Influencing Factors Model and Empirical Study of Social Media User Switching Behavior (Post-print)

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Date: 2023-08-27T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This study investigates the influencing factors of social media user switching behavior, thereby broadening the research scope of social media user behavior. It aims to provide references for relevant theoretical research and offer insights for social media operators to improve service quality and enhance user stickiness. [Method/Process] A theoretical model is constructed based on the Expectation-Confirmation Theory, Flow Theory, and Information Systems Success Model, with a focus on examining whether and to what extent social media system quality, information quality, service quality, flow experience, and user satisfaction with social media use affect user switching behavior. Data were collected through questionnaire surveys, and SPSS and AMOS software were employed for data analysis and hypothesis testing. [Results/Conclusion] The analysis reveals that social media system quality, information quality, service quality, and flow experience exert positive influences on user satisfaction, while user satisfaction negatively affects switching behavior.

Full Text

Preamble

ChinaXiv Cooperative Journal
Volume 62, Issue 18, September 2018

A Model and Empirical Study of Influencing Factors on Social Media Users' Switching Behavior

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Abstract

[**Purpose/Significance**] This study explores the influencing factors of social media users' switching behavior to broaden the research scope of social media user behavior, providing theoretical references for relevant research and practical guidance for social media operators to improve service quality and enhance user stickiness. [**Method/Process**] Based on the Expectation-Confirmation Theory, Flow Theory, and the Information Systems Success Model, this study constructs a theoretical model focusing on whether and to what extent social media system quality, information quality, service quality, flow experience, and user satisfaction with social media usage affect user switching behavior. Data were collected through questionnaire surveys and analyzed using SPSS and AMOS software to test the hypotheses. [**Result/Conclusion**] The analysis reveals that social media system quality, information quality, service quality, and flow experience positively influence user satisfaction, while user satisfaction negatively affects switching behavior.

Keywords: social media; switching behavior; influencing factors; model
Classification Number: G250
DOI: 10.13266/j.issn.0252-3116.2018.18.005

Introduction

In recent years, social media services have increasingly impacted people's lives and work. According to the 40th "Statistical Report on Internet Development in China" released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) in August 2017, as of June 2017, the usage rates of social services derived from WeChat Moments and QQ Space were 84.3% and 65.8%, respectively, while Weibo's user penetration rate reached 38.7% [1]. Tencent's official data shows that as of the end of June 2017, WeChat's monthly active accounts reached 963 million, a year-on-year increase of 19.5%, while QQ's monthly active accounts were 850 million, a year-on-year decrease of 5.4% [2]. Amid the rapid development of social media, user switching behavior has emerged and gradually become a hot topic of concern in both industry and academia.

This study attempts to answer three research questions: (1) What factors influence users' switching behavior during social media usage? (2) What theories can provide theoretical support for a model of social media switching behavior? (3) How can the feasibility and applicability of the constructed model be verified through empirical research? Based on the Information Systems Success Model, this study constructs a model of influencing factors on social media users' switching behavior and uses questionnaire surveys and structural equation modeling to analyze and fit data, thereby verifying the correctness of the constructed model. This research helps to understand the influencing factors of social media switching behavior, enabling social media developers and operators to better provide products and services that meet user needs.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Social Media Switching Behavior

Social media integrates multiple communication modes such as interpersonal and mass communication, changing the ways information is disseminated and received, and enabling interpersonal communication to transcend time and space limitations. Users can create and exchange information in cyberspace through social media applications. With continuous internet development and innovation, social media products and services from different developers or brands have become increasingly abundant. This availability and diversity of choices make it relatively easy for users to switch from their current social product or service provider to another when they discover a social media application with better user experience.

Foreign scholars H.S. Bansal and S.F. Taylor define switching behavior as consumers' behavior of replacing or exchanging their current service provider with another [10]. I. Chang et al. define social networking site (SNS) user switching as users turning to SNS services provided by another provider while having stopped or not completely stopped using their current product [11]. For social media, when users increase their usage of "new" social media, decrease their usage of "old" social media, or even abandon "old" social media entirely to devote themselves to "new" social media, social media switching behavior occurs.

