

# Credibility and Privacy Issues in Social Networking Use Among Saudi Young People

Khulood Miliany

King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia.

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received: 26 April 2017;

Received in revised form:

12 July 2017;

Accepted: 24 July 2017;

### Keywords

Social Networks,

Credibility,

Privacy.

## ABSTRACT

Information on social media platforms suffers from a relative lack of professional gatekeepers to monitor content. Therefore, credibility and privacy on social media platform has become important issues for today information consumers. This study aims at exploring Saudi Youths' trends toward some social networking issues which are credibility, and privacy and how their awareness of these controversial issues affect their use of social media. The study is based on a survey with a sample size of 300 young people from Saudi university. The findings indicate that Saudi students reported that the information found on social network sites are not credible, and they are worried about their privacy when using any social network sites.

© 2017 Elixir All rights reserved.

## Introduction

The use of the internet and subsequently social media has become widely recognized by people of all ages and geographical dispensations [1]. Statistics indicate that "Face book" site ranks first among social networking sites, as it is used by more than 500 million visitors worldwide. 18-29 year olds continue to represent the bulk of social media users, these data highlight how social media platforms like Twitter and Face book are becoming more diverse and more mainstream. Fully 93% of people who do have an online profile are on Face book. MySpace continues to lose, with only 23% of the surveyed users being there. Twitter users are up, but still only account for 11% of online profile.

According to Arab Media Social Report (2012) the number of Facebook users in the Arab world has approximately tripled in the last 2 years, increasing from 16 million users to 45 million users. Youth (between the ages of 15 and 29) continue to make up around 70% of Facebook users in the Arab region, a number that has been holding steady since April 2011. Saudi Arabia makes up 50% of Facebook users in the Gulf region and Saudi Arabia consider the country with the highest number of active Twitter users, accounting for over 40% of all active Twitter users in the Arab region. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ranks among countries with the highest digital media usage rates. For instance, it has over three million Twitter users and records a 300% growth rate, making it the fastest growing Twitter country in the world [2]. The percentage of active users is at 57% of adult citizens, with the youth and young people being the most active [3]. Social media is an important part of young people's everyday life in several countries including Saudi Arabia, where they become the absorbers of information, as well as the creators, gatekeepers, and disseminators of messages. Therefore, as a platform, it offers multiple motives for use and diverse prospects for gratifications. However, on social networking sites, Arab youngsters often encounter the conundrum of upholding their

traditional Arab and Muslim culture, and espousing new alternative cultures and values that result in inconsistent influences on their identity and self-perception.

Although Saudi young people may be using the social media actively for several motives ranging from information seeking, social interaction and entertainment. Information seeking, still there are voices that are against the intensive use of this new media particularly as a source of news and at the same time express concern regarding some important issues as credibility, and penetrating privacy. Therefore, this study aims at exploring Saudi Youths' trends toward some social networking issues which are credibility, privacy and how their awareness of these controversial issues affects their use of social media.

## Credibility of social media

Credibility is defined as a facility for inspiring or instilling belief [4]. Believability is a factor in the credibility of a source or medium. The assessment of credibility in the online environment is often much more complex than in previous media contexts due to "the multiplicity of sources embedded in the numerous layers of online dissemination of content" [5]. Discussion on credibility has focused on three perspectives of communication: medium credibility, message/content credibility, and source credibility [6].

Medium credibility is the perceived level of credibility that individual users have of a specific medium, such as newspapers, television, the Internet, or blogs [7]. Message credibility, on the other hand, is the perceived credibility of the communicated message itself, such as informational quality, accuracy, or currency [8]. Source credibility is seen as the expertise or trustworthiness of the source as the likelihood to provide credible information [9]. Media credibility discussions have focused largely on source. [10] define social media credibility as the aspect of information credibility that can be assessed using only the information available in a social media platform.

In social media, the credibility of the source has a great effect on the process of acquiring the content and changing audience attitudes and beliefs. Therefore, concerns and scepticism have been raised on the credibility of social media and online news content because of the questions of professionalism, anonymity of sender location, etc. [11] [12] [13]. [14] suggest, social media are gaining prominence as an information source in disaster and risk time even though the accuracy of the information shared through these channel is often unclear. This makes it imperative to learn more about how people evaluate the information they consume on social media websites, especially judgments of the credibility of this information.

