

Liking and commenting on Facebook – what are the reasons?

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ABSTRACT: This study began by stating that one of the biggest social networking sites, Facebook, gets widely used by people for communication and to look for information. By liking and commenting posts you can communicate what you think and spread content. What is it then that drives us to use these tools? What are the reasons to like and comment Facebook posts? To find out a quantitative study was conducted. A questionnaire survey with four statements that was based on earlier studies of Facebook usages was posted on Facebook and 241 Facebook users responded. The statements were: *“I like or comment posts that provide useful information”*, *“I like or comment posts that are entertaining”*, *“I like or comment posts to strengthen the relationship with the person who posted it”* and *“I like or comment posts so the person who posted the post then hopefully will like or comment on my posts”*. The findings were that from these four statements, entertainment was the greatest reason for Facebook users to like and comment posts. This was followed by strengthening of relationships and posts with usable information, but both relationships and information were not so strong reasons. Lastly to like and comment posts to get own likes and comments was rejected as a reason to like and comments Facebook posts. The implication of this study is that companies should use entertainment to get more likes and comments on their posts.

KEYWORDS: Facebook, like and comment, entertainment, relationships, information, attention

1. Introduction

Social networking sites offers a way for people to use computers for communication and to search for information (Lee & Lee, 2017 and Powell, 2009). These sites allow users to create a profile from which they can interact with other users (Powell, 2009). Social networking sites are growing rapidly and Facebook is one of the biggest sites we have (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007, Pempek, Yermolayeva & Yermolayeva, 2009 and Powell, 2009). Social networking sites have become a valued tool for

communication in many people’s daily life (Ellison et al., 2007 and Powell, 2009). With Facebook, users can communicate through posts and messages (Pempek et al., 2009). Posts can also be “liked” and “commented”.

The like button is a tool where the user can show that they like, enjoy or support the posted content. Friends of a user can see what content a user likes and the more likes a post get the higher up in the news feed it will show. The total number of likes will also be seen on the post and sometimes it is

possible to see the names of users who has liked the content. Facebooks description of likes is that it's a way for users to give positive feedback and connect with things that the user care about (Facebook, 2016 and Wikipedia, 2016)¹.

Comments are a type of user-generated content which means that it's content which has been created by users. Comments has very much the same function as likes, though with comments a user can use words to express more of his or her feelings, both positive and negative. Comments can also be used to bring other users to certain content (Wikipedia, 2016)².

As stated above, likes and comments are tools that can be used for communication on Facebook. Mostly to show others what you enjoy or to show appreciation, by likes, or by giving your opinion about something, by comments. As we have seen comments can also be used to spread content by referring someone to it. What is it then that makes people use these tools? What drives users to like and comment posts on Facebook? How do individuals benefit? Is there something that motivates us to do it or do we even consider it as something beneficial?

An understanding of people's activity on Facebook is important for today's companies (Hansson, Wrangmo and Sjøilen, 2013). Today, social networking sites is an important communications tool for many companies (Hansson et al., 2013). Many companies use Facebook as an advertisement tool and if you understand what will give your company's posts more likes and comments, you can use this knowledge to increase the activity of your

posts and hence increase the changes of your company to get awareness on Facebook (Hansson et al., 2013).

2. Theory

According to Park, Kee & Valenzuela (2009) are there four reasons for using Facebook: socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking, and information seeking. Park & Lee (2014) found that entertainment, relationship maintenance, self-expression, and communication are main reasons for using Facebook. Park et al. (2014) also states that entertainment motivation is the greatest. Nadkarni & Hofmann (2012) proposed that Facebook use derived from to two basic social needs: (1) the need to belong and (2) the need for self-presentation.

According to a study by Lee et al. (2017) convenient relationship, information motives and entertainment motives are highly rated by Facebook users. Facebook users have a high percentage of humor and gossip posts and are likely to use "comment" or "like" to show appreciation to these posts (Lee et al., 2017). Facebook also provides a well-functioning area for exchange of information and opinions (Lee et al., 2017).

According to Błachnioa, Przepiorkaa, & Rudnickab (2016) low level of self-esteem and a high level of narcissism can serve as predictors of a high level of Facebook use. Narcissism can predict four different aspects of Facebook use, namely: Facebook personal importance, instrumental Facebook use, social Facebook use, and Facebook intensity (Błachnioa et al., 2016).

