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Tommy K. H. Chan Christy M. K. Cheung Na Shi Matthew K. O. Lee

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Gender differences in satisfaction with Facebook users

Tommy K.H. Chan and Christy M.K. Cheung

*Department of Finance and Decision Sciences,
Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong, Hong Kong*

Na Shi

*University of Science and Technology of China –
City University of Hong Kong Joint Advanced Research Centre,
University of Science and Technology of China, Beijing, China, and*

Matthew K.O. Lee

*Department of Information Systems, City University of Hong Kong,
Hong Kong, Hong Kong*

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the factors associated with user satisfaction in the social network sites (SNSs), and to explore the moderating effects of gender on user satisfaction.

Design/methodology/approach – A research model was built upon the expectation disconfirmation model (EDM) with a focus on SNSs specific motivations (i.e. relationship maintenance and entertainment). The model was tested empirically with 221 experienced Facebook users using an online survey.

Findings – The research model explained 40.5 percent of the variance in user satisfaction. In addition, the results showed that entertainment plays a more important role in determining user satisfaction with SNSs for male users, while relationship maintenance is more important in determining user satisfaction with SNSs for female users.

Research limitations/implications – The current study enriched the theoretical understanding of user satisfaction in the context of SNSs. Particularly, perceptions and disconfirmations about the use of SNSs were identified and empirically tested. Furthermore, gender differences in terms of SNSs usage were empirically demonstrated.

Originality/value – The present study is one of the first few studies that attempts to explain user satisfaction with SNSs as well as examine the role of gender with a theoretical foundation. It complements the empirical research in the IS literature that addresses new social communication technologies.

Keywords Gender, Social network sites, Social media, Satisfaction, Expectation disconfirmation theory, IS continuance

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

With the advent of information technologies, social network sites (SNSs) have undoubtedly transformed the way of how people communicate and interact in the twenty-second century. SNSs have evolved as an ideal platform of pursuing online social interaction among internet users. Recent usage data reported that 67 percent of the internet population uses SNSs (PewInternet, 2013). Most SNSs provide online spaces for users to build and publish their profiles, create links with other users, and establish a personal network. Within the established network, users can perform a wide range of activities. For example, they can keep in touch with their offline friends, and meet new friends with shared interests. They can acquire information about new trends, events, and other social activities through friends' updates or company pages. They can also play games and listen to music with the embedded recreational features and applications.



The significance of SNSs has not gone unnoticed by practitioners and researchers. To site developers, maintaining a sound user base in the SNSs is crucial because it ensures a stable stream of income (e.g. advertising and subscription) for sustaining the sites. To researchers, the proliferation of SNSs has raised different issues that warrant further investigations, such as usage and attitude (Gangadharbatla, 2008; Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2009), motivation of using SNSs (Joinson, 2008; Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, 2008), and profile information (Kluemper and Rosen, 2009; Miller *et al.*, 2010; Thelwall, 2009). While there are increasing scholarly attentions toward different usage behaviors in the SNSs, little has been done to investigate the unique factors associated with user satisfaction and the gender preferences within the platform. Satisfaction and gender differences have been recognized as a critical factors influencing information technology use (Bhattacharjee, 2001; Debrand and Johnson, 2008). Satisfaction determines the continuance intention to use an information system (Bhattacharjee, 2001), whereas gender differences influence the attitudes, beliefs and usage patterns toward an information system (Debrand and Johnson, 2008; Fallows, 2005).

The objectives of this study are twofold: to examine the factors associated with user satisfaction in the SNSs, and to explore the moderating effects of gender on user satisfaction. We build upon the expectation disconfirmation model (EDM) (Bhattacharjee, 2001) and develop our research model to understand user satisfaction and gender differences in the context of SNSs.

We believe that this study will provide both research and practical contributions. On the theoretical side, this study advances the theoretical understanding of the user satisfaction in the context of SNSs through the theoretical lens of the EDM. On the practical side, understanding the formation of user satisfaction with SNSs allows practitioners to develop a critical mass that allows self-sustaining of the site (Van Slyke *et al.*, 2007). It also provides insights into the customization gender-specific user interface or functions that addresses the needs of different user groups, enhancing the site competitiveness in the highly competitive social media industry.

We structure our paper as follows. In the next section, we provide a review of prior literature on the relevant concepts that we used to build our research model. Then, we draw upon the EDM, and propose a research model explaining user satisfaction with SNSs, and the corresponding gender effects. Subsequently, we outline the research methodology for validating the research model and hypotheses. Based on the empirical evidence, we summarize the key findings and conclude the paper with a discussion of the implications for research and practice, limitations, and directions for future research.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 The EDM

The EDM is proposed by Bhattacharjee (2001) to investigate the post-adoption behaviors of information technologies. The EDM posits that perceived usefulness and disconfirmation are the two factors that influence satisfaction, while satisfaction and perceived usefulness jointly predict the continuance intention to use an information system (Bhattacharjee, 2001).

The explanatory power of EDM has been demonstrated across different contexts in the IS research, such as web-based information systems (Chou *et al.*, 2010; McKinney *et al.*, 2002; Susarla *et al.*, 2003), mobile internet (Hong *et al.*, 2006), e-learning (Chou *et al.*, 2012), question-and-answer site (Ruth, 2012), and online auction site (Yen and Lu, 2008). These studies have provided solid evidence in demonstrating the interplays among perceived usefulness, disconfirmation, user satisfaction and continuance use intention.

With the widely use of EDM to study use satisfaction with different information technologies in the IS literature, we also believed that it is an appropriate theoretical framework for studying user satisfaction with SNSs.

2.2 *User satisfaction*

User satisfaction refers to the user's psychological or affective state resulting from a cognitive appraisal of disconfirmation (Bhattacharjee, 2001). Researchers have investigated user satisfaction from different theoretical perspectives. A stream of literature explained user satisfaction as an outcome of emotional responses to system attributes (Bailey and Pearson, 1983; Doll and Torkzadeh, 1988). Another stream of literature investigated user satisfaction through the theoretical lens of EDM (Bhattacharjee, 2001; McKinney *et al.*, 2002), and suggested that the formation of satisfaction includes three processes: perceptual, evaluative, and psychological.