2.2 Expectation-Confirmation Theory

Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT), proposed by R.L. Oliver, is a fundamental theory for studying consumer satisfaction. It compares consumers' pre-purchase expectations with post-purchase performance to determine satisfaction with a product or service, which then becomes a reference for future purchases or usage [12]. ECT is often applied in studying users' repeated decision-making and behaviors, such as consumers' repeat purchase behavior and continued usage of social media or websites. For instance, Li Li studied the influencing factors of virtual community users' continuous knowledge-seeking intention based on ECT [13], while Min Qingfei et al. used it to examine factors influencing WeChat's continued usage intention [14].

From these studies, it is evident that satisfaction is an important factor affecting users' continued usage behavior. When users' satisfaction with a social media platform decreases, they will not choose to continue using the product or service, thereby generating social media switching behavior. Since ECT is the basic theory for studying user satisfaction, it can provide theoretical support for analyzing the influencing factors of social media switching behavior.

2.3 Flow Theory

Flow Theory was first proposed by M. Csikszentmihalyi in 1975, referring to the state in which people become completely immersed in certain daily activities,

focusing their attention and filtering out all irrelevant perceptions [15]. Flow theory posits that when users are in a flow state, they concentrate highly on their current activity, neglecting the existence and changes in their surroundings, and this state makes their behavior repetitive and recurrent. Initially, flow theory was commonly applied in teaching and leisure entertainment, but in recent years it has also been used to explain internet user behavior. Scholar M.H. Huang believes that flow experience plays an important role in understanding online users' information behavior [16]. Research on flow experience in the information age context is related to many activities; for example, in e-commerce and information systems, some scholars have confirmed that good flow experience can attract users and positively influence their attitudes and behaviors [17]. Y.P. Chang et al. empirically confirmed that flow experience significantly influences Chinese social media users' continued usage intention [18]. Jing Juanjuan pointed out that individuals experience euphoria and flow in activities such as social media, information retrieval, and online shopping, which is significant for improving their psychological well-being and satisfaction [19].

As a tool for information transmission via the internet, social media is not only highly recreational and entertaining but also rich in information. Therefore, users experience a sense of immersion when using social media, and flow theory can explain users' behavior of switching social media service providers from the perspective of entertainment and leisure. Thus, flow theory can provide theoretical support for analyzing the influencing factors of social media switching behavior.

2.4 Information Systems Success Model

After systematically and thoroughly analyzing relevant research literature and materials, W.H. DeLone and E.R. McLean proposed the Information Systems Success Model and six influencing factors—information quality, system quality, use, user satisfaction, individual impact, and organizational impact—to measure the benefits an information system can bring to users [20]. With the development of the times, in 2003, DeLone and McLean added "service quality" as an influencing factor to the model. Based on defects discovered during practical application, they replaced the difficult-to-measure factor "use" with "intention to use" in the improved new model, and substituted "net benefits" for "individual impact" and "organizational impact" in the old model [20], as shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

During social media usage, different social media platforms have different positioning, provide different services, and have different service levels, resulting in varying attractiveness to users. Therefore, this study considers social media as a holistic influencing factor and combines it with the DeLone and McLean Information Systems Success Model to construct the final influencing factor model. The model description shows that information system quality, service quality, and information quality have direct or indirect impacts on user satisfaction and usage intention. Therefore, this study can measure the quality and character-

istics of different social media from three aspects: system quality, information quality, and service quality.

3. Research Hypotheses and Conceptual Model

3.1 Research Hypotheses on Influencing Factors of Social Media Switching Behavior

3.1.1 Influence of Social Media System Quality on User Satisfaction Social media system quality mainly refers to the functions and characteristics of social media, such as display interface, response speed, and system fluency. Based on existing research, this study measures system quality from three aspects: interface friendliness, security, and response speed [21]. Interface friendliness means the user interface displays functions and prompts that are easy to operate; security means the application system can run correctly, safely, and stably; response speed refers to the speed at which the application responds to and provides feedback on user operations. According to the Information Systems Success Model, system quality has a direct impact on user satisfaction [20]. Li Qian and Hou Bimei believe that mobile social network system quality positively influences user satisfaction [22]. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that social media system quality has a positive impact on user satisfaction with social media usage.