¹ The source is a wiki and must be interpreted carefully.

² The source is a wiki and must be interpreted carefully.

High level of narcissism makes people more engaged in Facebook and gives them a hard time imagine life without it (Błachnioa et al., 2016). Using Facebook gives people with a high level of narcissism a way to stick out and enjoy a higher social status (Błachnioa et al., 2016). For people with a high level of narcissism Facebook gets used more often for both social and instrumental purposes (Błachnioa et al., 2016). According to Błachnioa et al. (2016) narcissism is also linked with Facebook self-promotion. Furthermore Błachnioa et al. (2016) says that those who have a high self-esteem are not in need of attention on Facebook and they may not attach much weight to using it and to being active or popular there. People with high self-esteem rather use Facebook as a tool at work or for educational purposes (Błachnioa et al., 2016). Conversely, for people with a low level of self-esteem Facebook activity is a tool for improving self-image (Błachnioa et al., 2016).

According to Teo, Lim & Lai (1999) two main factors for Internet usage are, perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment. Teo et al. (1999) emphasizes that it's important for individuals and companies to keep their web pages updated to keep them useful and interesting for Internet users.

Perceived enjoyment and perceived ease of use are strong determinants of intention to use a pleasure-giving information system (van der Heijden, 2004). It is also stated that when the information is more functional, the pleasure-giving factors are still important (van der Heijden, 2004). Van der Heijden (2004) suggest that pleasure-giving values (perceived enjoyment and perceived ease of use) plays an essential role to

increase acceptance of functional information.

Enjoyment is according to Kuan-Yu & Hsi-Peng (2011) the most important factor affecting the behavior of social networking sites users. Users want social networking sites to make them and their friends feel interested and have fun. Kuan-Yu et al. (2011) also points out that a greater number of people reinforce the enjoyment of social networking sites. Users appreciate the opportunity to meet new people, whereby they can expand their social network (Kuan-Yu et al., 2011).

Social networking sites help people to maintain relations (Ellison et al., 2007). Facebook users mostly interact with people whom they also interact with offline (Ellison et al., 2007). Online activity can be used to support relationships even when life is changing (Ellison et al., 2007).

A brief summary of the theory that has been presented concludes that there are four main reasons for people to use Facebook, namely: *To find and share useful information* (Błachnioa et al., 2016, Lee et al., 2017, Park et al., 2009 and Park & Lee, 2014). *To find and share joyful entertainment* (Kuan-Yu et al., 2011, Lee et al., 2017, Park et al., 2009, Park & Lee, 2014, Teo et al., 1999 and van der Heijden, 2004). *To maintain and strengthen relationships* (Ellison et al., 2007, Kuan-Yu et al., 2011, Lee et al., 2017, Park et al., 2009 and Park & Lee, 2014). *To express oneself and to be seen by others mainly because of the need of attention* (Błachnioa et al., 2016, Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012 and Park et al., 2009). These four reasons will be the premises underlying the study and will form the basis for further research.

3. Method

The introduction and theory has been developed as secondary research. The main source of information has been scientific articles that has been found through the database summon. Other secondary sources have been webpages found through google and scientific literature and articles found from the reference list of other scientific articles. The secondary research has been made to develop a background for the primary research.

What has been found through the secondary research are that there are four main reasons for people to use Facebook: *Information, entertainment, relationships and attention*. These premises underlies the further research and the study has furthermore made a questionnaire survey based on these, to bring greater understanding to what makes Facebook users like and comment posts. Which of these four reasons for using Facebook gives reason for users to like and comment posts?

The primary data for identifying what it is that makes Facebook users like and comment posts has been developed through a quantitative research. Google forms has been used for developing a questionnaire survey which has been posted on Facebook. Google forms has been used because it lets the user collect over 200 responses which was needed for this study. There were no notable problems with using Google Forms, all the features needed for the survey were available. The survey was posted on Facebook for the simple reason that it's where you'll find the greatest access to Facebook users, which is the survey unit. Facebook is also a convenient channel to rapidly find many respondents and that was

needed because the study was made under time pressure. A risk with using Facebook is that it is difficult to control who responds. However, Google forms enables you to check the answers afterwards and there were no signs of dubious answers.