### **Privacy issues**

The rapid growth of contemporary SNSs has coincided with an increasing concern over personal privacy. Privacy is an important issue for the users of online social network [15]. Many studies have concluded that the awareness level of privacy concerns is very important determinant of online practices and behavior [16] [17] [18] [19] [20] [21]. Social networking sites and associated privacy concerns is one of the most debated topic nowadays as participation in such sites has increased dramatically. A number of journals and articles come up with this issue that how the increase in the usage of social networking sites is leading to various online crimes. The social media user privacy has become a more vital issue in recent times. According to ECAR Research, youth are likely to share their personal information. Like qualification, working place, full name, date of birth, e-mail, etc. through SNS. The research discovered that most of the respondents put the restriction to their profile, which proposes that they are showing worry about their privacy and security. Also, A 2013 Pew study found that 50 percent of Internet users were worried about the information available about them online, compared to 30 percent in 2009 [22].

Early research studies found that SNS users individual information privacy concerns to be a major route of their willingness to disclose their own information on the Internet (Son, and Kim, 2008) Some people with a high importance for information privacy defend their privacy by answering adversely to organization's information behavior when they think their privacy rights are threatened [23].

Privacy in Arab region paying particular attention to the role of Islam and cultural traditions in constructing norms around privacy. Studies also have found that culture has a huge impact on online privacy concerns, the pattern of use of social networks, and the SNS privacy policies. Most cultural privacy research focuses on Western cultures, with minimal research done with Middle Eastern cultures. In this work, we are interested in how users of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia manage their privacy in an application that provides simplified coarse grain privacy controls to users.

### **Research objectives**

The most important objectives of this study can be summarized as follows:

1. Identify how Saudi young people are surfing social networking sites and the existence of substantial differences between males and females in this regard.
2. Clarify how the major motives underlying Saudi youth use of social networks? use.

3. Identify the role of culture to demonstrate how social networks is being utilized in Saudi Arabia that has a high rate of social media penetration
4. Understand trends of Saudi young people toward some important issues such as credibility, and penetration of privacy.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher senses the problem and came up with this study, so the problem can be crystallized by following questions:

1. To what extent do Saudi youth use social networks and are there substantial differences between them according to gender?
2. What is the major motives underlying Saudi youth use of social networks? use?
3. What is the role of culture to demonstrate how social networks is being utilized in Saudi Arabia that has a high rate of social media penetration.?
4. What are their trends or attitudes in relation to issues as credibility of social media, and privacy? and how it reflects on their use of social media?

### **Methodology and samples**

This study adopted survey method of research. Public university in Jeddah were randomly selected for study. The choice of the university was informed by convenience of access to young people who are conversant with social media, most of whom are found in tertiary institutions like university. The instrument for collecting data is a close-ended questionnaire. A cluster sampling methodology was used, with stratification according to gender. A total of 400 university students who were enrolled in general education courses to guarantee a sample representing a diverse body of students from different fields. Sampled courses included Introduction to communication, Introduction to sociology, Principles of Psychology, and similarly broad classes.

The respondents comprise 59% females and 41% males. In addition, 41.3% of the respondents were between the ages of 16 and 19 years, while 58.4% were between 20 and 22 years.

### **Results and discussion**

The data analysis of the responses resulted in the emergence of number of categories. These are: usage of social networking sites among Saudi young people, credibility of social networks, privacy concerns in of social networks.

Usage of social networking sites among Saudi young people

The study showed that Female students use the social media (95.2%) more than males (93%). This could be due to the nature of the Arabic societies and particularly in Saudi Arabia, where female's activities outside the family home are minimalistic. The study confirmed the intensive use of social media among Saudi young people. More than half of the respondents use the social networks on daily basis (52.2%), Most of them use it more than once throughout the day while 18.8% access it once a day, compared with (7.2%) access it only once a week. The study also founds that Twitter ranked first (75.7 %) among social networking which Saudi young people prefer, followed by the Facebook by 17 %.