3.1.2 Influence of Social Media Information Quality on User Satisfaction Social media information quality mainly refers to the quality of information disseminated and provided by social media, such as whether the information is correct, safe, and reliable. This study measures information quality from three aspects: timeliness, reliability, and comprehensiveness [18]. Timeliness refers to the speed at which social media updates information; reliability refers to the authenticity and credibility of information disseminated through social media; comprehensiveness refers to the degree to which comprehensive information can be obtained through social media. Y.L. Wu et al. believe that higher social media quality positively influences higher user satisfaction [23]. Li Qian and Hou Bimei believe that mobile social network information quality positively influences user satisfaction [22]. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that social media information quality has a positive impact on user satisfaction with social media usage.

3.1.3 Influence of Social Media Service Quality on User Satisfaction Social media service quality mainly refers to the quality of various services provided by social media to users. This study measures service quality from two aspects: personalization and interactivity [21]. Personalization means social media can provide services that meet users' individual needs; interactivity means users' opinions or suggestions can receive feedback, and social media can provide certain two-way communication channels. Y. Liu et al. propose that the service quality of social websites has a positive impact on user satisfaction [24]. Zhao

Ying et al. believe that social media service quality positively influences user satisfaction [25]. Based on these research results, it can be hypothesized that social media service quality has a positive impact on user satisfaction with social media usage.

3.1.4 Influence of Flow Experience on User Satisfaction Flow experience affects social media users' attitudes, including positive or negative emotional feelings generated after using social media. Good flow experience can create strong emotional responses in users, such as increased happiness and satisfaction. Existing research on online learning, mobile social networking sites, and network interactive services has shown that flow experience can bring users strong feelings of happiness and satisfaction [26]. Zhang Song et al. pointed out that flow experience positively influences user satisfaction with and emotional commitment to SNS websites [17]. Liu Xiao also noted that flow experience has a positive impact on user satisfaction [21]. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that flow experience has a positive impact on user satisfaction with social media usage.

3.1.5 Influence of User Satisfaction on Social Media Switching Behavior User satisfaction with social media usage refers to users' degree of satisfaction during social media usage. According to Expectation-Confirmation Theory, when users are satisfied with a product, they are likely to continue using it, and the positive significant relationship between user satisfaction and continued usage intention has been widely confirmed. Foreign scholar K.Z.K. Zhang et al. proposed that bloggers' satisfaction with their current social blogging service negatively influences their intention to switch blogging services [27]. Y. Liu et al. proposed that satisfaction with current social network games negatively influences user switching behavior [24]. Domestic scholars Chen Hao et al. proposed that satisfaction positively influences users' continued usage intention [28]. Zhao Ying confirmed through research that college students' satisfaction with social media positively and significantly influences their continued usage intention [25]. Based on these research results, it can be hypothesized that user satisfaction with social media usage has a negative impact on social media switching behavior.

3.2 Social Media Switching Behavior Influencing Factors Model

Based on existing models and relevant theories, this study constructs a theoretical model of social media switching behavior influencing factors that includes four exogenous latent variables and two endogenous latent variables, as shown in Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]. The exogenous latent variables are social media system quality, information quality, service quality, and flow experience. The endogenous latent variables are user satisfaction with social media usage (also a mediating variable) and social media switching behavior.

