

Factors influencing the uptake of Social Networking sites

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Abstract

Social Networking Sites (SNS) have become immensely popular, both in developed and developing countries. However, the factors driving the adoption may well be different. This research used the Hofstra Social Network Site adoption model to evaluate the perceptions of normative pressure, critical mass, usefulness, ease of use, playfulness, trust and their impact on the adoption of SNS. Because access to personal broadband communication is a particular concern for developing countries, this was included and explored as a separate variable. We found that, as a predictive model, the traditional TAM constructs of Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use explain most of the variance in the Intended and Actual Use of SNS. However, Perceived Playfulness and a Critical Mass of current users are also significantly more important to heavy users of SNS. There was also a small but significant gender bias in the frequency of SNS use.

1. Introduction

Social Networking Sites (SNS) evolved through people's need to connect within a social structure (Backstrom, Huttenlocher, Kleinberg, & Lan, 2006). This desire to form connections within a group led to the creation of Social Network Sites as far back as 1997 with the now defunct SixDegrees.com. Today we are all familiar with SNS such as Facebook, the professional SNS LinkedIn and the broadcast instant messaging service Twitter. Of these SNS, Facebook is market leader in terms of usage with more than 664 million users, representing 32% of the world's estimated 2.095 billion internet users; or in fact 9.6% of the entire world population. (World Internet Usage Statistics, 2011).

Yet the reasons for adoption of Social Networking sites are not as yet fully understood by academia. A number of researchers claim that constructs proposed by the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1986) of ease of use and perceived usefulness no longer seem to be the primary driving factors behind use and adoption. Rather, the more social constructs of Normative Pressure, Critical Mass and perceived fun of the site seem to be driving the adoption of these (Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009; Zywica & Danowski, 2008; Backstrom *et al*, 2006). Of these some interesting trends have been identified in that once a certain threshold of Normative Pressure has been reached, applying more pressure can actually have the exact opposite effect and rather than the potential user joining the site they choose to not join (Sledgianowskiet & Kulviwat, 2009; Backstromet *et al*, 2006), a diminishing returns phenomenon was documented in this regard. The following gives a brief overview of the key adoption factors identified in the literature.

2. Literature Review

This section gives an overview of the broader driving adoption factors of SNS as identified in the pertinent literature.

2.1 Impression and the “Self”

The primary purpose of social networking sites is to allow the users to interact with other users within their social circles. One of the key enablers for this is for the user wishing the

interaction to create a publicly visible profile that not only reflects who they are but also does so in a positive manner (Backstrom *et al*, 2006; Siibak, 2009). For most users this is of critical importance and will affect whether they choose to use a particular SNS or not (Boyd, 2008).

2.1.1 “Face” and Public Profile

“Face” is the externally visible appearance that “we” present to others (Afifi, Falato, Weiner, 2001). The creation and maintenance of “face” was found to be more important to men than it is to women (Haferkamp & Krämer, 2009). Interestingly though it was also found in the same study that women tend to place more importance on creating an accurate representation of themselves on their online profile whilst men considered it acceptable to falsify information in order to show themselves in a more positive light, although these same women assumed that others fabricated much of what was visible on their public profile.

An extension of the “face” creation and the portrayal of the face to the external world is the ability of the user to create a publicly viewable profile (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). In a recent study users stated that this publicly visible profile was one of the most important aspects of the SNS (Haferkamp & Krämer, 2009).

2.1.2 Impression Management

Impression management and the degree to which one can control the impression others have of you is important to most people. An interesting Canadian study found that impression management appeared to be more critical to low self-esteem individuals (Cameron, Holmes, Vorauer, 2009).

A benefit of SNS is that the user can now take the time to consider how to handle situations and thus come to a considered decision on how to handle any potential “face” threatening issues that may arise. The ability to make a considered decision on handling “face” threatening issues is of key importance for handling relationships (Afifi *et al*, 2001). The consideration comes from the fact that an answer does not need to be delivered immediately but the appropriate decision can be come to and this is then viewed as “face” protecting.

A documented paradoxical phenomenon with impression management is that SNS users tend to show themselves as realistically as possible, but these same users do not trust the information that others publish and consider it to be false (Haferkamp & Krämer, 2009).