To get as wide spread of respondents as possible, the survey was shared by people of different ages and gender in different parts of Sweden. A limitation of the study is that it's mainly Swedes that has answered. Another limitation was that it was mostly young adults who answered. The most common age demographic on Facebook are although young adults with about 30 % of the user accounts (Zephoria, 2016). Therefore their opinion weighs heavily. The theoretical population for the survey has therefore been Facebook users from Sweden, from both gender and in all ages but mostly young adults. Young adults have become a focus because, as stated above, they represents the majority of Facebook users. The population was chosen to get a representation of the general opinion from the majority of Swedish Facebook users.

The survey was designed with four statements which were answered through a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Each statement represented one each of the four premises and the respondent got to choose from strongly disagreeing to strongly agreeing the statements. The survey was made in Swedish but the statements has been translated to English when presented in this study.

One question per premise was used to get as few questions as possible and this was mainly for practical reasons, again because of time pressure. With fewer question more

people will probably answer. There was also some scientific meaning to this because fewer questions makes it easier to analyze. However, one question per premise made so the statements had to be very extensive. The downside to this is that the study doesn't have so much depth to rely on from the survey. If the survey would be made again with more time to make us of it would be smart to use at least two questions about each premise with different wording and focus, to increase understanding and reliability in the study. However, the responses from this survey were good enough for drawing some simple conclusions.

The responses from the survey have been assembled and analyzed separately for each statement. These results have furthermore been compared to the theory underlying each statement and then evaluated for making conclusions about each reasons influence on making Facebook users like or comment posts.

3. Empirical data

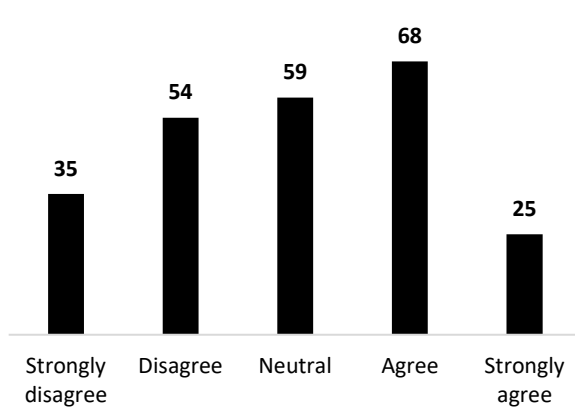
A total of 241 people answered the survey. It was evenly distributed between the gender with 122 (50, 6%) males and 119 (49, 4%) females. The age distribution were a bit overrepresented of people between the ages of 18 to 27 (78 %). When drawing conclusions from this material one therefore have to be careful. However the range of the intervals were quite wide.



Furthermore the result from the survey will be presented separately for each of the four statements.

Statement 1

“I like or comment posts that provide useful information”

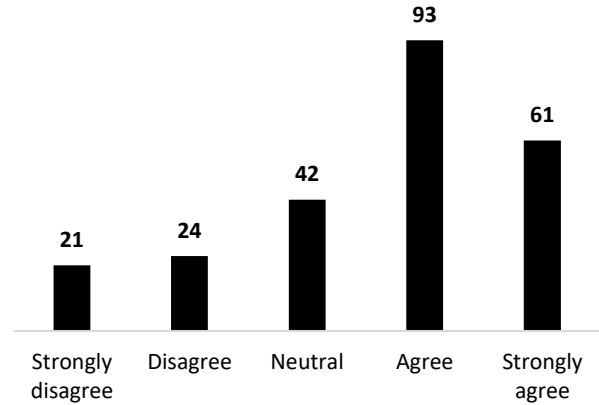


Female		Male	
Strongly disagree	10%	Strongly disagree	19%
Disagree	24%	Disagree	20%
Neutral	32%	Neutral	17%
Agree	25%	Agree	31%
Strongly agree	8%	Strongly agree	12%
18-27		28-57	
Strongly disagree	15%	Strongly disagree	11%
Disagree	23%	Disagree	22%
Neutral	24%	Neutral	27%
Agree	28%	Agree	29%
Strongly agree	11%	Strongly agree	11%

The result from this statement suggest that there is a variation for liking or commenting posts that provide useful information. Most people (93) agrees on seeing this as a motivator to like or comment posts but almost as many (89) disagrees. There is also a great number of people (59) who stays neutral to this statement. The different genders were quite similar in their varying view of this. People in different ages also seemed to have a quite similar, varied view. The mean value is 2, 98 and the median is 3.

