소셜 네트워킹 사이트의 전환에 미치는 영향 요인 : 필리핀의 프렌드스터와 페이스북을 중심으로

Switching Behavior between Social Networking Sites : Exploring The Philippine Case of Friendster Versus Facebook

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초 록

소셜 네트워크를 활용한 웹 사이트(SNS)의 사용이 광범위해짐에 따라 소셜 네트워크 서비스의 영향력이 점차적으로 증가하고 있다. 한국을 비롯한 다양한 국가에서의 SNS 사용이 증가하고 있으며 필리핀 역시 급격한 SNS 사용량과 행태적 변화를 보이고 있다. 특히, 필리핀의 경우 Friendster에서 Facebook으로의 사용자 전환이 매우 급격하게 이루어지고 있다. 기존의 온라인 커뮤니티와 다른 특성을 가진 SNS의 특성을 반영한 전환비용의 특성은 아직까지 명확하지 않다. 본 연구에서는 필리핀에서 SNS 간의 급격한 전환이 이루어진 상황을 바탕으로 SNS 간의 전환 의도에 영향을 미치는 변수들을 조사하고자 하였다. 소셜 네트워크 사이트를 사용 중인 필리핀 사용자들의 설문조사를 통하여 본 연구는 SNS 간의 전환비용에 직접적인 영향을 미치는 변수들로 SNS에 대한 사용자의 만족, 대체 주목성, 사회적 영향력이 주요 요인으로 작용함을 확인하였다.

ABSTRACT

Considering the widespread use of social networking sites (SNSs) and the sudden shift of Filipino SNS usage from Friendster to Facebook, this paper examines five factors that affect user intentions to switch SNSs. By surveying switchers from Friendster to Facebook in the Philippines, satisfaction, alternative attractiveness, and social influence were significant factors affecting switching intent.

키워드 : 소셜 네트워킹 사이트, 전환 의도, 사회적 영향력, 대체 주목성, 만족
        Social Networking Site, Switching Intention, Social Influence, Alternative
        Attractiveness, Satisfaction

1. Introduction

Beginning with Classmates.com, several SNSs have been developed, and with the rapid boom of the Internet, SNSs have become more than a fad and have moved into the cultural mainstream. SNSs are increasingly attracting the attention of academic and industry researchers intrigued by their use and reach [6, 30, 32]. Many studies have focused on the adoption of SNSs and how users behave and interact with friends in SNSs [12, 17, 26, 27]. Although the adoption and acceptance of technologies is important in the information systems (IS) field, Zhang et al. [33] have pointed out that the success of information technology relies more on individuals' continued use rather than on the initial use or adoption of information technology (IT). This is particularly significant to online platform services, such as SNSs, because of their role in connecting people, and their business model, selling online advertising on their sites, which is based on a large membership count.

Marketing and IS researchers have long studied switching intention and behavior in both offline and online businesses. However, only a few studies have examined switching intention involving SNSs. Due to the network effect of SNSs, many people believe that it is hard to switch from their current SNS, where all their friends are connected, to a new SNS. Nevertheless, there have been switching [5] among SNSs, such as Myspace, Friendster, Orkut, and Facebook, around the world.

This study focused on the two most controversial SNSs in the Philippines. Friendster was the dominating SNS in the Philippines until 2008. Within a couple of months in 2009, a large number of users shifted from Friendster to Facebook, recently rated as the most popular web site in the Philippines (Ranked by Alexa.com in 2011). Taking advantage of the shift in Filipino SNS use momentum and the prevalence of SNS use around the world, the objectives of this study were to identify factors that affect switching intent with regard to SNSs.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Networking Sites

As the definition of Boyd and Ellison [8] on SNS only speaks of the profile that the users are able to create, and not the effects of that profile and the interactions with other users, Allen [4] has augmented it with that of boyd's definition of SNSs as "mediated publics." Therefore, this study defines SNSs as '*a subscription-based, private or semi-private online facility that enables subscribers to generate public or private profiles and to communicate and connect with one-another through the use of the facility's software*' [2]. Through SNSs, subscribers (or users) are able to com-

municate and connect with one another–simplifying collaboration and data exchange and enhancing ways to interact with old friends as well as new ones. From the first recognizable SNS launched in 1997, the growth of these sites surged from 2003 onward as many new SNSs were launched.

Alongside this evolution is the growth of researchers' interests that made possible various studies in different areas. In the field of Psychology, SNSs take a significant part in developing user identity particularly in emerging adults. Steinfield et al. [26] suggested that SNSs like Facebook help reduce barriers that lower self-esteem students might experience in building their social network and thus, making it a source of bridging social capital. Gonzales and Hancock [12] also argued that in contrast to previous work on Objective Self-Awareness, becoming self-aware by viewing one's own Facebook profile enhances self-esteem rather than diminishes it. In relation to these researches on the role of SNSs in user identity development, questions on how these sites affect the users' online and offline activities were also answered through various studies. When it comes to computer-mediated communication (CMC) or the use of the Internet for communication purposes, SNSs are dominantly used. To shed some light on certain issues regarding the effects of CMC on interpersonal relationships, Kujath [17] developed a study that confirmed that Facebook and MySpace act as an extension

of face-to-face interaction. Thus, maintaining interpersonal relationships helped broaden connections as well as strengthen existing friendships. Subrahmanyam et al. [27] have also showed similar results that participants often used the Internet, most especially SNSs, to connect and reconnect with friends and family members.