2.1.3 Perception Management

Perception Management is essentially the other side of the coin to Impression Management. Whilst impression management is mainly concerned with the creation of the image or “face” you project to others, perception management speaks to how the external users view your profile or whether they are going to “buy” into the profile that you have created of yourself.

2.1.3.1 Self-disclosure and Trust

Self-disclosure and trust are very much intertwined, both online and in personal relationships (Cameron et al, 2009; Christofides, Muise, & Desmarais, 2009). The more one discloses to another person the more that person feels enabled to give trust in return. Due to the nature of interaction on an SNS it is harder for people to build a trust relationship; this is caused by way of the geographical separation of the individuals interacting. The amount of self-disclosure is increasing (Tufekci, 2010) and this even reaches alarming proportions to the point where security concerns are raised (Utz & Krämer, 2009). The privacy paradox looms for most users in trying to keep their private details private whilst at the same time trying to create the illusion of trust amongst peers. A wider and more in depth look into privacy and the various issues that arise from this will take place later.

2.1.3.2 Self-esteem

As much as self-disclosure is necessary in order to build trust with other users, this can be hazardous for particular levels of self-esteem. Self-disclosure does not happen in isolation. When something is disclosed the person disclosing expects a response. If the person disclosing is imbued with high levels of self-esteem the experience of self-disclosure is generally a positive and reaffirming one (Cameron et al,2009). The converse however is true for those individuals with low self-esteem. For a person with low self-esteem to disclose a personal fact is very important and can often lead to that person not disclosing at all (Cameron *et al*,2009). This, in turn, reduces this person's online credibility: by virtue of not

divulging personal information the user can possibly be viewed as less trustworthy.

2.2 Social Aspects

Once a user has created their publicly profile they are now prepared to begin interacting with other users of the SNS that they have become members of. This social interaction can happen in many ways and can lead to evolution of the self as well as the group (Boyd *et al*, 2007; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). There is also a blurring of the boundary lines of between the user's online and offline life. Relationships formed offline move online easily enough but it has also been found that the opposite direction is not entirely uncommon (Ellison *et al*, 2007).

2.2.1 Personal Evolution

The SNS supports the growth of the individual by allowing for the emergence phenomenon to take place within groups, i.e. personal growth through a group's consciousness evolving (Backstrom *et al*, 2006; Ellison, 2007). Information dissemination is also a strong driver of personal growth and comes about through a person's social networks (Hogset, 2005). How each person interacts with their social circle has evolved online in order to make it simpler and easier and to allow equal access for those that want it (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). A user can now interact online in a way that can affect their offline lives (Irons, 2009) by changing their preferred brands.

2.2.2 Group Evolution

The SNS phenomenon is not only responsible for the evolution of the individual but also the evolution of the group as a whole. This evolution can be seen in a number of ways, a user joining a particular group on Facebook or the opposite a user removing themselves from a particular group on Facebook. For instance, a brand can now track its popularity online using its "Fan" count. This in turns allows the community to have a larger say in the direction that their favourite brands take (Irons, 2009).

2.2.2.1 Social Capital

Social capital is defined as “*the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition*” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:12). Essentially this defines what your worth to the community at large is and how you can go about capitalising on this. When a geographical group's social capital is rising, it can be linked to increased participation in civic activities. This increased participation in civic activities can be driven through SNS (Ellison *et al*, 2007; Park *et al*, 2009). The increase of social capital has been linked to many other social and civic improvements such as lower crime rates, better health care and better social order (Ellison *et al*, 2007).

2.2.2.2 Evolution of Egocentric Networks

An egocentric network can best be described as a network based around a particular user. The evolution of these egocentric communities is best seen in that sites arise around a particular community and not necessarily dedicated to particular communities (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Non-users of SNS are often seen as hostile towards many forms of Social Grooming, Social Grooming defined as gossip or non-functional social interaction (Tufkci, 2008), this hostility can lead to a break of particular communities from a SNS.

The phenomenon whereby users of a particular community suddenly leave an SNS in which they are active to join another, is defined as *bursting* (Backstrom *et al*, 2008). The Movement Burst work from Backstrom *et al* (2008) suggests that users move from group to group based on topics discussed in various forums. Also, not just the connection of the outside users to the inside users appear to matter, but the connections between the users within the SNS are also significant to predicting whether the external user would consider joining (Backstrom *et al*, 2008).