This result is consistent with the results of previous studies that confirmed the results of June [24] that youth spend a considerable portion of their day today life interacting through social media.

We also discovered that most respondents (58%) use social networks for both information and interaction. The social networks are multi-purpose in use. Thus, in the process of interaction, information is shared and news spread.

The reasons given by respondents for their choice of social networks as a primary source of information include convenience and the fact that being connected to a social network through handy devices such as smart phones and modems as top reasons. However, the traditional media are used as a way of crosschecking information gotten on the social media. This means that even though the use of the social media has been primarily adopted by youths as a way of getting information, the significance of traditional media has only slightly diminished and the traditional media still holds its position as a credible way of getting information.

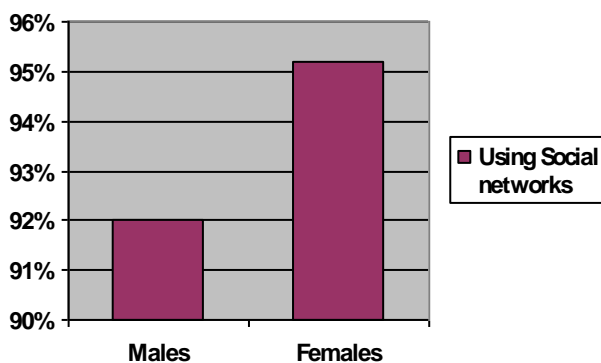


Figure 1. The use Social Networks.

#### Motives for social networks use

This study establishes that Entertainment was the primary motive for using social networks by both genders (76.88%) in Saudi Arabia, followed by Information Seeking for females and Social Connection for males. The motive of Self-Presentation was the least important for males and second least important for females.

Perhaps a partial explanation for this prioritization is twofold, both elements of which relate to the interaction between culture and the local media ecosystem. First, there are several restrictions on public entertainment to avoid violating widespread cultural norms, for example, the regular censorship of media, or as reflected in the paucity of entertainment venues that allow singles to mix, like musical concerts, nightclubs, and cinemas themselves. Furthermore, the economic conditions of the country are such that many people have relatively high levels of disposable income and considerable free time. These factors, coupled with restrictions on entertainment, are bound to foster a high demand for alternative entertainment venues, including through social networks platforms. Such socioeconomic factors are both shaped by and impact the local cultural environment.

#### Credibility of Social Networks

Most of the respondents recognize the advantages of social networks and therefore prefer social networks as a source of news; however, the traditional media cannot be completely pushed to the background or ignored as a source

of information. One of the major reasons why people still go back to traditional media is its credibility and trustworthiness. If social networks are not made to be more credible and trustworthy, some of its users might begin to refer back to the traditional media as a primary source of information and use the social media as a secondary source of information.

The study shows that 9.7% of the respondents reported agreeing that the information found on social network sites are credible while 59.3% reported strongly agreeing that the information found on social network sites are not credible. Despite the awareness of the lack of credibility of social networking among Saudi youngsters, but they consider it the most important information source. This may be due to that large freedom space available on social networking and many news on those networks are not available on the traditional media, which is in many cases and particularly in the Arab World, governmental media. Also, because the quick and updated news service available on social networks that turned them to be one of the main sources of news for traditional media.

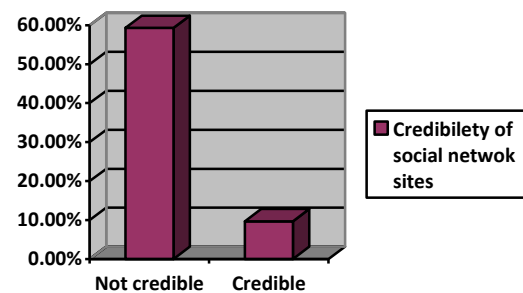


Figure 2. Credibility of Social Networks.

#### Privacy on social networking sites

We asked respondents to report their current social networks privacy settings. Students who expressed concerns related to privacy tended to manage their concerns by either untagging or removing images or by making use of the limited profile to restrict certain contacts or groups of contacts from viewing specific types of personal information. As a response for enough privacy on social networking sites, the number 51% of user in Saudi Arabia believed that there is no sufficient privacy on SNS and claimed some information such as a person's social safety number, address, phone number, financial information, photos, videos or any personal notes, etc. can be misused. It seemed that the respondents are worried about their privacy when using any SNS. 32% user believed that there is decent privacy on SNS and that they are not worried misuse of information. 17% of respondents said there is less privacy on SNS. They said that SNS should provide some high level of privacy control to protect our data. User privacy preferences and behaviors may vary depending on, for example, gender, culture, region or religion. In their research, [25] illustrated that cultural values play an important role in how people manage privacy issues. Therefore, it is impossible to conduct a study on Saudi people without referring to the effect of the relatively conservative Saudi culture, which significantly impacts on their media use. Saudi young people use social networks with realizing the possibilities of penetrating their privacy. This was confirmed by the results showed that youth confirmed, especially females that they were not posting their personal information

and photos on their accounts by 86.2%, while 30.6% of them make it available to the public.

Also. The study finds that females were more likely to be reserved in posting their personal pictures. About 82% of males said they posted their personal photos on social networks in comparison with 49% of females who did so. The Arab patriarchal kinship system, which still dominates family relations, and the conservative cultural norms of most Saudis, may help explain the results. Personal images must be safeguarded against any infringement that may result in damaging the reputation of the family. Past researches confirmed that females in conservative Arab and Muslim cultures are expected to be more reserved about presenting themselves to others on SNS in personal pictures [26] [27].

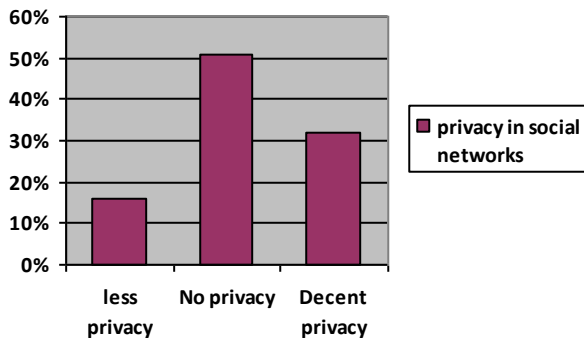


Figure 3. Privacy of Social Networks.

## References

- [1] Kim S. Questioners' credibility judgments of answers in a social question and answer site. *Information Research*. Vol. 15, No 1 Accessed June 20, 2012 from <http://informationr.net/ir/152/paper432.html>
- [2] Bennett, S. The state of social media in Saudi Arabia [infographic]. *Media Bistro*, January 2013. Retrieved from [http://www.mediabistro.com/alltwitter/social-saudi-arabia\\_b33808](http://www.mediabistro.com/alltwitter/social-saudi-arabia_b33808).
- [3] Global Digital Statistics. (2015). In *We are social*. Retrieved February 3, 2015, from <http://www.slideshare.net/wearesocialsg/social-digital-mobile-in-the-middle-east-north-africa-turkey?related=4>
- [4] Garrison, B. The perceived credibility of electronic mail in newspaper newsgathering. A paper presented to the Communication Technology & Policy Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Midwinter Conference, March 1, 2003, Boulder, Colorado. Accessed July 13, 2012 at <http://com.miami.edu/car/Boulder.pdf>.
- [5] Sundar, S. The MAIN model: a heuristic approach to understanding technology effects on credibility. In: Metzger, M., Flanagin, A. (Eds.), *Digital Media, Youth, and Credibility*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 73—100, 2008.
- [6] Metzger, M. J., Flanagin, A., Eyal, K., Lemus, D. R. & McCann, R. M. Credibility for the 21st century: Integrating perspectives on source, message, and media credibility in the contemporize environment. *Communication Yearbook*, 27, 293-335, 2003.
- [7] Sundar, S. S., & Nass, C. Conceptualizing sources in online news. [Article]. *Journal of Communication*, 51(1), 52, 2001.
- [8] Metzger, M. J., Flanagin, A., Eyal, K., Lemus, D. R. & McCann, R. M. Credibility for the 21st century: Integrating perspectives on source, message, and media credibility in the