Statement 2

“I like or comment posts that are entertaining”

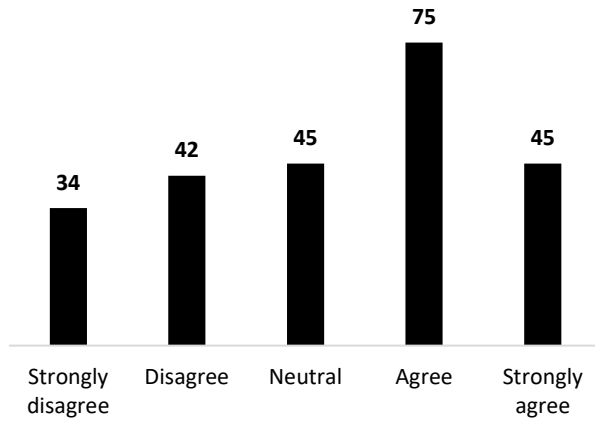


Female		Male	
Strongly disagree	6%	Strongly disagree	11%
Disagree	8%	Disagree	12%
Neutral	18%	Neutral	17%
Agree	42%	Agree	35%
Strongly agree	27%	Strongly agree	24%
18-27		28-57	
Strongly disagree	9%	Strongly disagree	7%
Disagree	10%	Disagree	11%
Neutral	17%	Neutral	22%
Agree	41%	Agree	31%
Strongly agree	23%	Strongly agree	29%

According to the results from this statement entertainment is a great motivator for Facebook users to like or comment posts. This goes for both genders and all ages. The mean value is 3, 62 and the median is 4.

Statement 3

“I like or comment posts to strengthen the relationship with the person who posted it”

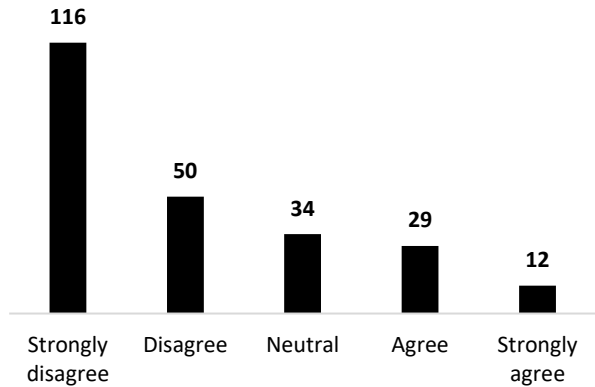


Female		Male	
Strongly disagree	10%	Strongly disagree	18%
Disagree	15%	Disagree	20%
Neutral	18%	Neutral	20%
Agree	34%	Agree	29%
Strongly agree	24%	Strongly agree	14%
18-27		28-57	
Strongly disagree	13%	Strongly disagree	20%
Disagree	19%	Disagree	9%
Neutral	17%	Neutral	27%
Agree	33%	Agree	24%
Strongly agree	18%	Strongly agree	20%

According to the results from this statement most people (120) agrees on liking or commenting posts to strengthen the relationship with the person who posted it. This seems to be more common among females rather than among males, but some men also have a positive view to this statement. People in different ages have a similar view. The mean value is 3, 23 and the median is 3.

Statement 4

“I like or comment posts so the person who posted the post then hopefully will like or comment on my posts”



Female		Male	
Strongly disagree	50%	Strongly disagree	46%
Disagree	18%	Disagree	23%
Neutral	13%	Neutral	16%
Agree	13%	Agree	11%
Strongly agree	5%	Strongly agree	5%
18-27		28-57	
Strongly disagree	46%	Strongly disagree	60%
Disagree	21%	Disagree	20%
Neutral	16%	Neutral	9%
Agree	14%	Agree	7%
Strongly agree	4%	Strongly agree	4%

According to the results from this statement it's a weak reason for Facebook users to like or comment posts to get own likes or comments. This view is shared for both genders and all ages. The mean value is 2 and the median is 2.

4. Analysis

According to the results from the survey, entertainment is the greatest reason for Facebook users to like or comment posts. This goes in line with the theory underlying this study. Park et al. (2014) states that entertainment is the main reason for using Facebook. Van der Heijden (2004) suggest that perceived enjoyment plays an essential role to increase acceptance of functional information, which means that entertainment affects more than just posts that are supposed to entertain and therefore becomes an even greater reason. According to Lee et al. (2017) Facebook contains a high percentage of humorous posts, and users are likely to comment or like to show appreciation to these posts. This states both that Facebook users sees a lot of entertainment posts, which makes them more likely to get attention, and also that Facebook users are likely to like or comment them. Also Kuan-Yu & Hsi-Peng (2011) states that the most important factor affecting the behavior of social networking site users is enjoyment which should mean that Facebook users are likely to like or comment entertainment posts.

To strengthen relationships was the second greatest reason for Facebook users to like or comment posts (according to the results from the survey). This reason, however, was from the whole viewed more as a neutral motivator, with a mean value of 3, 23. Based on this result it's therefore not significant that this is a strong reason for Facebook users to like or comment posts. However, there are more Facebook users who see it as a reason (120) than there are who doesn't (76). Ellison et al. (2007) and Park et al. (2014) emphasizes that people use Facebook to maintain relationships.

That is to say that relationships are a reason for using Facebook but not necessarily to strengthen relationships, but rather to maintain them.

There were, according to the results from the survey, mixed views from Facebook users about liking or commenting posts that provides useful information. On seeing this as a motivator to like or comment posts almost as many agreed (93) as disagreed (89). There were also a great number of neutral Facebook users (59). This is also in line with the theory that the study is based on. Błachnio et al. (2016), Lee et al. (2017), Park et al. (2009) and Park et al. (2014) all mention information as a reason for using Facebook. To seek information, to communicate information, or to educate oneself. However, nobody is claiming that it's the strongest reason, which is reflected in the survey results. It is seen as a reason for some but the general view is neutral.

Lastly, to like or comment posts to get own likes and comments, was according to the results from the survey, not seen as a reason for Facebook users to like and comment posts. 166 Facebook users disagreed and only 41 agreed. However, this can be a difficult question to answer, and some may not want to admit this behavior for themselves or are not even aware of it. The behavior to get attention can also play out in different ways and this is not necessarily the most common way. Because the theory from the study says that it is a reason for using Facebook. Park et al. (2009) claims that self-status seeking is a main reason for using Facebook. Park et al. (2014) also emphasizes self-expression as a reason for using Facebook. Nadkarni & Hofmann (2012) proposes that people use Facebook because of the need to belong and the need

for self-presentation. According to Błachnioa et al. (2016) narcissism is linked with Facebook self-promotion. Facebook gives people with a high level of narcissism a way to stick out and enjoy a higher social status (Błachnioa et al., 2016). Błachnioa et al. (2016) also claim that people with a low level of self-esteem use Facebook as a tool for improving self-image. However, the results of the survey must be accepted and this can therefore not be seen as a reason for Facebook users to like or comment posts.

The results from this study indicates that age dosent affect the use of likes and comments, but there is not enough respondents in this survey to conclude this, so when making conclusions from this material one therefore have to be careful making generalizations.

5. Conclusion

The findings from this study is that entertainment is the greatest reason for Facebook users to like and comment posts. This is also supported by previous studies on the use of Facebook. There is also some support that Facebook users like and comment posts to keep relationships but not necessarily to strengthen relationships. Some see useful information as a reason to like and comment posts, but about as many doesn't see it as a reason. The reason that definitely doesn't seem to be a motivator to like and comment posts is to get your own likes and comments. That is to say that to get attention is the weakest motivator of these four, but this is also a difficult question to get truthful answers from.

6. Implications

Companies could use this knowledge by making their Facebook posts more entertaining. Funny and humorous posts will attract the most likes and comments and will therefore bring most attention to the company. It could, for instance, be a good idea to also do informative posts funny. To make post that users can comment to share with their friends can also be a good idea. Because it gives them an opportunity to strengthen relationships. This is also something that we see. Many posts on Facebook today is all about spreading fun things with friends by tagging them with comments. For instance: "*comment three friends that has to see this*" **a funny post**.

7. Future studies

With a better understanding to what it is that makes people like and comment on Facebook, future studies could be about why this makes people like and comment. We understand that people like posts that they find entertaining, but why do they want entertaining posts? To understand why could bring even greater understanding to the activity on social networking sites.

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