2.2.2.3 Emergence

Emergence refers to how ideas emerge and gain traction purely by the number of people communicating about them. A key example of this is the emergence of the new security

conscience within the users of SNS. Users are becoming more aware collectively of the threats posed by revealing too much of their personal information and are actively seeking ways to make their interactions with other members more secure. This security cannot however come at the cost of the openness of communicating (Utz & Kramer, 2009).

2.2.3 Privacy

2.2.3.1 How much do we knowingly reveal about ourselves

The level at which a user can control their privacy settings remains a hot topic (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Christofides *et al*, 2009; Haferkamp & Krämer, 2009; Utz & Kramer, 2009). Users have a strange and dichotomous relationship with their privacy settings on most SNS. Most users readily agree that maintaining their privacy is important to them. However it is interesting to note that many do not keep their personal information private when the opportunity arises and publish many more personal details than they state they would (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Christofides *et al*, 2009). This desire to reveal details or little known facts about one's private life seems to have its roots in the need to prove to other users and potential friends that one is trustworthy. This could also potentially be linked to the discovery that a user's degree of physical attraction can make them more or less attractive as a potential “friend” on an SNS (Haferkamp & Krämer, 2009; Park *et al*, 2009).

A further encroachment on privacy is the phenomenon of Net Stalking, whereby partners (or strangers for that matter) can track each other's online moves and social circles (Helsper & Whitty, 2010; Muise *et al*, 2009; Park *et al*, 2009). This has been linked to serious breakdowns of trust within relationships (Helsper & Whitty, 2010) and rather interestingly the more the ability to track one's partner is used the more the trust between partners is dissolved.

A rather broad spectrum of users say that they do think about security and online privacy but their actions are often in direct contradiction to their statements (Haferkamp & Krämer, 2009). Many users post huge amounts of personal information on these sites in order to gain the trust of others users within the SNS.

2.2.3.2 How much does our interaction on SNS reveal about ourselves

Users want to be able to identify who they are interacting with. In order to facilitate this a user's interactions and friendship links on a SNS can be a very useful tool for other users to use to identify and essentially to ratify a user's existence.

The relatively recent addition of locale aware applications to SNS has opened up a totally new era of security breaches and distrust. A site that illustrates the danger of this is www.pleaserobme.com. The designers of this site harvested information that users of SNS placed on the internet and illustrated how this can be used for malicious intent. When users post a locale aware tweet, using Twitter, a locale aware Facebook update or capture a flag using 4Square, these interactions highlight where you are and, by implication, where you are not i.e. not at home. This can then be linked to other freely available information on the Internet in order to get your home address (Borsboom, Amstel, & Groeneveld, 2010).

2.2.4 Persistence of Information

A feature of SNS is that your interactions with people are stored permanently; this has both positive and negative consequences.

2.2.4.1 Persistence

Information posted online remains online. This has an impact when a user is looking for a job: it has become very simple to do a quick online search and to discover a great deal of information about a person. The user might not want much of this information to end up in the hands of their potential new employers (Boyd, 2008).

2.2.4.2 Replicability

Many of the situations faced in private life have been faced before by someone. The SNS now becomes a fantastic repository of information. This will allow a user to research similar situations and to make an informed decision on how best to handle a particular situation (Boyd, 2008).

2.3 Other Drivers of Social Network Sites

Drivers for the considerable growth of SNS may be as diverse as the different origins of SNS. Some started as dating sites, such as Friendster designed to compete with the dating site Match.com (Boyd, 2008). Some began as Instant Messaging Services, as in the case of QQ of China, whilst many of the new and successful SNS have been deliberately designed as Social Network Sites (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Facebook, MySpace and the business networking site LinkedIn are examples of these. Twitter a relatively new entrant in the SNS market (Chan, 2010) allows for a type of broadcast instant messaging service.

2.3.1 Social Network Maintenance

Social Network Maintenance is a strong driver and important predictors of SNS use (Backstrom et al, 2006; Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Haferkamp, & Krämer, 2009). This maintenance is facilitated in many ways. This is very often done by using the photo sharing capabilities inherent in many of the popular SNS.