User satisfaction has been extensively studied in different contexts, such as online shopping (Lin and Lekhawipat, 2014; Shih, 2004), mobile services (Koivumäki *et al.*, 2008; San-Martin and López-Catalán, 2013), mobile sites (Zhou, 2013), online games (Huang and Hsieh, 2011), and internet banking (Liébana-Cabanillas *et al.*, 2013). It is recognized as a core factor that determines the continuance use of an information system. For instance, Sung and Hahn (2007) found that user satisfaction contributes to the success of a network service. Assensoh-Kodua and Lekhanya (2014) showed that satisfaction is one of the salient determinants of continuance intention in the SNSs context. Shiau and Chau (2012) also reported that satisfaction influences bloggers' continuance intention to use the blog.

2.3 *The use of social networking sites*

Media users are often goal-oriented and motivated to seek out particular media to satisfy their specific needs (Palmgreen *et al.*, 1985). Contrary to the utilitarian value derived from using organizational information technologies, SNSs users primarily aim at deriving hedonic value and experience from using these new forms of online social technologies (Debrand and Johnson, 2008; Li, 2011). Remarkable effort has been devoted to investigate different types of SNS uses from different theoretical lens, which has enriched our scientific understanding on why people are motivated to use SNSs. For example, Ellison *et al.* (2006) found that SNS users use SNSs for four reasons: maintaining offline contacts, meeting new people, seeking information, and having fun in the site. Similarly, Nyland and Near (2007) reported that people use SNSs for meeting new people, maintaining existing relationships, pursuing social events, and obtaining enjoyment. Table I summarizes the different types of uses of SNSs.

Recent consultancy reports also provided insights into the predominant factors that influence the use of SNSs. It is found that approximately 90 percent of the users use SNSs mainly for relationship maintenance. The respondents indicated that using SNSs is an ideal platform to stay in touch with family members and current friends, and connect with old friends that have lost touch with (PewInternet, 2011). Apart from maintaining relationships, users also use different kinds of applications embedded in the platform for fun. For instance, Candy Crush Saga, a mini-game in Facebook, have attracted 127 millions of active users per months (SocialBakers, 2013a); Spotify, a music sharing application, also recorded 37 millions of active use per month (SocialBakers, 2013b). To sum, relationship maintenance and entertainment are the two salient drivers that motivate people to use SNSs. Therefore, in this study, we also anchor our focus to

Study	Motivation	Description
Ellison <i>et al.</i> (2006)	Information seeking Entertainment-oriented uses Look up offline connections Make new friends Meet new people Entertain Maintain relationships Social events Media creation	Find out about events, trends, music, or get information Filling up free time, taking breaks, fun Connect with offline contacts Meet new people Meeting and communicating with people that users didn't know in real life Passing time and entertaining oneself Maintaining already existing relationships outside of social network sites Learning about social activities and music Generating media capabilities of social networking sites such as uploading music and videos
Nyland and Near (2007)	Meet "friend" need Meet information need Social connection Shared identities Photographs Content Social investigation Social network surfing Status updates Playfulness	Keep in touch with old/current friends, and make new friends Learn about events, post social functions, and feel connected Re-connecting with lost contacts and maintaining contact with existing friends Joining of groups, organization of events and meeting of "like-minded people" Posting and viewing of photographs Content within social network sites, e.g., applications and quizzes Meet or view new people and find out more about people who are met offline Move from one person to another via friend links Viewing the newsfeed and status updates
Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008)	Critical mass	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
Joinson (2008)	Trust Normative pressure	The point where enough users have adopted an innovation so that there is an acceleration of adoption of the innovation whereupon it becomes self-sustaining The belief that there are safety mechanisms built into the site An individual's perception of what significant others think about the individual performing a specific behavior
Sledgianowski and Kulivivat (2009)	Perceived ease of use Perceived usefulness	The extent to which a person believes that using a technology will be free of effort The extent to which a person believes that using a technology will enhance his/her productivity or job performance

(continued)

Table I.

Study	Motivation	Description
Baek <i>et al.</i> (2011)	Information sharing Convenience and entertainment Pass time Interpersonal utility Control Promoting work Involvement Usefulness Usage Trust Convenience Openness of information Audience Making new contracts Acceptability System quality Awareness	To share practical knowledge or skills with others To communicate with friends and family I'm bored To meet people with same interests as mine I want someone to do something for me to tell others what to do To promote the organization I work for Consider SNSs a part of their lives and they had time to use it Use Facebook as a form to interact with the society, community and events. Share photos and videos on SNSs SNSs is trustful as a safe place SNSs is friendly use Concern for privacy issue Consider whether other users are using Facebook Contact with friends or making new friends Whether the use of Facebook is accepted in the religion The overall technical adequacy of the website The degree to which a user stays informed and current with others' activities through the use of SNS
Mansumittrchai <i>et al.</i> (2012)		The degree to which a SNS helps users stay connected and maintain social relationships and ties
Lin <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Connectedness Pleasure	The perceived value of SNS, the fun and enjoyment gained from usage

investigate impacts of the perceptions and disconfirmations of relationship maintenance and entertainment, and the gender effects upon them on user satisfaction.

2.4 Gender differences in online social interaction

In the sociology literature, researchers have indicated that male and female behave differently in communication and relationship management. In particular, sociologists believed that female are relational oriented, while male are agentic (Deaux and Major, 1987; Eagle and Steffen, 1984); female show preferences for maintaining family ties (Di Leonardo, 1987; Rosenthal, 1985), connecting with friends (Wellman, 1992), and engaging in social activities, whereas male focus more on task-oriented activities.

In recent years, the research on gender differences in information technologies has attracted much attention in the IS community. It is suggested that male and female possess different attitudes and preferences in using different information systems (Debrand and Johnson, 2008; Venkatesh and Morris, 2000). For instance, Wolin and Korgaonkar (2003) indicated that male exhibited more positive beliefs and attitudes toward web advertising than female. Yeh *et al.* (2012) found that perceived uncertainty is more influential in predicting intention to purchase in an online auction site for male than female. Table II summarizes the moderating effects of gender on various information technology uses. Till now, little has been done to examine the gender difference in the context of SNSs. Understanding the gender effect in SNSs is of both theoretical and practical relevance. Results from this study may help researchers to explain inconsistencies as indicated in prior SNS research, while practitioners may also benefit from having a better understanding of the gender preference on SNSs.