3.3 Survey Questionnaire Design

To ensure the credibility of the empirical research results, this study designed a questionnaire on social media switching behavior influencing factors based on the research results of Zheng Junjun et al. [29] and Zhang Shuchang et al. [30], as shown in Table 1 (basic sample information items are omitted due to space limitations). The questionnaire consists of two parts: the first part includes 5 questions on basic sample information for sample screening and analysis; the second part includes variable items. There are 6 variables in this study, with 3-4 questions designed for each variable, totaling 20 questions. The items use a 7-point Likert scale, with each item consisting of a set of statements rated from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Before large-scale distribution, the authors conducted a small-sample pre-test to revise problems in the questionnaire, such as difficult technical terms, ambiguous item expressions, and low discriminability of item options, before finally distributing the questionnaire to a large user group.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Sample and Method Selection

This study aims to investigate the influencing factors of social media users' switching behavior. According to the "Statistical Report on Internet Development in China" released by CNNIC, the student group accounts for the highest proportion of netizens compared to other groups [1]. According to the "2017 China Social Media Impact Report," social media users aged 20-29 have a usage rate as high as 77.3%, ranking first among all age groups [31]. This study selected college students and postgraduates as the sample population because their age distribution aligns with the age distribution of users with the highest social media usage rate. The descriptive statistical results of the survey sample (see Table 2) show that over 80% of respondents are aged 20-25, making the sample representative. Moreover, most respondents use social media for more than 3 hours daily, which is close to the national average of 3.8 hours per day, and 91% have used social media for more than two years. In summary, the surveyed sample has extensive experience with social media usage, ensuring the scientific validity of the research results to a certain extent, while the respondents also have distinct representativeness.

4.2 Reliability and Validity Testing

To analyze the reliability of the sample data obtained from the questionnaire, the authors conducted reliability and validity tests using SPSS 22.0. The factor analysis results for social media switching behavior influencing factors indicate that the data are suitable for factor analysis overall (see Table 3). The Bartlett's test of sphericity statistic shows a significant probability (Sig) of 0.000, indicating strong correlations among variables and suitability for factor analysis. Subsequently, Cronbach's α consistency coefficients were calculated for internal

consistency reliability analysis of each factor (see Table 4). The Cronbach's α coefficients for all dimensions are above 0.7, indicating internal consistency.

4.3 Confirmatory Factor and Model Testing

Confirmatory factor analysis is a process of testing whether the theoretical model is consistent with empirical data, i.e., the degree of internal fit between the model and data, which reveals the validity and applicability of the theoretical model. This study used AMOS 17.0 and SPSS 22.0 software to conduct confirmatory factor analysis through structural equation modeling. Structural equation modeling was chosen because it is a confirmatory analysis method, and previous domestic and foreign studies on similar issues have tended to use quantitative research methods such as questionnaire surveys, structural equation modeling, and regression analysis. Therefore, using structural equation modeling to verify the theoretical model is reasonable. After calculation, items with factor loadings below 0.6 were deleted, reducing the number of measurement items from 25 to 20. The modified indicators are shown in Table 5 .

The model fit was tested using various indicators including chi-square/df ratio, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and incremental fit indices (NFI, CFI). The square roots of AVE for all variables are greater than their corresponding correlation coefficients, indicating good discriminant validity of the model and that the observed values can be distinguished. Overall, all indicators meet the standards, indicating good model fit. The final accepted model test results are shown in Table 6 , discriminant validity is shown in Table 7 , and standardized coefficients are shown in Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper].

4.4 Parameter Estimation and Hypothesis Testing

This study used the maximum likelihood method to estimate the path coefficients between factors (see Table 8). The C.R. values (critical ratios, i.e., t-test values) all have absolute values greater than 1.96, and P-value tests at the 5% error level show statistical significance among all factors. Therefore, based on the results in Table 8, the model passes the hypothesis tests.

4.5 Discussion and Analysis

The data results show that hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 are all supported by data and thus hold. The results indicate that the effect sizes of exogenous latent variables on social media user switching behavior, in descending order, are: flow experience ($\beta = 0.283$), social media service quality ($\beta = 0.251$), social media system quality ($\beta = 0.236$), and social media information quality ($\beta = 0.233$). The endogenous latent variable, user satisfaction with social media usage (β = -0.255), negatively influences switching behavior.

