Social networking and uncertainty reduction theory psychology essay

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between social networking and uncertainty reduction theory having the focus on how this theory is related to social attraction and uncertainty reduction in a social media situation. Previous research suggests that as uncertainty decreases the threshold of information increases. Results suggest that (popular media personnel are a large rold in women's media usage, social comparison tendencies, and body image). A discussion of findings in comparing social networking and uncertainty reduction follows the results.

With the advancing technology of the Internet, members of the community are being exposed to social networking. It was four years ago that I remember Facebook becoming a thing of the future and MySpace a thing of the past. " The data doesn't deny that Facebook has come to dominate social networking in the US and over took Myspace in 2009" (Owyang, 2010). With the advancement of social networking, the Uncertainty Reduction Theory is becoming more applicable to everyday life as well as everyday encounters. For example, imagine walking into an unfamiliar situation then suddenly becoming filled with uncertainty about the people that surround you as well as the area that you are in. With this example, you are likely to become more reserved and not as willing to open up to your peers unless they do so first. It is this case for the social networking in an unfamiliar world otherwise known as the world wide web.

While researching this topic, I came across the phenomenon of social networking and uncertainty reduction. In doing the research, I found repeatedly that with the increase of communication between strangers, uncertainty decreases. However, I also found that Charles Berger,

Uncertainty Reduction Theorist, developed 8axioms to describe how uncertainty reduction unfolds. Although extensive research has been done on Berger's theory, there are many doubts about his views on uncertainty and the methodology in which he goes to reduce it. With the development of social networking being on the rise and the relationship to the amount of information that is revealed, there is a need for further research on these topics. Therefore, the purpose of this paper it to explore the relationship between social networking and uncertainty reduction theory. The paper will be organized around a discussion of relevant literature, methods, study results, discussion, and future research.

Literature Review

This project covers two variables: social networking and uncertainty reduction. Many surveys have been conducted to further discuss the online statistics on these two variables. The following topics will report on previous findings on these two variables.

With the phenomenon of uncertainty reduction, there are two different ways of describing the theory: either by the eight axioms or by describing it as passive, active, or interactive as forms of seeking information from the other person.

Positive or negative reinforcement of certain behaviors can have an impact on other people who are witnessing these behaviors and their reinforcements whether it is positive or negative aid in the increase or decrease of uncertainty.

Rationale

With the increasing popularity of social networking as well as the convenience, there is a need for further research on social networking and uncertainty reduction. With the growing problem of Internet safety, further research is needed to be done on how to meet new people online in a safe fashion. Therefore, this research project examines the relationship between social networking and the amount of information that is revealed in an online setting.

Research Question

R. Q. 1: What is the relationship between uncertainty reduction and strangers meeting online.

R. Q. 2: What is the threshold of information revealed in an online setting opposed to an in person?

Methodology

The goal of the present investigation is to explore the relationship between social networking and uncertainty reduction theory. The study is organized around a survey questionnaire. The methodology will be organized around a discussion of participants, measures, procedures, and analysis.

Participants

The participants were comprised of 100 male and females ages 19-25. A convenient random sample of 40 participants came from online surveys while the other 60 were randomly passed out around the University of Tennessee-Knoxville library and Communication Classes.

Measures

After determining the questions for the survey, a likert-type scale was used to have a uniform guide for the scale used ranging from 1-5 and 1 being Strongly Disagree to 5 being Strongly Agree. The survey questionnaire was comprised of 15 questions centered on the following topics: Facebook, MySpace, and Chatroulette. To ensure that the answers were closed-ended, neutral questions. To measure the amount that each participant spends social networking on the specified sites, Facebook, MySpace, and Chatroulette, questions were tailored around asking the amount of time spent chatting or video chatting. However, to measure the participants uncertainty in an online setting, questions were designed to reveal the amount of information that each participant revealed in each given setting. For a view of the complete survey questionnaire, please refer to Appendix A.

Procedure

Surveys were sent out online and handed out in person at the University's library. The participants were first informed that the survey was completely voluntary and they would in no way be tied to their responses. After agreeing to complete the survey, the participants were given a survey of 17 questions and of the 17, one asked age and the other asked biological sex. The other 15 questions were close-ended, neutral questions to measure the amount of social networking and uncertainty reduction. The 40 participants that were asked in an online setting were asked through a posting on Facebook so their participation in the survey was completely voluntary. The remaining 60 were randomly approached in the University library and asked for their corporation and a few minutes of their time to fill out the survey questions.