3. Research model and hypotheses development

The EDM posits that perceived usefulness and disconfirmation are the two salient predictors that influence user satisfaction, and user satisfaction in turns influences the continuance intention with an information system. In this study, we consider relationship maintenance and entertainment as the predominant proxies of perceived usefulness. We posit that relationship maintenance and entertainment and their disconfirmations (i.e. disconfirmation of relationship maintenance and disconfirmation of entertainment) predict user satisfaction with SNSs. We also test the moderating effects of gender on these relationships[1]. Figure 1 depicts the proposed research model.

3.1 The perception of SNS uses and user satisfaction

Human are born with different needs, and are often motivated by unsatisfied needs (Maslow, 1943). With the advance of the functions and features of SNSs, individuals are now able to use SNSs to gratify a wide range of needs within the platform. As discussed in the previous section, there are two predominant types of SNS motivations, namely relationship maintenance and entertainment.

Relationship maintenance refers to the use of SNS to connect with users' old friends, classmates, colleagues, and other people they know in person (Ellison *et al.*, 2006). With the use of SNSs, individuals' needs for socialization are likely to be fulfilled and satisfied (Lenhart, 2009). Empirical evidence supported the relationship between relationship maintenance and user satisfaction. Lampe *et al.* (2006) found that users use SNSs to learn more about the people they met. Lin *et al.* (2014) also showed that the feeling of connectedness promotes satisfaction.

Table II.
A summary of the moderating effect of gender on information technologies

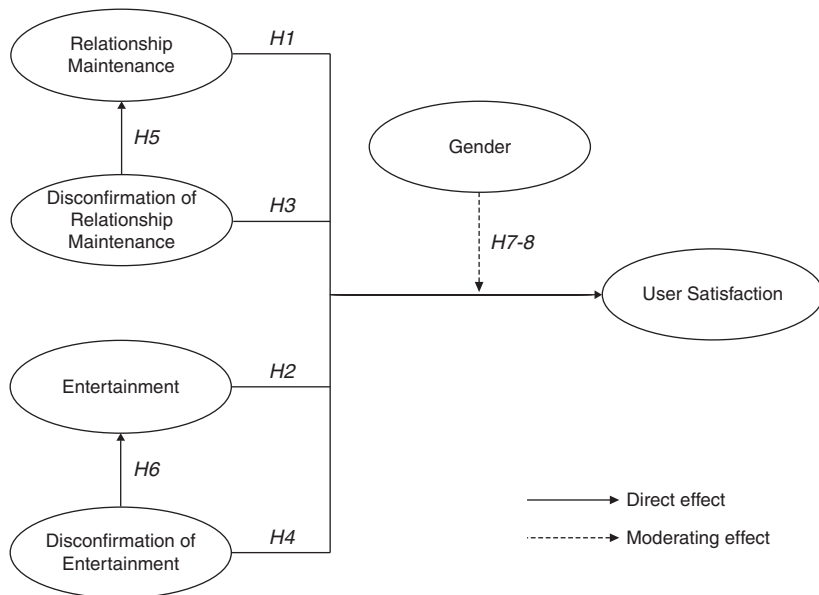
Study	Context	Theory	Hypotheses (gender as moderator)
Venkatesh and Morris (2000)	A system for data and information retrieval	Technology acceptance model	Perceived usefulness → Behavioral intention ^a Perceived ease of use → Behavioral intention ^a Perceived ease of use → Perceived usefulness ^b Subjective norm → Behavioral intention ^a Performance expectancy → Behavioral intention ^a Effort expectancy → Behavioral intention ^a Social influence → Behavioral intention ^a
Venkatesh <i>et al.</i> (2003)	Organization-wide information systems	UTAUT	Attitude → Behavioral intention ^a Subjective norm → Behavioral intention ^a Perceived behavioral control → Behavioral intention ^a Perceived relative advantage → Behavioral intention ^a Perceived ease of use → Behavioral intention ^a Perceived visibility → Behavioral intention ^a Perceived result demonstrability → Behavioral intention ^a
Venkatesh <i>et al.</i> (2004)	Organization-wide information systems	Theory of planned behavior	Perceived critical mass → Behavioral intention ^a Attitude × age → Behavioral intention ^a Subjective norm × age → Behavioral intention
Ilie <i>et al.</i> (2005)	Instant messaging	Innovation diffusion theory	Perceived behavioral control × age → Behavioral intention
Morris <i>et al.</i> (2005)	Enterprise-wide systems	Theory of planned behavior	Computer self-efficacy → Perceived usefulness ^a Computer self-efficacy → Perceived ease of use ^a Perceived usefulness → Behavioral intention ^a Perceived ease of use → Perceived usefulness ^a Perceived ease of use → Behavioral intention ^b
Ong and Lai (2006)	E-Learning	Technology acceptance model	

(continued)

Study	Context	Theory	Hypotheses (gender as moderator)
Djamasbi and Loiacono (2008)	Decision support systems	Social feedback theory	Negative outcome feedback → Overall mood ^a Feedback treatment → Decision accuracy ^a
Zhang <i>et al.</i> (2009)	Blog	Social role theory	Satisfaction → Switching intention ^a Attractive alternative → Switching intention ^a Attitude → We-intention ^a
Shen <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Social network-facilitated team collaboration	Social influence theory	Positive anticipated emotions → We-intention ^a Negative anticipated emotions → We-intention ^a Subjective norms → We-intention ^b Group norms → We-intention ^a
Riquelme and Rios (2010)	Mobile banking	Technology acceptance model Innovation diffusion theory	Social identify → We-intention ^a Perception of risk → Intention to adopt ^b Perceived ease of use → Intention to adopt ^a Perceived usefulness → Intention to adopt ^b Social norms → Intention to adopt ^a
Heriyati and Siek (2011)	Smartphone	na	Relative competitive advantage → Intention to adopt ^a Word-of-mouth communication → Consumer decision making ^a Perceived quality → Consumer decision making ^a

Notes: ^aSignificant; ^bnon-significant

Figure 1.
Proposed research
model



Entertainment refers to the use of SNS for filling up free time, taking break and having fun (Ellison *et al.*, 2006). Through the use of the interactive features embedded in the SNSs (e.g. poking) and social games (e.g. Candy Crush), SNSs users could have fun with their connected friends. As such, it derives positive experiences and satisfaction from using the sites. Empirical evidence supported the relationship between entertainment and user satisfaction. Lin *et al.* (2014) found that the pleasure obtained from using the SNSs is highly associated with satisfaction. Similarly, Xiao *et al.* (2014) also reported that playfulness is positively related to user satisfaction. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1. Relationship maintenance is positively related to user satisfaction with SNSs.

H2. Entertainment is positively related to user satisfaction with SNSs.

3.2 Disconfirmations and user satisfaction

According to the EDM, disconfirmation is assessed by the users' evaluation between the initial expectation and the actual usage (Bhattacharjee, 2001). In this study, disconfirmation of relationship maintenance (entertainment) refers to the discrepancy between a user's perception of the performance of SNS on relationship maintenance (entertainment) and the initial expectation.

Positive disconfirmation with the SNSs promotes user satisfaction because it is an indicator of realizing the expected benefits of SNS use, whereas the negative disconfirmation implies the failure of achieving the expectation (Bhattacharjee, 2001). Empirical evidence supported the relationship between disconfirmation and user satisfaction. Shiau and Chau (2012) reported that positive disconfirmation is positively related to satisfaction in a sample of blog users. Jin *et al.* (2013) also showed that

positive disconfirmation is a significant and positive predictor of satisfaction in online question answering communities. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

- H3. Positive disconfirmation of relationship maintenance is positively related user satisfaction with SNSs.
- H4. Positive disconfirmation of entertainment is positively related user satisfaction with SNSs.

3.3 Relationship maintenance, entertainment, and disconfirmations

The association between perception and disconfirmation is described in cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957). In the EDM, Bhattacharjee (2001) argued that rationale users adjust their initial perception (e.g. usefulness) to eliminate their disconfirmations. Similarly, in the context of SNSs, users may also experience cognitive dissonance or psychological tension if the perceptions of uses (i.e. relationship maintenance and entertainment) differ from their actual usage experience. Disconfirmations arise, and users may try to adjust their initial perceptions of uses (i.e. relationship maintenance and entertainment) to make the perceptions more realistic. Put simply, positive disconfirmation inflates users' perception of uses (Bhattacharjee, 2001), whereas negative disconfirmation deters users' perception of uses.

The relationship between disconfirmation and perception is upheld by empirical evidence. Bhattacharjee (2001) and Lin *et al.* (2005) suggested that positive disconfirmation showed a significant impact on user satisfaction and perceived usefulness. Similarly, it is believed that if users' expectation level regarding relationship maintenance and entertainment is positively disconfirmed, they will perceive a high level of relationship maintenance and entertainment. Therefore, we hypothesize:

- H5. Disconfirmation of relationship maintenance is positively related to relationship maintenance.
- H6. Disconfirmation of entertainment is positively related to entertainment.

3.4 The moderating role of gender

Male and female generally show different attitudes and preferences toward the use of communication technologies. Prior research also indicated that female prefer using computer technologies to expand their social networks and keep in touch with others (Debrand and Johnson, 2008). In a ten-year follow-up study by Joiner *et al.* (2012), findings indicated that female use the internet and SNSs for communication much more than male. In addition, female are more satisfied with the features embedded in the SNSs that help them to maintain relationships (Hargittai and Hsieh, 2010; Special and Li-Barber, 2012). Male, however, are found to spend more time on the internet for entertainment and leisure (Weiser, 2000). Joiner *et al.* (2012) reported that male have greater breath of internet use and are more likely to use it for gaming and entertainment.

Similarly, we believed that the effect of relationship maintenance on satisfaction will be stronger for female, whereas the effect of entertainment on satisfaction will be stronger for male. Additionally, disconfirmation of relationship maintenance will

influence satisfaction more for female while disconfirmation of entertainment will influence satisfaction more for male. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H7a. Influences of relationship maintenance on user satisfaction with SNSs are stronger for female than male.

H7b. Influences of disconfirmation of relationship maintenance on user satisfaction with SNSs are stronger for female than male.

H8a. Influences of entertainment on user satisfaction with SNSs are stronger for male than female.

H8b. Influences of disconfirmation of entertainment on user satisfaction with SNSs are stronger for male than female.

4. Research methodology

4.1 Measures

We derived the validated and established measures from prior studies with minor modifications to fit into the SNSs context. We adapted the measurement items of user satisfaction from Bhattacharjee (2001), and derived measurement items of relationship maintenance and entertainment from Ellison *et al.* (2006). We measured user satisfaction on a seven-point semantic differential scale, whereas measured relationship maintenance and entertainment on a seven-point Likert scales anchored with “strongly disagree (1)” to “strongly agree (7)”. We derived measurement items for disconfirmations of relationship maintenance and entertainment from Bhattacharjee (2001) and Ellison *et al.* (2006). For these two constructs, we used a seven-point scale with anchors ranging from “much lower than your expectation (-3)” to “much higher than your expectation (3)”. Table III presents the details of the measurement items.

4.2 Pre-test and pilot test

We conducted a pre-test with two professional researchers in IS field to assess the questionnaire quality. After gathering comments and suggestions, we refined the structure, logic and wording of the questionnaire for better presentation and readability.

We then conducted a pilot study with 30 experienced Facebook users for gathering additional feedback to fine-tune the questionnaire. In particular, we verified clarity of the wordings, relevance of the items, formatting of the questionnaire, absence of biased words and phrases, clarity of the instructions, and use of standard English (Fowler, 2009). Other than minor formatting modifications, no major problems were surfaced. After the questionnaire was finalized, we launched the main study.

4.3 Data collection

We collected the data through an online survey. In particular, we posted the survey link to popular Facebook pages. Users who were interested in the study could click on the link, and they were directed to the online questionnaire. We described the research purposes and details in the first page of the questionnaire, users started the survey upon their consent of participation. The use of survey study is believed to be vital and qualified in the current study, as all of constructs in the research model are the evaluation of users' perception, rather than behavior (Fowler, 2009; Zhou *et al.*, 2012).

