Factors Influencing the Adoption of Social Networking Sites: Malaysian Muslim Users Perspective

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Abstract—For social, emotional and cognitive development of the human being, Social Networking Sites (SNSs) provide an important milieu that eventually leads the human experience to the new era. Malaysia is one of the top countries where social networking sites are adopted faster. The purpose of this study is to determine the factors influencing the Malaysian Muslim users to adopt social networking sites. It will justify the social, educational, technological and other factors behind the adoption of social networking sites like Facebook, twitter and MySpace. The paper is conceptual in nature and proposes that a future research can be conducted with the Structural Equation modeling approach to sort out the significance and the relative importance of these factors behind the Muslim users' adoption of social networking sites in Malaysia.

Index Terms—Adoption, factors, Muslim users, Malaysia, social networking sites (SNSs).

I. INTRODUCTION

In this new era, social networking sites have achieved a dominant breakthrough. Millions of people are now attached with this and both online and conventional activities result the expanded platform that affects conventional way of thinking [1]. Social network can be defined as profile based podium which allows users and it involves visiting, viewing and interacting the viewpoints and opinions between and among the members through social and personal encounters. On these persons can be searched based on keyboard descriptions in order to communicate and interact and at the same time social phenomena can be discovered [2].

As a whole, social networking sites provide the opportunities to the individuals so that they may represent themselves, they can manage and articulate their own virtual world through their own page. Though the response to the popularity of SNS is great in business and social interactions, it is little bit slower in the academic world where concentration of versatile applications is necessary [3].

Many people are using the latest media technology; SNSs in particular are to fulfill their psychological and social needs. The use of SNSs is extended even to the educational and even religious purpose while the importance of SNSs has also risen for its effectiveness in communicating commercial items. This form of social interaction or communication has become increasingly common in our daily lives [4]. It has become a new culture for people to use Social Networks to update their status, upload new photos or/and video. Social

Networking is becoming part of our routine activity. This new culture or lifestyle is easily accepted by the Muslim users' particularly Muslim teenagers who have been exposed to the ICT and computers from their early years [5]. There are many studies that have been undertaken on the usage of social networking sites, eliciting people's perception on its security and features [6].

However, little study has been conducted on the factors behind the SNS's use particularly among the Muslim users. It is to be noted that Muslim users are not hypothetical to be similar to others due to their spiritual and social identity whereas identifying their motives behind the adoption of SNSs is crucial and supposed to be unique. Considering all the above factors, the study can be effective to explore the underlying causes that influence the Malaysian Muslim users to adopt the social networking sites and to assist the key role players in developing the policy on the use of social networking sites among the Muslim users.

Social networking sites have become part and parcel of the daily life not only for the adults but also for the teenagers. They are adopting the SNSs even more strongly [7]. Eliciting the motive behind this adoption, therefore, can be treated as a significant study. In addition, Muslim social networking users, particularly teenagers are the future leader of the society often erroneous in their choice which may eventually causes the significant loss for them, their family and the society as a whole. Figuring out the factors and nature of usage may assist the key role players to take motivational or corrective measures regarding the usage of social networking sites [3], [8]. The research may provide many sub areas or a potential platform to study Malaysian Muslim users and their adoption with SNSs as little or no study has been done on this issue.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social networking has become leading event in the online world within last few years. Distinctive virtual community sites such as Facebook and twitter originate from SNS. These sites are the most famous in the world of social networking and blogging. In addition, each month around 50 to 70 million active users attach with Facebook and twitter. Previously, social networking sites focused on the interactions between college students and faculty members; then it involved other social groups like high schools, companies and varied geographic groups [1], [9].

In order to design the profile with distinct page of the users by themselves, social networking sites such as Facebook uses "type oneself into being" formula. In the aspects of applications and functions like incorporating information and

communication tools such as blogging, mobile connectivity as well as photo and video sharing, wikis and chatting, social networking sites may vary.

An interesting fact is found that an average individual user spends around 20 minutes daily with the social networking sites such as Facebook where two third of its users at least open their accounts once in a day. MySpace was the highest used networking sites until the dominance introduction of Facebook which is highly innovative and involves the users to connect with the network with specific e-mail address. In 2007 Facebook crosses the record of MySpace by having 20 million members and 1.6 billion page views every day. In 2008, Facebook has become the fastest growing social networking site with a growth rate of 150% from June, 2007 to June, 2008 [5], [10].