Analysis

In analyzing the participants answers to the survey questions presented, a likert-type scale was used. In using the likert-type scale, using a scale of 1-5 having 1 be Strongly Disagree, 3 being Neutral, and 5 being Strongly Agree. The survey questions were divided into 3 different categories which pertained to Facebook, MySpace, and Chatroulette. In choosing to separate the survey questions into 3 different categories, I found that I could differentiate between the amount of information that is shared for the 3 types of social networking cites listed. I found that by using the closed-ended questions from a neutral standpoint helped in putting the data into similar groups to find a correlation across the participants responses.

Results

The goal of the present investigation is to explore the relationship between social networking and uncertainty reduction. The following information reports on the results of the study. The results are based and answered on the research questions.

The survey questions were placed into three different categories for evaluation. The three groups are Facebook, MySpace, and Chatroulette. Questions 1-5 report on Facebook and the trust developed in an online setting, 6-10 report on Chatroulette and the amount of information each participant revealed to a stranger only if they did so first, and 12-15 report on MySpace and if they reveal more information to strangers online or face-to-face.

The themes and patterns found pertaining to Facebook were as follows:

The themes and patterns found pertaining to Chatroulette were as follows:

The themes and patterns found pertaining to MySpace were as follows:

Discussion

The goal of the present investigation was to explore the relationship between social networking and uncertainty reduction theory. This study posed two research questions regarding social networking and the amount of personal information given to a random stranger to see if there was a direct correlation in the amount of information revealed by the online stranger. The following information reports on the patterns and themes found in participants responses to close-ended, neutral survey questions.

A major theme

Participants responses regarding social networking among the three categories given showed ___ variation. Most participants revealed that they

Study of Limitations and Future Directions

There are several limitations that pertain to this study. The participants were predominately male in a 60/40 ratio. With these results it could be misleading because women typically reveal more information than do guys and having a participant bank of mostly males could affect the findings. Also, I found that in doing my poster presentations as well as handing out survey questions, some people were unfamiliar with Chatroulette and what it does. However, after explaining the concept, most people were very interested in giving it a try. Another limitation is that all participants were found in the same city. Possibly if participants were gathered from different geographic

locations, they would be more familiar with the Chatroulette concept. Also, participants ages ranged from 19-25 where as someone younger may be more technologically advanced or more seasoned in the online advances.

While this study of social networking and uncertainty reduction was only a survey, I feel that if this study were to be replicated, doing an exploratory analysis would help because it is looking at a qualitative perspective. This way by interviewing each participant, you could ask more specific questions if they were unfamiliar with one of the concepts.

Appendix A

Social Networking and Uncertainty Reduction Theory Survey

By receiving this survey, you are participating in a study involving the purpose to better understand people's behavior in finding information about their views on social networking sites and the amount of information they reveal to online strangers.

For the following items please answer with the best of your ability.

Do you identify as:

â-¡   Male

â-¡   Female

What year were you born? _____

Directions: Please indicate the answer that best indicates how you feel about Facebook and online strangers.

1.) I typically enjoy meeting new people online.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

2.) I usually meet new people through Facebook.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

3.) Typically when I meet new people face-to-face, I reveal personal information if they do so first.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

4.) I am skeptical of meeting people in an online setting.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

5.) I almost always trust the information that I receive online from strangers.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

Directions: Please indicate the answer that best indicates how you feel about Chatroulette and online strangers.

6.) I usually meet new people through Chatroulette.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

7.) I typically never trust any information given by a stranger online.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

8.) I typically reveal personal information such as name, age, and biological sex in the initial interaction.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

9.) I typically reveal personal information such as a picture, e-mail address, or a phone number in the initial interaction.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

10.) I prefer to get information from the stranger I meet online before I reveal any information about myself.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

11.) I prefer to meet strangers online through video chatting.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

Directions: Please indicate the answer that best identifies how you feel about

Myspace and online strangers.

12.) I usually meet new people through MySpace.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

13.) I almost always question the information I receive from the online stranger.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

14.) I have faith in the information that I receive from the online stranger.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

15.) Typically when I meet new people face-to-face, I reveal personal information.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree