

Understanding How Posting and Replying Behaviors in Social Media Differentiate the Social Capital Cultivation Capabilities of Users

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Abstract : This study identifies how the cultivation capabilities of social capital influence the overall attitudes of social media users and how these influences differ across user groups. First, the cultivation capabilities of social capital are identified from three aspects, namely, social capital accessibility, potentiality and sensitivity. These three types of social capital acquisition capabilities collectively represent how the social media users perceive the social media environment in terms of possibilities for social capital creation. These three capabilities are hypothesized to influence social media satisfaction and continuing use intention. Next, two essential activities in social media are identified, namely, posting and replying, to categorise social media users based on behavioral patterns. Various social media activities consist of the combinations of these two basic activities. Posting represents the broadcasting aspect of social media, whereas replying represents the communicative aspect of social media. We categorize users into four from communicators to observers by using these two behaviors to develop usage pattern matrix. By applying the usage pattern matrix to the capability model, we argue that posting behavior generally has a positive moderating effect on the attitudes of social media users, whereas replying behavior occasionally exhibits the negative moderating effect. These different moderating effects of posting and replying behavior are explained based on the different levels of social capital sensitivity and expectation of individuals. When a person is highly expecting social capital from social media, he or she would post actively. However, when one is highly sensitive to social capital, he or she would actively respond and reply to postings of other people because such an act would create a longer and more interactive relationship. A total of 512 social media users are invited to answer the survey. They were asked about their attitudes toward the social media and how they expect social capital through this practice. They were asked to check their general social media usage pattern for user categorization. Result confirmed that most of the hypotheses were supported. Three types of social capital cultivation capabilities are significant determinants of social media attitudes, and two social media activities (i.e., posting and replying) exhibited different moderating effects on attitudes. This study provides following discussions. First, three types of social capital cultivation capabilities were identified. Despite the numerous concerns about social media, such as whether it is a decent and real environment that produces social capital, this study confirms that people explicitly expect and experience social capital values from social media. Second, posting and replying activities are two building blocks of social media activities. These two activities are useful in explaining different the attitudes of social media users and predict future usage.

Keywords : social media, social capital, social media satisfaction, social media use intention

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