- contemporize environment. *Communication Yearbook*, 27, 293-335, 2003.
- [9] Castillo, C., Mendoza, M., Poblete, B. Information Credibility on Twitter. In: *Proceedings of the 20th International Conference on World Wide Web*, March 28–April 1, 2011, Hyderabad, India, pp. 675–684.
- [10] Hilligoss, B., and Rieh, S. Y. Developing a unifying framework of credibility assessment: Construct, heuristics, and interaction in context. *Information Processing and Management*, 44(4), 1467-1484, 2008.
- [11] Fogg, B.J. Prominence-interpretation theory: explaining how people assess credibility online. In: *Proceedings of CHI'03, Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. pp. 722—723, 2003.
- [12] Kioussis, S. Public trust or mistrust? Perceptions of media credibility in the information age. *Mass Communication & Society*, 4(4), 381-403, 2001.
- [13] Sutton, J. N., Palen, L., & Shklovski, I. Backchannels on the Front Lines: Emergent Use of Social Media in the 2007 Southern California Fires. In *Proceedings of the Information Systems for Crisis Response and Management Conference (ISCRAM 2008)*. Washington D.C.
- [14] Rahman, M. S., Haque, Md. M., Khan, M. B. K. "The Influence of Privacy, Trust towards Online Social Network: An Exploratory Study on Bangladeshi Customers Perception". *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences*. Issue 35, 2011.
- [15] Dinev, T. & Hart, P. "Internet Privacy Concerns and Social Awareness as Determinants of Intention to Transact". *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2006.
- [16] Dwyer, C. (2007) "Digital Relationships in the 'MySpace' Generation: Results From a Qualitative Study." *Proceedings of the 40th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS)*, Hawaii, 2007.
- [17] Tuunainen, V. K., Pitkänen, O., Hovi, M. "Users' Awareness of Privacy on Online Social Networking sites – Case Facebook". 22nd Bled e conferenve, June 14-17, Bled, solvenia, 2009.
- [18] Stutzman, F., Capra, R., and Thompson, J. Factors Mediating Disclosure in Social Network Sites *Computers in Human Behavior*. 27 (1), 2010.
- [19] Lachello, G., and Hong J. "End-User Privacy in Human-Computer Interaction". *Foundations and Trends in Human-Computer Interaction*, 1(1). 1-137, 2007.
- [20] Stutzman, F., Capra, R., and Thompson, J. Factors Mediating Disclosure in Social Network Sites *Computers in Human Behavior*. 27 (1), 2010.
- [21] Marshall, BA., Cardon, PW., Norris, DT, Goreva, N., D'Souza, R.. "Social networking websites in India and the united states: a cross-national comparison of online privacy and communication". Vol IX, NO. 2, 2008.
- [22] Rainie, L., Kiesler, S., Kang, R., Madden, M., Duggan, M., Brown, S., & Dabbish, L. *Anonymity, Privacy, and Security Online*. Pew Research Center, 2013.
- [23] Son, Jai-Yeol and Kim, Sung S. "Internet Users' Information Privacy-Protective Responses: A Taxonomy and a Nomological Model," *MIS Quarterly*, (32: 3) pp.503-529, 2008
- [24] Smith, H.J., Milberg, J.S., and Burke, J.S. "Information Privacy: Measuring Individuals' Concerns About Organizational Practices," *MIS Quarterly* (20:2), June, pp 167-196, 1996.

[25]Ahn, J. The effect of social network sites on adolescents' academic and social development: Current theories and controversies. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science & Technology*, 62(8): 1435–45, 2011.

[26]Zakaria, N. and Stanton, J.M. Designing and Implementing Culturally-Sensitive IT Applications. *Information Technology & People*, 16, 1 (2003), 49--75.

[27]Al-Jabri, I., Sohail, S., & Ndubisi, N. (2015). Understanding the usage of global social networking sites by Arabs through the lens of uses and gratifications theory. *Journal of Service Management*, 26, 662-680.

[28]Al-Menayes, J. J. (2015). Motivations for using social media: An exploratory factor analysis. *International Journal of Psychological Studies*, 7(1), 43-50.