A. Demographic and Socioeconomic Factors as the Key Element of SNSs

In the use of computer and internet, demographic and socioeconomic divergences are crucial as the ability to use these technologies has become progressively more critical concern to economic success [11]. There are varieties of reasons for which people use Internet and they use it in different ways. In different types of communities of any society, the viewpoints of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are vastly different [12]. More often, internet use is culture and religion specific [13], [6].

According to the findings of several researches, Internet use can be categorized into three kinds like social, leisure and academic[10]. It is found by many studies that, age is the most significant factor that effects on Internet use [9]. For example, while using Internet, young generation and old generation have different objectives. Browsing entertaining things, playing games, chatting etc. are the main scopes where young generation spends their time on Internet.

On the other hand, older generation of Internet users mostly shop online, send and receive e-mails, search health tips etc. [2]. It is mentioned in many studies that, young people use internet and Social Networking Sites (SNS) more often than older people. One survey on this topic is done by Thompson Teo. It is found that, in terms of certain activities like browsing, messaging, downloading and purchasing, age is related to the use of internet. The result conveys that, in terms of downloading and messaging activities, age is negatively correlated and it is positively correlated with purchasing activities. Therefore it is clear that though younger people use internet more but the older people possess greater purchasing power [4].

B. Social Information Sharing in SNSs

Social networking sites or SNSs have become part and parcel of the daily life for most of the internet users. As the name describes, SNSs allow the individual to become visible in online and get the social interaction. It becomes so popular that almost four out of five internet users have the SNSs account worldwide. With the high internet literacy rate, Malaysia is very much part of this growing trend. Interestingly, 60 percent of these users are young stars age ranges from 13 to 25 (alexa.com).

The Internet is the entrance to the Social Networking Sites.

It is increasingly being used and has become a must for most people around the world. Besides being a source of information, internet is treated as an effective source of communication and social interaction. Previously, people were using emails, chats room, forums and instant messaging to communicate in the cyber world [3]. Since the introduction of web 2.0 technologies, communication via internet turned into a new shape. Web 2.0 is associated with the application like social media and being referred to second generation of web development which eventually offers a modern social platform that deals with interactive elements for users of mass participation.

With the most common social media such as Facebook twitter and YouTube, users become used to form new sorts of interactive, mass and interpersonal communication like virtual group and chat group in workplace and online communities. SNSs lead the recent change of human experience and become a cue for emotional, social and cognitive development particularly for the teenagers, consuming large portion of their time [2]. Communication and interaction may now take place through the Internet in a virtual world or cyberspace without having to face each other at the same place and same time.

Nevertheless, only few SNSs that are globally accepted by most people. Most of the social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace, Friendster, YouTube and twitter allow the individual to form a member based online communication. They can post their profile information like photograph, user name and allow communicating in innovative ways like convey private and public messages and sharing photo online [11].

C. Technological Advancement behind the Adoption of SNSs

Technological advancement in the Information and Communication (ICT) make it possible for people to interact virtually [14]. Part of this study is to substantiate that ICT is one of the many factors that has influenced teenagers' adoption of Social Networking. Millions of teenagers worldwide are using Social Networking daily. There are thousands of Social Networking Sites available in many countries with different languages for various purposes [7].

The newer advanced technologies include Smart mobile phone and the broadband Internet. This technological advancement has indirectly revolutionized teenagers' daily activities, pattern of the interaction, their behavior and life style. Researches proved that teenagers prefer using SMS, MMS, email and Social Networking Sites to communicate with their friends, family and teachers Teenagers are the most active users of mobile phone and the broadband Internet [15].

They are spending more of their time and money on mobile phone and the broadband Internet. The fact that technology is becoming more readily available at a lower cost has given more options and alternatives for teenagers to carry out their lives and daily activities using the latest state of the art technologies such as Social Networking Sites, SNSs [7].

D. Knowledge Allocation with SNSs

Apart from the social and technological factors, users are more often use social networking sites for learning and

sharing the idea and knowledge. Many of them use you tube to download the educational video while some of them create unique Facebook group or become a member to enhance their boundary of the knowledge [16]. Therefore the research will justify the constituting factors like social, technological and educational motive behind the adoption of social networking sites among the Malaysian Muslim users. Further SNSs such as Facebook is widely used to discover and to gain information according to individuals' needs.

A case study discovers a fact that Facebook can substitute classic search engines in the case of acquiring required information. Moreover it explains how the users of Facebook experience the environment where they participate to collaborate in order to get the needed information. Here the information is not limited within the circle of web rather it may come from referrals of personal experiences and print sources [17].