4.5.1 Influence of Flow Experience on User Satisfaction The standardized estimate of flow experience on user satisfaction is 0.283 (P = 0.005), indicating that flow experience positively influences satisfaction and indirectly affects user switching behavior. This hypothesis is consistent with previous research. For example, Xue Yang et al. noted that flow experience positively influences user satisfaction with and emotional commitment to social websites [32]. The innovation of this study lies in that while previous research generally treated flow experience as a mediating variable emphasizing its intermediary role, this study attempts to treat it as an exogenous variable to explore its influence on other endogenous variables, ultimately verifying its significant effect through empirical data. Thus, flow experience directly affects social media users' attitudes, and good flow experience creates strong emotional responses such as increased happiness and satisfaction, leading to continuous and repeated usage behavior rather than switching to other similar or functionally equivalent social media.

As mentioned, the distinctive feature of social media is its entertainment and leisure nature. Due to this characteristic, users pay more attention to whether they feel relaxed, happy, and immersed when using social media. Therefore, social media operators and service providers need to increase investment in functions and services from multiple perspectives, such as enhancing the entertainment value and functional uniqueness of products or services, to improve user experience from various angles, encourage users to achieve flow experiences, and thereby reduce switching behavior.

4.5.2 Influence of Social Media Service Quality on User Satisfaction The standardized estimate of social media service quality on user satisfaction is 0.251 (P = 0.010), indicating that service quality positively influences satisfaction and indirectly affects user switching behavior. This hypothesis also supports previous research. For example, Zhao Ying et al. verified through empirical research the positive influence of social media service quality on user satisfaction [25]. However, due to different survey samples, among the three influencing factors of system, information, and service quality, this study shows that service quality has the most significant effect, whereas in previous research, service quality had the least significant effect while information quality had the most. This demonstrates that the effect of influencing factors varies across different research groups, providing reference for future research.

This study measures service quality from two aspects: personalization and interactivity. The higher the service quality that social media can provide, the less user switching behavior will occur, and the stronger users' continued usage intention will be. With the development of network technology and the popularization of mobile terminals, users' interactive intentions have increased, and they are more inclined to showcase themselves, share and receive information through social media. The personalized and interactive services that social media operators can provide can precisely meet users' psychological needs. Therefore, to reduce user switching behavior and enhance users' continued usage intention,

operators and service providers need to improve social media service quality from both interactivity and personalization perspectives, incorporating emerging technologies such as VR and AR functions to enhance user interaction, and analyzing users' behavioral preferences based on their historical usage data to develop personalized services and functions for different users.

4.5.3 Influence of Social Media System Quality on User Satisfaction The standardized estimate of social media system quality on user satisfaction is 0.236 (P = 0.029), indicating that system quality has a positive influence on satisfaction and indirectly affects user switching behavior. Social media system quality mainly includes three aspects: interface friendliness, security, and response speed. A simple and easy-to-operate interface, a safe and stable operating system, and fast response speed can significantly increase user satisfaction when using social media, leading to continuous and repeated usage behavior. This hypothesis also supports previous research. For example, Li Qian et al. believed that mobile social network system quality positively influences user satisfaction, but in these studies, system quality not only directly affects user satisfaction but also indirectly affects continued usage intention by influencing the degree of motivation fulfillment [22].

Thus, to improve user satisfaction, social media operators need to continuously improve both hardware and software, develop functions that meet users' individual needs while ensuring system security, and simplify operation interfaces. Specifically, they can obtain user needs through online and offline surveys, interviews, and pre-tests, and design and develop system functions according to users' habits and needs to make social media software simple and convenient to operate.

4.5.4 Influence of Social Media Information Quality on User Satisfaction The standardized estimate of social media information quality on user satisfaction is 0.233 (P = 0.042), indicating that information quality has a positive influence on satisfaction and indirectly affects user switching behavior. This study measures information quality from three aspects: timeliness, reliability, and comprehensiveness. Social media has both entertainment and information-sharing functions, and obtaining and sharing information through social media is an important characteristic of user behavior in the internet environment. When social media cannot provide timely information or provides false or non-user-needed information, user satisfaction will inevitably be affected. As mentioned in previous research, higher social media quality positively influences higher user satisfaction [30]. Unlike previous research, this study adds comprehensiveness as a measurement element when measuring social media information quality, considering the changes in information dissemination methods in the big data era, making the measurement of information quality more in line with contemporary development.

In the era of rapid information technology development, the internet is flooded

with large amounts of mixed-quality information. When users expect to obtain information through social media, false and irrelevant information will inevitably affect their satisfaction. This requires operators to improve information retrieval algorithms, screening conditions, and feedback mechanisms to filter and screen information from the platform or system backend before it is delivered to users, thereby improving information quality. At the same time, they need to continuously update the backend push system, incorporate technologies such as hot topic analysis and capture, and timely capture trending topics to provide users with real-time information.

4.5.5 Influence of User Satisfaction on Social Media Switching Behavior The standardized estimate of user satisfaction on switching behavior is -0.255 (P = 0.001), indicating that satisfaction has a negative influence on switching behavior, and this influence is not indirect. This is consistent with conclusions from many previous studies. For example, in the marketing field, the impact of satisfaction and dissatisfaction on user switching behavior has long been widely confirmed; lower satisfaction leads to user switching behavior. Y. Chen et al. treated satisfaction as an important factor influencing user network switching behavior in their research [33]. Previous studies have analyzed not only the impact of satisfaction on user switching behavior but also the role of other factors such as switching costs, which is worth considering and referencing for model improvement in future research.

Therefore, satisfaction is an important factor affecting user switching behavior. In the era of rapid internet technology development and updates, various social media software emerge endlessly and are constantly being improved and updated. If social media operators and service providers want to increase user stickiness, improve user loyalty, and even attract more users, they need to continuously improve and perfect their software or platforms to enhance user experience and increase user satisfaction.

5. Research Conclusions

At the theoretical level, this study constructs a theoretical model of influencing factors on social media users' switching behavior based on Expectation-Confirmation Theory and Flow Theory, combined with the Information Systems Success Model, and analyzes the factors influencing social media users' switching behavior. Based on the Information Systems Success Model, this study adds flow experience as an exogenous variable. Moreover, in previous research, the Information Systems Success Model was often used for positive testing of satisfaction. This model adds switching behavior as a dependent variable based on this foundation, which is somewhat innovative. The direct influence of social media system quality, information quality, service quality, and flow experience on user satisfaction, their indirect influence on switching behavior, and the influence and mechanism of user satisfaction on switching behavior provide new ideas and references for related research.

At the practical level, this study selects college students—the main representative users of social media—as the research sample, and the conclusions provide valuable references for the improvement and upgrading of social media operators and service providers. The data analysis results show that the factors influencing user switching behavior, in descending order of effect size, are user satisfaction, flow experience, social media service quality, system quality, and information quality. Among them, satisfaction has a direct and negative influence on switching behavior. Additionally, this study finds that for different research groups, the effect of each influencing factor varies. That is, among the three influencing factors of system, information, and service quality, this study shows that service quality has the most significant effect, whereas in previous research, service quality had the least significant effect while information quality had the most. Therefore, when social media operators and service providers attempt to reduce user switching behavior, they should first consider the role of satisfaction, followed by how to drive users to generate flow experience. When improving social media performance itself, the quality factors to focus on should vary for different user groups.

This study has limitations. The sample population mainly consists of college students, and they have long daily usage time and usage history with social media. Other occupational groups and users with relatively less usage time were not considered, which may cause certain biases in the analysis of influencing factors. Future research will expand the scope of survey respondents and conduct comparative analyses of influencing factors across different user groups.

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Author Contributions

Jia Ruonan: Responsible for paper writing, revision, and data collection;
Wang Xiwei: Proposed research proposition and ideas, wrote and revised the final version of the paper;
Wang Lei: Responsible for English literature collection and abstract translation;
Wei Yanan: Responsible for article proofreading.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.