The drive to join a social network and to be part of a social network is primarily to maintain your offline connections in an online environment (Ellison et al, 2007; Haferkamp, & Krämer, 2009). Whilst this is not strictly true in all forms of SNS interactions this has proven to be true in the majority of cases. As part of this online maintenance it had always been assumed therefore that the more pressure from your social network was exerted, by numbers of people already joined or joining, the probability that you would join would increase. This has however been shown to not always be the case. Once the critical mass point has been reached the influence of the group over the user begins to diminish (Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009).

2.3.2 Curiosity and Playfulness

Natural human curiosity and playfulness have been found to be great drivers for the widespread use of many SNS (Haferkamp, & Krämer, 2009; Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009). Some SNS can be used purely for personal entertainment and do not fulfil any real need associated to one's form of employment.

2.3.3 Hindrances

One of the many phases that SNS have gone through was their perceived distractive nature. This led to the banning of some sites such as Facebook, MySpace and the resource intensive YouTube from the workplace (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). However, as more teams are becoming geographically distributed, many companies are rethinking this policy. The ability of SNS to enable non co-located teams to work together in near seamless fashion has led to the increased usage of some SNS.

The lack of availability of personal broadband can be seen as an issue in a developing world context as it restricts many users from being able to access many of the mainstream web based SNS. The mobile SNS have however benefited from this locally. Sites like Mxit have become popular in South Africa amongst the youth who have access to cell phones for connectivity but not as much access to online SNS (Ross, 2008).

3. Research Model and Methodology

3.1 Research Model and Hypotheses

This research aims to test an extended version of the model proposed by Sledgianowski and Kulviwat (2009). It was found in the previous study that Playfulness, Critical Mass, Trust, Normative Pressure, Perceived Ease of Use and Perceived Usefulness all increased a user's Intention to Use a SNS. This Intention to Use an SNS was seen to have a direct relationship to a user's Actual Use of a SNS. Figure 3 illustrates the hypothesized relationships.

Figure : The Proposed Model (based on Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2009)

As for the independent variables, Playfulness was defined as the ability of the site to create joy and/or a sense of pleasure. Critical Mass was defined as more a perceived sense of Critical Mass, or the notion that it seems as though the site has a significant number of members that the new member can communicate with. Trust is also seen more as a perception of whether the site seems trustworthy to users. Normative Pressure is the pressure that is exerted on a user by members of a peer group that carries significant sway with the user but

was not found to have a significant effect by Sledgianowski & Kulviwat (2009). Perceived Ease of Use defines how quickly the user will adapt to using the new technology. Perceived Usefulness defines whether the SNS will help the user be more productive.

The phenomenon we wish to explain is the adoption of SNS. However, this is not as straightforward to conceptualize and operationalize as many early adoption models propose (Pelling, 2009). Later adoption models, such as Sarker and Wells' (2003) three-stage input-process-output mobile adoption model, treat intentions, initial adoption and continued use as a process rather than a single event. Many people register on SNS initially, find it does not meet their expectations and don't continue using it or use it very rarely. This research focuses on individuals that have tried out SNS and investigates the impact of the independent variables on actual levels of use i.e. intensity of use (see below for more detail). The two key constructs are therefore the intention to continue to use SNS in the future and the current level (frequency and intensity) of use.

Finally, internet bandwidth availability is a particular concern in South Africa: the relatively high cost of broadband connectivity (relative to disposable income) makes it an important concern. Rather than just treating it as a facilitating condition, we also investigated whether SNS use could actually drive the adoption of broadband connection.

3.2 Research Approach

The nature of the research model reflects a positivist approach to the research domain. A quantitative, empirical research methodology was most appropriate. The instrument used to conduct this research was a survey consisting mainly of Likert Scale questions. The questionnaire used by Sledgianowski & Kulviwat (2008) was deemed to be hardened and of sufficient quality for this survey. The original researchers were contacted and their permission was asked to use their instrument. An extension was added to the survey to gather data on the connection between personal broadband adoption and the use of Social Network Sites. Minor language issues were also addressed.

