name, gender, age, qualification and any information that represent themselves to other members on Facebook, it does not have any promising for them to be civically engaged.

In the meantime, *sharing* function (β=0.610, p<0.05) is the most substantial predictive factor of civic engagement. This result indicates that higher in sharing, exchange, distribute and receive content among the Facebook user will be positively related to civic engagement among them.

However, the second predictive factor affecting civic engagement, reputation function (β= - 0.468, p<0.05) has negative and significant effects on civic engagement. It shows that more usage on reputation function on Facebook such as expose their image level that could be "likes" they received and too many friends they have, it will lead to the decrement of their civic engagement.

The result also revealed that *Presence* function on Facebook (β=0.243, p<0.05) has positive and significant effects on civic engagement. It shows that more user can identify existing of other users on Facebook will increase civic engagement among the users. The availability of individuals in Social media and have social networking site accounts can build relationship among Facebook users. Such as Facebook, they can post events on timelines, or send messages to group or create posts can serve as a platform to gather friends, potential supporters, and other online audiences. In a similar vein, another study found that youth involved in online communities were more likely to volunteer, do charity work, and get involved in community issues (Kahne et al., 2012).

While the results also disclosed that *group* function (β=-0.226, p<0.05) has negative and significant effects on civic engagement. As mentioned, *group* function such as Facebook group will support and educates the members with similar intentions for the good of the community, however, the results discover that more usage on *group* function such as created and joined more groups in Facebook, it will lead the members not *stay* engaged in the group. Therefore, it will lead to the decrement of civic engagement among the users.

Next, the results have shown that *conversation* function (β=0.186, p<0.05) has positive and significant effects on civic engagement. It shows that more usage on conversation function such effective communication and more usage on relationship function such as more users attached and related to other users on Facebook will be positively related to higher civic engagement among them. In order to be established through communication, the ability to communicate well are essential (Rossiter and Pearce,1975, p. 3). The achievement of positive effects on one's well-being, such as a satisfying relationship through socialization, one would need to have the necessary socialization skills. Such social media related communications can help individuals to find more effective ways to communicate and gain knowledge about the norms of online communication and lead to engagement.

Finally, the direct effect analysis also shows that *relationship* function (β=0.143, p<0.05) has positive and significant effects on civic engagement. It means more usage on relationship function such as more users attached and related to other users on Facebook will be positively related to higher civic engagement among them. Past studies have suggested that engaging with people, such as neighbours, friends, and family, and participation in social groups has proved to improve people's level of social support, the fulfilment of their relationships, making sense of life, self-esteem, commitment to communities, and psychological and physical well-being (Thoits, 1983; Cohen & Wills 1985; Diener et al., 1999; Putnam, 2000; Peterson et al., 2005).
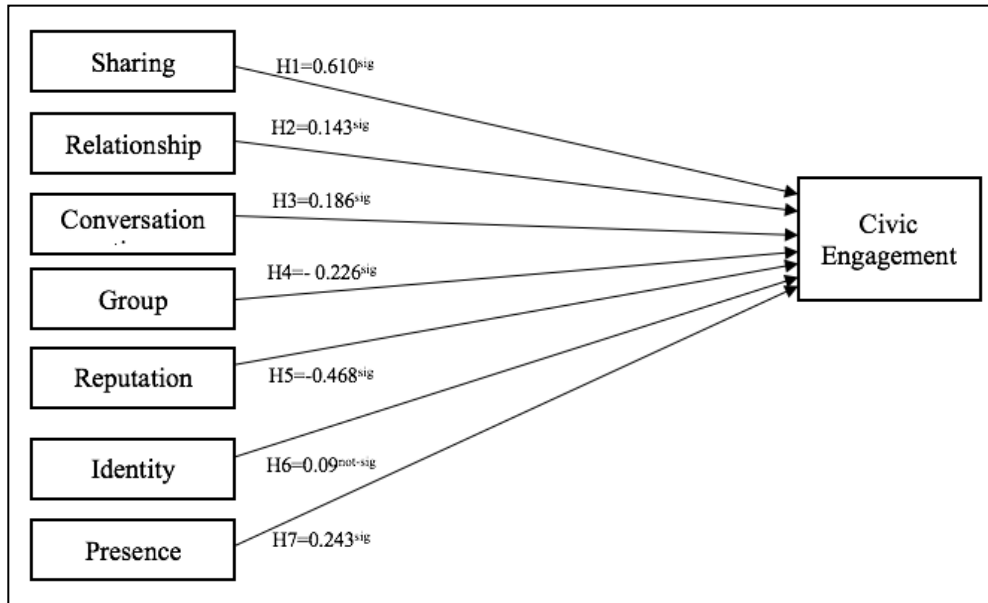
Figure 2. Direct Effect Model (Initial)

Conclusion

It becomes clear that social media such as Facebook does not focus solely on just one function in promoting civic engagement in an organization. By analyzing the Honeycomb's seven functionalities of Facebook, organizations can monitor and understand how social media such as Facebook activities vary in terms of their functions and impact, to develop a congruent social media strategy in developing and promoting civic engagement in their organizations. Based on the finding of direct analysis of this study, a new model has developed that may undoubtedly benefit all organizations in promoting civic engagement towards using Facebook as their communication tool (Figure 4).
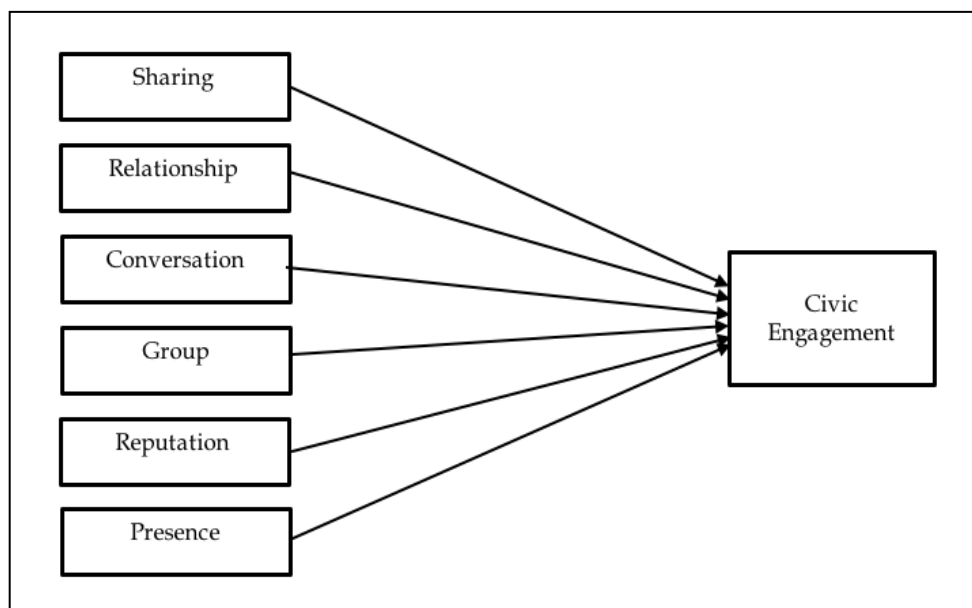

Figure 3. Predictive factors in contributing towards civic engagement

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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