As SNSs share social information it is treated as a source of both education and entertainment because it is fundamentally designed to entertain and educate the users. Social networks are now very popular infrastructures for the purposes of information sharing, interaction and communication over the internet. User to user communication and event organization are possible on these social networking sites [18]. Recently in order to defend cyber-attack, vast applications with great security and advanced performance are added such as spam e-mail, internet search etc. Confirming reliability and trust is very crucial in interactive and worth relationship with friends and family at every single time. SNSs represent a movement towards search engine.

E. SNSs as a Media of Product/Brand Communication

SNSs have gained immense commercial importance in the area of business communication. For an instance, Facebook has the present value of $85 billion and it expects to earn more than $22 billion of revenue and $234 billion of market value within 2015, it has become the market leader not only in the world of social media but also in overall market arena [19]. SNSs users do not need to pay to use or register their accounts; therefore, it is totally free of cost for general users.

Consequently SNSs users do no need to bear any economic lose. It is just like broadcast television, but on SNSs such as Facebook or twitter commercials are like banner and targeted ads. Additionally it provides good options to sale many virtual products and games. Cakes and champagne like virtual products are available here on this site and in 2010 overall sales of virtual knick-knacks was up to $1.6 billion [20]. SNSs can be defined as an innovative institution to utilize its users as social capital. SNSs always encourage using their original name and actual information rather than any kind of ambiguity. Here on this site, advertisers can get their target customers by analyzing their actual profiles. By acquiring the information of users' lives and their friends and family affiliation, companies can customize or segment their required groups for the appropriate offers. SNSs provide an immense prospect to the commercial entities to learn about the exact demographic features and also the accurate social ties and the networks they belong to, such as family, co-workers, class mates, peers. It gives worth information to

the business companies automatically as the users of Facebook gain information from various sources.

Advertisers are attracted to display their ads on the site as the number of SNSs users are increasing. For an instance, Interactive advertising bureau mentions that the number of Facebook users is greater than any of TV networks in the world [11], [21]. This site has become very important for the advertisers because it provides true information of demographic characteristics of users and these characteristics may include the information of age, gender, interests and purchase preferences etc. Commercial users and advertisers find SNSs as very professional on the issues of their interest. A marketing researcher agency Neilsen has joined with this, in order to evaluate the impact of social networking on the issue like brand awareness [22]. According to the discovery of Neilsen, Facebook users, for example, are 30 percent more likely to know, comment or share the advertisers' message if they find any of their friends like it or comment on it.

Companies get a generous opportunity by SNSs fan page to attach with the target users. Fan page has become so popular that many people now prefer to migrate from the main brand website to SNSs fan sites [17]. In these days, e-mail and text message from advertisers are not comfortable to the individuals and they treat these as a kind of interruption [23]. Under this consideration, SNSs have become very strategic as they allow users to prefer or dislike certain ads and learn the reasons of their disliking. By maintaining the interests of both users and advertisers, SNSs have become very proactive [24]. It means that, advertisers can customize their ads based on the choice criteria of users as SNSs follow the customer interest regarding specific commercials.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

From the above discussed literature, it is to be noted that there are several factors that may cause the adoption of social networking sites such as social, technological, informational and even educational factors particularly among the Muslim users in Malaysia. As Malaysia is a multiracial country, underlying caused for this adoption may not be same for the specific race of the country. The paper is conceptual in nature where possible causes is underlined behind the adoption of social networking sites while a future research can be done in empirical manner taking different races as the moderating variables.
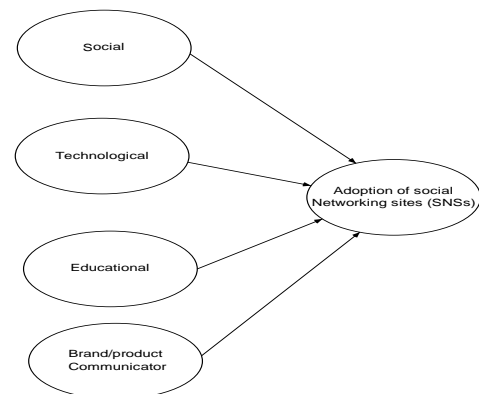

Fig. 1. Conceptual model on factors influencing the adoption social networking sites.

IV. CONCLUSION AND DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE RESEARCH

From the above discussed literature, it is to be noted that there are several factors that may cause the adoption of social networking sites such as social, technological, informational and even educational factors particularly among the Muslim users in Malaysia. As Malaysia is a multiracial country, underlying caused for this adoption may not be same for the specific race of the country. The paper is conceptual in nature where possible causes is underlined behind the adoption of social networking sites while a future research can be done in empirical manner taking different races as the moderating variables.

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