The survey questionnaire was distributed to a large database of potential subjects as well as distribution via the SNS themselves. This must be seen as a convenience sample and may not

be representative of the SNS population at large, or even the South African SNS population. Participation was voluntary as well as confidential.

There were 107 responses, but of these only 86 were usable. Any responses that were less than 85% complete were removed from the analysis. Of these responses, 49 (60%) came from males (60%) versus 34 (40%) females. In the data analysis tables, the following abbreviations are used for the various constructs: PU – Perceived Usefulness; PEU – Perceived Ease of Use; NP – Normative Pressure; PP – Playfulness; CM – Critical Mass; PT – Perceived Trust. These were all measured on a 5-point Likert scale. INT – the Intention to Use – was measured as whether an individual was intending to keep using SNS in the next 6 months and, if so, whether at a high or low level of use. Actual (current) Use was measured both by Frequency of Use (AUfreq – how *often* SNS are accessed) ranging from several times per day to once per month as well as Use Intensity (AUtime – how *much time* is spent on SNS) ranging from 2-4 hours per day to less than an hour per month.

5. Analysis and Findings

5.1 Reliability and Validity Analysis

A Cronbach Alpha reliability analysis was run against all the test items grouped into their constructs. Despite the relatively small sample size, most constructs were in fact fairly reliable, with exception of the very low average inter-item correlation for Critical Mass. This will be explored deeper with Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

Table : Cronbach Analysis and Inter Item Correlation

The next step in the analysis was to run Confirmatory Factor Analysis against the constructs and their questions. This step confirmed that most test items loaded onto the correct factors, although a few test items were removed as they did not load onto any corresponding factors; only the cleansed variables are displayed in table 2 below.

Table : Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Validity Testing.

As noted in the reliability analysis, there was a low inter item correlation within the variables

that comprised the Critical Mass construct. The CFA shows that CM1 and CM4 load onto one factor and that CM2 and CM3 load onto a wholly separate factor. Test items CM 1 and CM 4 do have in common the fact that they speak of a current situation (“many people I communicate with use SNS” and “Of the people I communicate with regularly, many use SNS”) whereas CM 2 and CM 3 speak of a future situation (“The people I communicate with will continue to use SNS in the future” and “The people I communicate with using SNS will continue to use SNS in the future.”). Thus in subsequent analysis, these two variables have been used separately.

Eigenvalue analysis shows that the 7 factors explain just over 75% of the variance in the data.

5.3 Model and Hypothesis Testing

5.3.1 Linear Regression Analysis for Adoption Predication and Model Fit

Multiple linear regression was performed to see how well the independent variables can predict INT and Use (Table 3).

Table : Multiple Regression Analysis for Model Fit

Variable Pre-dicted	Significant Predictors (p-value < .05)	R ² & Adjusted R ²	Full Model F & p (all variables)
INT	PEU (.0081); PP (.0476)	R ² = .2811; Adj R ² = .1812	F(10,72) = 2.815; p < .0053
AUfreq	PEU (.0006); PU (.0196)	R ² = .4089; Adj R ² = .3268	F(10,72) = 4.980; p < .0000
AUtime	PEU (.0016); PU (.0471)	R ² = .3748; Adj R ² = .2880	F(10,72) = 4.317; p < .0001

As can be seen, the model is not particularly good at predicting Intention to (Continue) Using SNS, with only Perceived Ease of Use and, very interestingly, Playfulness being significant predicting variables (p<.05) but the model can only explain 28% of INT variation (18% adjusted). The model is somewhat better at predicting actual use, but interestingly only the traditional TAM variables of Perceived Ease of Use and Perceived Usefulness are significant predictors, explaining up to 41% (adjusted: 33%) of the variance in frequency of use and 37% (adjusted: 29%) of the variance in time spent on SNS.

5.3.2 Hypothesis testing on importance of individual variables.

Given the correlations between the independent variables, multiple regression analysis is not

ideal to assess which variables actually have a significant impact on the actual Use of SNS. To investigate this further, we looked at the individual correlations between the independent and dependent variables. In addition, t-tests were done to investigate which independent variables (means) differed significantly between high and low use participants. For the purposes of this study, Spending at least 2 to 4 hours per week on SNS qualified as “high usage”. This represented 42 users (23 male, 19 female) or roughly half of the respondents.

Table : Link between individual independent and dependent variables.

(* significant at p<0.05)	Correlation Coefficients		T-test (p value)	
	INT	AUtime	AUfreq	
Age	-0.02	-0.17	-0.09	
Gender	-0.07	-0.16	*-0.22*	
Income	0.12	0.02	0.01	
PU - Perceived Usefulness	0.27*	0.37*	0.41*	
PEU - Perc. Ease of Use	0.40*	0.48*	0.49*	
NP - Normative Pressure	0.02	0.11	0.17	
PP - Playfulness	0.40*	0.43*	0.45*	
CMc - Critical Mass current	0.03	0.26*	0.26*	
CMf - Critical Mass future	0.07	0.11	-0.02	
PT - Perceived Trust	0.11	0.08	0.13	

This analysis (Table 4) yields some interesting results. Firstly, PU, PEU and, surprisingly, PP (Playfulness) feature consistently as having a significant correlation with the various adoption variables and have a significantly different means between low and high frequency users.

However, of interest is also that there are significant correlations between the frequency of use and gender (women use SNS more frequently) as well as the current critical mass of SNS users (if an individual has many friends using SNS, they are more likely to use SNS frequently).

5.3.3 Broadband Analysis

Finally, some interesting results emerged from the relationship between broadband availability, intention to acquire broadband and the adoption of SNS.

Table : Link between broadband infrastructure and dependent variables.

Correlation Coefficients (* significant at p<0.05)	INT	AUtime	AUfreq
User has broadband connectivity	0.129	0.115	0.061
Use of SNS is likely to influence future BB adoption	0.399*	0.415*	0.423*

Firstly, it is interesting that whether a user has broadband connectivity does not influence the intention or actual SNS use. In fact, it is a much stronger predictor than any of the other model variables, strongly exceeding the importance of the traditional TM PU and PEU.

However, much more interesting is that there are strong and very significant relationships between a respondent's (intended or actual) use of SNS and whether this use is perceived to influence their future adoption of broadband: SNS is a major driver of broadband adoption rather than broadband driving SNS use. In fact, 33% of users stated that their acquisition of personal broadband was positively influenced by their intention to use SNS. This percentage is higher than it was initially thought to be during the design phase. This indicates that 33% of user's decision to purchase personal Broadband was driven by their need to communicate or be linked into these Social Network Sites.

6. Conclusions

Social Network Sites have become very popular in the last few years. This popularity stems from their ability to allow users from geographically distanced locations to communicate with their peers in the same way they would if they had been in the same locale. This allows many users to remain in contact with friends that have moved or to re-find friends that they have lost contact with. SNS like Facebook are beginning to gain traction in the everyday life of users that previously would not have considered themselves to be online. The true power of this is yet to be harnessed. The way to correctly harness this is still an important and yet not fully understand phenomenon.

This research tested a modified version of the model proposed by Sledgianowski and Kulviwat (2009), where Playfulness, Critical Mass, Trust, Normative Pressure, Perceived Ease of Use and Perceived Usefulness all increased a user's Intention to Use a SNS. We expanded the model with a few biographic variables (income, gender and age) but also modified the dependent variable from (intention to) initial use to a longer term 'adoption of SNS' as measured by continued use intensity (frequency and time spent) as well as intention to keep using SNS. Unfortunately, our sample was rather small, so our findings may not uncover all the significant relationships.

Interestingly, the core TAM variables of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness still account as the best predictive model to explain not just initial adoption but also continued high or frequent use. However, it was found that Perceived Playfulness of the site is also a very significant variable with having a positive impact on its use. Additionally, a Critical Mass of current users also has a significant positive impact on the amount of SNS use. Finally we found a small gender bias with women checking in slightly more frequently into SNS. Perhaps equally interestingly, the assumed impact of Trust and Normative Pressure were *not* found to be significant even though this might well have been the case if a larger sample had been taken.

Important in a developing world context is the import of bandwidth infrastructure. Contrary to expectations, having broadband internet access (which is relatively much more expensive in South Africa than in the developed world) did not impact on intentions or actual SNS use. However, SNS use was linked positively to future broadband adoption. This interaction between adoption of broadband and SNS use could be further explored in future research.

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