Constructs	Items
Relationship maintenance (RM)	<i>Indicate your actual perception of using Facebook in performing the following functions</i> RM1. To check out someone you met socially RM2. To learn more about other people in your classes/workplace RM3. To keep in touch with your old friends
Entertainment (EN)	EN1. To fill up free time EN2. For fun EN3. To take a break from your homework/work
Disconfirmation of relationship maintenance (DRM)	<i>Compared with your pre-expectation, indicate your perception of the experience of using Facebook in performing the following functions</i> DRM1. To check out someone you met socially DRM2. To learn more about other people in your classes/workplace DRM3. To keep in touch with your old friends
Disconfirmation of entertainment (DEN)	DEN1. To fill up free time DEN2. For fun DEN3. To take a break from your homework/work
User satisfaction (SAT)	<i>My overall experience of using Facebook is</i> SAT1. Very dissatisfied/very satisfied SAT2. Very displeased/very pleased SAT3. Very frustrated/very contented SAT4. Absolutely terrible/absolutely delighted

Table III.
Measurement items

Facebook is currently the most popular SNSs worldwide (PewInternet, 2013), and Hong Kong has an astonishing Facebook penetration rate of 60.1 percent, ranking top among the American, Australia and other European countries (Internet WorldStats, 2013; PewInternet, 2013). The gender distribution of Hong Kong Facebook users is balanced, consisting of 46.2 percent male and 53.8 percent female (Pageviral, 2013). With respect to the high penetration rate and balanced gender distribution, we believed Facebook users in Hong Kong is an appropriate sample in the current study.

4.4 Respondent profile

We collected a total of 243 responses in June 2013. In total, 22 responses were deleted due to perfunctory answering (i.e. choosing answers down the same column on a page), yielding 221 valid responses from subsequent analysis[2]. Among the respondents, 42.5 percent were male and 57.5 percent were female. All the respondents had experience of using Facebook and 76.9 percent of them had more than six months use experience. A total of 64.7 percent of the respondents visited Facebook every day and 43.5 percent of them spent more than 30 minutes a day on Facebook. Table IV provides a summary of the respondent profile. Our sample complies with general Facebook user that the dominant group of Facebook users (77.4 percent) are young adults aged 18-29. The current sample shared similar demographic characteristics as of the dominant Facebook group user (PewInternet, 2013). Thus, it is an appropriate sample for the current investigation.

Table IV.
Respondent profile

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	
Gender	Male	94	42.5
	Female	127	57.5
Age	18 or below	15	6.8
	19-28	171	77.4
	29-35	28	12.7
	36 or above	7	3.1
Experience with social network sites	1 month or less	8	3.6
	2-6 months	43	19.5
	7-11 months	64	28.9
	1 year or more	106	48.0
Number of contacts on social network sites	50 or less	45	20.4
	51-100	45	20.4
	101-200	67	30.3
	More than 200	64	28.9
Frequency of visiting social network sites	Once or more per day	143	64.7
	Once or more per week	64	29.0
	Twice or less per month	14	6.3
The average time of using social network sites (minutes per day)	Less than 15 minutes	42	19.0
	15-30 minutes	83	37.5
	30-60 minutes	43	19.5
	More than 60 minutes	53	24.0

5. Data analysis

5.1 Preliminary analysis

We conducted preliminary tests to detect potential common method bias, multicollinearity problem, and non-response bias. We conducted the one factor test (Harman, 1967) to identify potential common method bias. Result of the principal component factor analysis found that there is no single factor accounts for a majority of variance. We then examined the correlation matrix to determine whether any constructs have extremely high correlation with each other (i.e. $r > 0.9$) (Pavlou *et al.*, 2007). The correlation matrix shows that the highest inter-construct correlation in each subsample is 0.69 (see Table VI). Finally, we conducted a *t*-test to examine the non-response bias, statistical result showed that there is no significant difference between early and late respondents ($t = 1.23, p > 0.05$). To sum, the tests suggested that common method bias, multicollinearity, and non-response bias are not likely the threats influencing the results of our study.

5.2 Data analysis

We used partial least squares (PLS) approach to analyze the research model because of several advantages (Hair *et al.*, 2014). First, PLS is robust with fewer statistical identification issues while comparing with covariance-based SEM. Second, it is also capable in handling sample size. Third, PLS possesses the ability in analyzing data with non-normality, which is the case of our study (*Shapiro-Wilk*_{stat} = 0.95, $p < 0.05$). Taken together, PLS is preferred in this study. The software package used for analysis is SmartPLS 2.0 M3.

We first conducted a psychometric assessment of the measurement scales, and then evaluated the structural model. Using a two-step analytical approach (Hair *et al.*, 2006), we are confident that the structural relationships are drawn from a set of measurement instruments with desirable psychometric properties.

5.3 Test of measurement model

We evaluated the reliability and validity of the measurement model. Reliability is examined using the composite reliability (CR). As shown in Table V, all are above 0.70, exceeding the recommended thresholds (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Convergent validity indicates the extent to which the items of a scale that are theoretically related to each other should be related in reality. Convergent validity can be verified by use of the CR and the average variance extracted (AVE). The thresholds for CR and AVE are 0.70 and 0.50, respectively (Hair *et al.*, 2014). As shown in Table V, CR for each construct is greater than 0.70, and AVE for each construct is greater than 0.50. In addition, most item loadings are higher than 0.70. Two exceptions are found in the female subgroup, where the second item of relationship maintenance and disconfirmation of relationship maintenance were slightly below 0.70. These two items were retained because they contribute to the content validity of the measures (Hair *et al.*, 2014). To sum, the results suggest a satisfactory convergent validity of all the measurements.

Discriminant validity is the extent to which the measurement is not a reflection of some other variables. It is indicated by low correlations between the measure of interest and the measure of other constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity can be verified when the square root of AVE for each construct is greater than all the correlations between this construct and other constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table VI, the square root of AVE for each construct is greater than the correlations between them and all other constructs. The results suggest a satisfactory discriminant validity of all the measurements.

5.4 Test of structural model

We performed the bootstrapping technique to 5,000 samples to examine the explanatory power and path significance of the structural model (Hair *et al.*, 2014). Particularly, we tested the proposed research model with three separate samples, the full sample, the male subsample, and the female subsample.

For the full model, the proposed relationships are upheld by empirical evidence. All the hypotheses (i.e. *H1-6*) are significant at $p < 0.01$. Relationship maintenance ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.01$), disconfirmation of relationship maintenance ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$), entertainment ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$) and disconfirmation of entertainment ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$) exert positive and significant effects on user satisfaction. Disconfirmation of relationship maintenance is significantly related to relationship maintenance ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$), whereas disconfirmation of entertainment is significantly related to entertainment ($\beta = 0.60$, $p < 0.001$). The model explains 41 percent of the variance in user satisfaction. The predictive relevance Q^2 of user satisfaction is 0.34, which implies that the model has predictive relevance for the user satisfaction (Hair *et al.*, 2014). Figure 2 depicts the PLS results of the full model.

To investigate the moderating effects of gender, we further tested the male subsample, and the female subsample model using the method recommended by Keil *et al.* (2000). We first conducted the Levene's test of equality of variance to examine the equivalence of variance between the two subsamples. No significant difference is found ($F = 0.49$, $p > 0.05$). Interesting results are found when the research model is tested separately with the subsamples (i.e. male group and female group). Within male subgroup, the paths for relationship maintenance and disconfirmation of relationship maintenance to user satisfaction are not significant (see Figure 3). On the contrary, the paths for entertainment and disconfirmation of entertainment to user satisfaction are

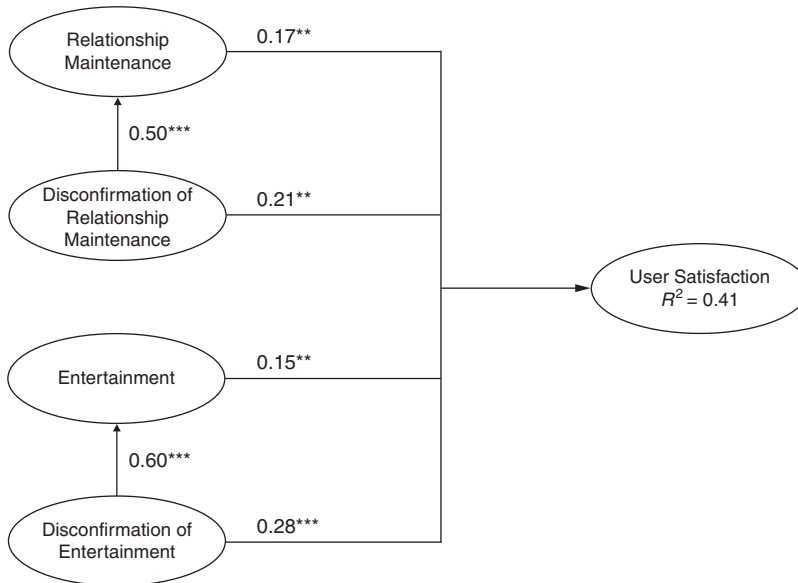
Table V.
Psychometric
properties of
measures

Items	Full sample <i>n</i> = 221			Male subgroup <i>n</i> = 94			Female subgroup <i>n</i> = 127		
	CR	AVE	Loading	CR	AVE	Loading	CR	AVE	Loading
RM1	0.78	0.50	0.82	0.82	0.60	0.78	0.81	0.60	0.86
RM2			0.72			0.82			0.65
RM3			0.75			0.72			0.80
DRM1	0.80	0.50	0.87	0.85	0.65	0.82	0.78	0.54	0.81
DRM2			0.90			0.87			0.67
DRM3			0.90			0.72			0.71
DEN1	0.92	0.79	0.82	0.90	0.75	0.83	0.93	0.80	0.90
DEN2			0.76			0.92			0.87
DEN3			0.70			0.85			0.92
EN1	0.88	0.71	0.85	0.87	0.70	0.82	0.87	0.70	0.86
EN2			0.82			0.83			0.80
EN3			0.87			0.86			0.85
SAT1	0.92	0.74	0.84	0.92	0.74	0.84	0.90	0.70	0.83
SAT2			0.89			0.89			0.85
SAT3			0.84			0.84			0.82
SAT4			0.88			0.88			0.84

Sample	Correlation of constructs				
	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Full sample</i>					
Relationship maintenance (1)	<i>0.71</i>				
Disconfirmation of relationship maintenance (2)	0.55	<i>0.71</i>			
Disconfirmation of entertainment (3)	0.40	0.59	<i>0.89</i>		
Entertainment (4)	0.48	0.39	0.62	<i>0.84</i>	
Satisfaction (5)	0.51	0.54	0.59	0.51	<i>0.86</i>
<i>Male</i>					
Relationship maintenance (1)	<i>0.77</i>				
Disconfirmation of relationship maintenance (2)	0.59	<i>0.80</i>			
Disconfirmation of entertainment (3)	0.47	0.57	<i>0.87</i>		
Entertainment (4)	0.43	0.45	0.61	<i>0.84</i>	
Satisfaction (5)	0.46	0.54	0.69	0.56	<i>0.86</i>
<i>Female</i>					
Relationship maintenance (1)	<i>0.77</i>				
Disconfirmation of relationship maintenance (2)	0.45	<i>0.73</i>			
Disconfirmation of entertainment (3)	0.31	0.52	<i>0.90</i>		
Entertainment (4)	0.54	0.30	0.59	<i>0.84</i>	
Satisfaction (5)	0.45	0.48	0.45	0.42	<i>0.84</i>

Notes: Italicized diagonal elements are the square root of AVE for each construct. Off-diagonal elements are the correlations between constructs. All the correlations are significant at $p < 0.001$

Table VI.
Correlation matrix



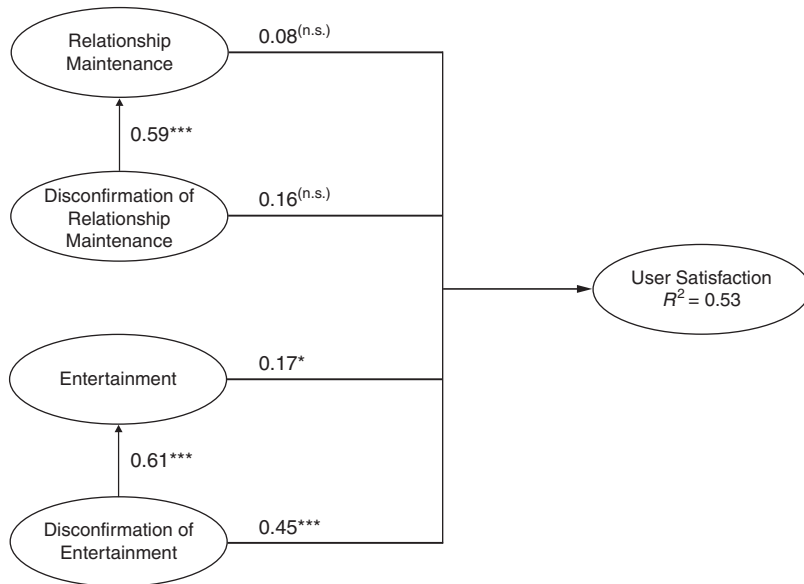
Notes: n.s.= non-significant. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 2.
PLS results of the
full model

not significant within the female subgroup (see Figure 4). Figures 3 and 4 depict the PLS results of the two subgroup models.

In addition, we conducted t -tests to compare the results between the two subgroups. As shown in Table VII, the structural model of the male subgroup explains

Figure 3.
PLS results of the
male subsample
model



Notes: n.s.= non-significant. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

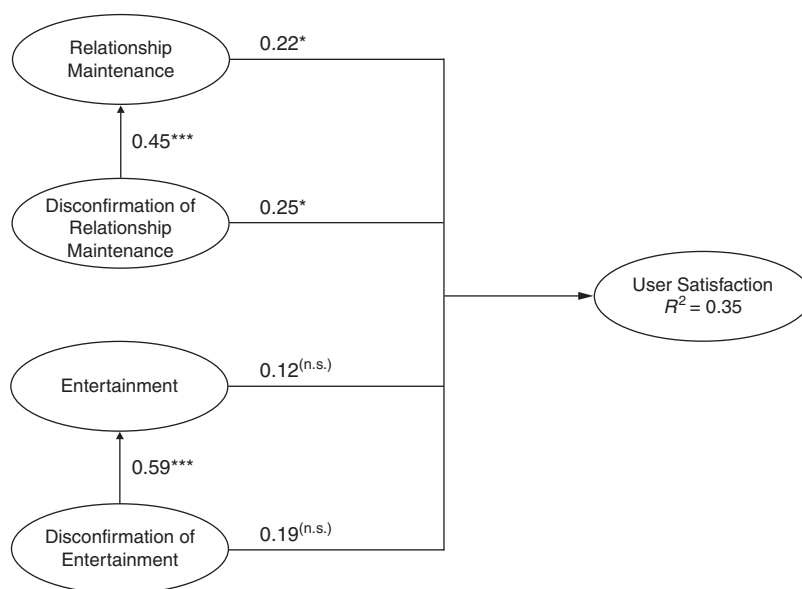
18 percent more of the variance in user satisfaction than the female subgroup. The R^2 change in the male subgroup is 0.12 ($f^2 = 0.26$), indicating a medium size effect, while the R^2 change in the female subgroup is 0.09 ($f^2 = 0.14$), indicating a small size effect (Cohen, 1988)[3].

In terms of relationship strengths, relationship maintenance, entertainment, disconfirmation of relationship maintenance, and disconfirmation of entertainment have different impacts on user satisfaction in each subgroup. Path coefficients of relationship maintenance, entertainment, and the two disconfirmations to user satisfaction for male are significantly different from the corresponding coefficients of female. In particular, the results suggested that relationships between entertainment, disconfirmation of entertainment and satisfaction are significant only in the male subgroup, whereas between relationship maintenance, disconfirmation of relationship maintenance and satisfaction are significant only in the female subgroup. These results provide strong evidence for the moderating effects of gender on the proposed relationships.

6. Discussion

The purpose of this study is to examine user satisfaction and the gender differences in SNSs through the theoretical lens of the EDM. The proposed research model explains 40.5 percent of the variance in user satisfaction with SNSs in the full model, 52.7 percent of the variance in user satisfaction with SNSs in the male subgroup and 35 percent of the variance in the female subgroup.

Our study confirms the findings in prior SNS studies (e.g. Lin *et al.*, 2014), and indicates the relationship maintenance and entertainment are the two salient factors that influence user satisfaction with SNSs. In addition, our study further teases out the distinct differences in using SNSs between male and female users, which is novel to the IS literature. The moderating results suggest that male users are more likely to



Notes: n.s.= non-significant. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 4. PLS results of the female subsample model

Path	Full (sample = 221)	Male (sample = 94)	Female (sample = 127)	Comparison of paths – male vs female (t -value)
DRM → RM	0.50***	0.59***	0.45***	na
DEN → EN	0.60***	0.61***	0.59***	na
DRM → SAT	0.21**	0.16	0.25*	-8.18***
DEN → SAT	0.28***	0.45***	0.19	17.45***
RM → SAT	0.17**	0.08	0.22*	-11.67***
EN → SAT	0.15**	0.17*	0.12	3.45***
R^2 (SAT)	0.41	0.53	0.35	na
Effect size	na	Medium	Small	na

Notes: T -value calculation: $t = (PC1 - PC2) / [\text{spooled} \times \sqrt{(1/N1 + 1/N2)}]$, where $\text{spooled} = \sqrt{\{[(N1 - 1)/(N1 + N2 - 2)] \times SE1^2 + [(N2 - 1)/(N1 + N2 - 2)] \times SE2^2\}}$, where $t = t$ -value with $N1 + N2 - 2$ degrees of freedom; spooled = pooled estimator for the variance; Ni = sample size of data set for culture i ; SEi = standard error of path in structural model of culture i ; PCi = path coefficient in structural model of culture i . * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table VII. Model summary

be attracted by the entertainment features, while female users are more likely to be attracted by the relationship building and maintenance features embedded in SNSs, confirming gender differences exist also in the SNSs context.

6.1 Theoretical implications

The present study is one of the first few studies that attempt to explain how perceptions and disconfirmations about the use of SNSs influence user satisfaction with

SNSs, as well as examine the role of gender in the formation of user satisfaction with a theory-guided approach. This study is expected to shed lights on the research of user satisfaction with new and complex social technologies.

The research model includes both the perception and disconfirmation variables that are specific to SNSs (i.e. relationship maintenance and entertainment) as the antecedents of user satisfaction. As most prior studies examining the antecedents of user satisfaction either focus on perception or disconfirmation, the current investigation further enriches this line of research by demonstrating the relative importance of perceptions and disconfirmations in explaining user satisfaction with SNSs.

Second, current study also advances the literature by introducing the distinctive gender-specific factors in understanding user satisfaction, in which it may offer possible explanations for the inconsistencies reported in past literature toward the motivations to use SNSs (Baek *et al.*, 2011; Baker *et al.*, 2007; Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2009; Special and Li-Barber, 2012). Specifically, for female users, relationship maintenance and its positive disconfirmation exhibit significant and positive impacts on user satisfaction with SNSs. On the contrary, for male users, entertainment and its positive disconfirmation exhibit significant and positive effects on user satisfaction with SNSs. Relationship maintenance is more valuable for female to use SNSs, while entertainment is more attractive for male to use SNSs. It is believed that the current findings will provide a deeper understanding of user satisfaction in the context of SNSs.

Finally, the simple yet explanatory research model of the current study attempts to address the call from Benbasat and Zmud (2003) and Hong *et al.* (2014) to incorporate IS specific features into the investigation of IS-related research questions. The satisfactory explanatory power of our extended EDM illustrated the importance of including context specific factors in understanding the phenomenon. Future research aims at studying these new and complex social technologies should also consider incorporating the content specific components into their research models.

6.2 Practical implications

Besides the theoretical implications for researchers, this study provides pertinent implications for managers, designers, and educators. Understanding user satisfaction in the online environment is particularly important to site managers because the level of satisfaction is associated with critical business outcomes. A higher level of satisfaction will improve loyalty, enhance positive word-of-mouth, and lead to continuance intention (Matos and Rossi, 2008; Norizan Mohd and Ismail, 2009). To increase user satisfaction, SNSs managers should not only focus on improving the performance of the platform, but also take into account user expectation towards the sites, as the disconfirmation between a user's perceived performance and his/her expectation can influence both perceived performance and satisfaction level.

Further, this study also offers important implications to designers. Our study showed that developers could enhance user satisfaction with SNSs by paying more attention to their specific needs and demographic characteristics. For instance, female users are more likely to satisfy their SNSs use when they are able to use SNSs to maintain relationships with their friends, whereas male users are looking for entertainment elements within the sites. As such, developers could provide more specific user experience by customizing the user interface. For example, developers may offer female users customized interface with better notification of social information and interaction, while integrate more social games into the sites for male users.

Last, our study provides educators insights into the specific usage pattern of male and female SNS users, which may potentially unfold the myth why certain individuals spend remarkable amount of time on the site. Our study suggests that male users are attracted by entertainment features whereas female users are looking for social interactions within the site. As such, our study may offer some ideas to educators in developing measures to address the concern of potential excessive use of SNSs.

6.3 Limitations and future research

The current research is subjected to some potential limitations that warrant future research. This study is based on cross-sectional data to explain the formation of user satisfaction with SNSs. Since individuals' satisfaction level is an ongoing attitude in a dynamic world of technological change, longitudinal research may better explain user satisfaction in the context of SNSs. Although the current study has captured the major factors related to the use of SNSs, cautions need to be taken in generalizing our results to other social network platforms. Different SNSs may have somewhat unique objectives and technological features, and it is important for future studies to look into more specific features of the target SNSs. Third, this research targets users of SNSs in Hong Kong. Future studies could build upon the current study and validate the result across different regions or countries. Finally, as the proposed research model only explained 40 percent of the variance in user satisfaction, more effort could be devoted to identify more potential and relevant factors to explain user satisfaction with SNSs.

Notes

1. The relationship between satisfaction and continuance intention has been well established in different information systems (see Jin *et al.*, 2013; Shiau and Chau, 2012) and in SNSs (see Assensoh-Kodua and Lekhanya, 2014; Lin *et al.*, 2014). Thus, this study used only a snippet of the expectation confirmation model (i.e. perception, disconfirmation and satisfaction) to keep the research model parsimonious and focussed.
2. According to Hair *et al.* (2014), 137 observations is needed to achieve a statistical power of 80 percent for detecting R^2 values of at least 0.1 (with a 5 percent probability of error) in PLS. Therefore, the current sample is adequate for the subsequent analysis.
3. f^2 effect sizes of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are termed small, medium, and large, respectively.

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About the authors

Tommy K.H. Chan is a PhD candidate in the Department of Finance and Decision Sciences at the Hong Kong Baptist University. His research interests include hedonic information systems, social media and online consumer behaviors. His research articles have been published in *Information & Management*, *Journal of Marketing Analytics*, *Internet Research*, and leading information systems conference proceedings. Tommy K.H. Chan is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: khchan@life.hkbu.edu.hk

Christy M.K. Cheung is an Associate Professor at the Hong Kong Baptist University. She received her PhD from the City University of Hong Kong. Her research interests include virtual community, knowledge management, social media, and IT adoption and usage. Her research articles have been published in *Decision Support Systems*, *Information & Management*, *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, *Journal of Information Technology*, and *MIS Quarterly*.

Dr Na Shi received her PhD from the University of Science and Technology of China-City University of Hong Kong Joint Advanced Research Center. She received her Bachelor degree in Information Management and Information Systems from the University of Science and Technology of China. Her research includes social network sites adoption and continuance, electronic word-of-mouth in virtual community, asymmetry and nonlinearity in human behaviors.

Professor Matthew K.O. Lee is a Chair Professor of Information Systems & E-Commerce at the College of Business, the City University of Hong Kong. He holds a PhD degree from the University of Manchester (UK). He has a research and professional interest in IT based innovation adoption and diffusion, knowledge management, social computing, electronic commerce, and legal informatics. His publications in the information systems and electronic commerce areas include a book as well as over 100 referred articles in international journals, conference proceedings, and research textbooks. He has published in top journals in his field and his work has received numerous citations.

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