Aside from all the privacy issues of SNSs and studies on the willingness of users to disclose their information online, previous researches have also explored the use of these sites in education. Xia [28] explored whether Facebook groups are conducive for library marketing while Muñoz and Towner [22] proposed the idea of using Facebook for teacher education. Indeed, SNSs have not only proven to be a good medium of communication but also a good tool for teaching and marketing.

2.2 User Switching

While their backbone consists of visible profiles that display an articulated list of friends, SNSs have implemented a wide variety of technical features. And these differences have led to the rise and even the fall of several SNSs. In the case of Friendster, many early adopters in the U.S. left because of the combination of technical difficulties, social collisions, and a rupture of trust between users and the site [5].

Customer switching intention and behavior has been studied extensively by marketing

researchers. Traditionally, researchers have focused on consumer switching between frequently purchased consumer products and these studies usually examine the impact of marketing practices [31]. Factors that affect switching behavior were also identified in various studies. Keaveney [13] classified eight general categories of customers' reasons for switching services. These categories included inconvenience, service failures, and competition. Ping [24] research was one of the early studies that addressed switching behaviors between companies. Aiming to fill in a gap in their knowledge of retailer-supplier relationships, they tested hypothesized associations between response intentions (exiting, voice, loyalty, opportunism, and relationship neglect) and their antecedents (overall satisfaction, alternative attractiveness, relationship investment, and switching cost).

Taking into account the advancement of technology and the growing population of the online market, it was only until recently that researchers have turned their attention to customer switching in online service industries and products such as paid online service providers [14]; email services [15]; blogging services [33]; web browser products [31] and the like. Using data on the online brokerage industry, Chen and Hitt [8] developed an approach for measuring switching costs and brand loyalty as well as measured the effects of variables on switching behavior. A dual model was also proposed by Kim and Son [16] in their attempt to extend the horizons of post-adoption research in the IS field. Their model focused on two distinct perspectives : (1) the customer's dedication to the firm; and (2) the constraint that makes it difficult for them to switch to other alternatives.

Literally, "switching" can be defined as the complete change of use of one product to another. However, simultaneous use of competing online services is often possible and in some cases necessary. An example would be the dual-SNS users who still use their Friendster account to connect with some of their friends who don't use Facebook. Therefore, based on Ye et al. [31], this study defines user switching as IT users' *termination or significant reduction* in usage of one SNS while replacing it completely or substituting it largely with an alternative SNS.

3. The Philippine Case of Friendster vs. Facebook

The shift of SNS users in the Philippines has also made this topic ripe for exploration which added more meaning in pursuing this study. The blogs and news recently all said the same thing : "Add me on Friendster!" was a likely way to end a conversation with, whether between old friends or newly acquainted people. In fact, the Philippines had over 13 million active Friendster users, more than any other country in the world [18].

Friendster was one of the most popular social networking sites in Asia. Launched in 2002, it was designed as a dating site to help friends-of-friends meet. As Friendster's popularity surged in the U.S., it was said that the site encountered technical and social difficulties [6].

However, as it began to fade in the U.S., Goldberg [11] announced that instead of packing its bags and leaving, Friendster was alive and thriving in Southeast Asia, particularly in the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Apart from its personalization feature in creating profiles, the *testimonials* were the number one attraction. Users would usually receive messages from their friends after they had posted a testimonial for them, asking for a testimonial in return; "It was an unwritten rule," as mentioned in Lapeña [20]. Indeed, Friendster was a sensation in the Philippines until Facebook appeared. Facebook was founded 2 years after Friendster was launched. Unlike Friendster, Facebook has a neat and uniform interface. Some of its attractions are the various games and its chatting system, which Friendster does not have. Facebook has continued to capture Filipinos users, and in September 2009 alone, the number of Facebook users in the Philippines continued to surge with over 1.3 million Filipinos registering for new accounts on the social networking site. This made the Philippines the number one country in Asia in terms of growth in Facebook users for the month [10].

Despite Friendster's "first-mover advantage," most Filipinos have made the move from Friendster to Facebook, and its popularity seems unstoppable. Indeed, in May 2010, a report released by Google showed social networking site Facebook lording it over the Internet [21].

4. Research Model and Method

Our research model was conceptualized to determine the reasons why SNS users switched from Friendster to Facebook <Figure 1>.
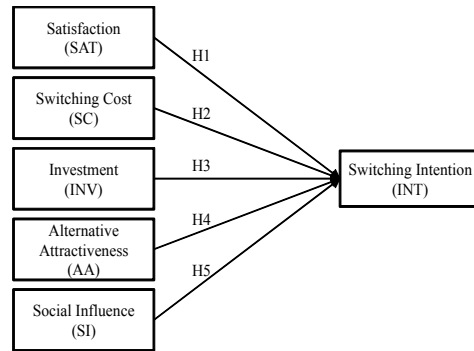
〈Figure 1〉 Research Model

Among diverse factors that are frequently used in loyalty and post-adoption behavior studies [24], satisfaction, switching cost, investment, and alternative attractiveness were used in this study. Social influence was also added, due to the pilot interview results in which a majority of the participants answered

that a reason for their switch was peer pressure.

Extensive research and studies have been made regarding user satisfaction, and various definitions are given. In this study, we defined satisfaction as "the users' cumulative impression of a firm's service performance" [29]. Next to the relationship based on customer loyalty, user satisfaction has been identified as a reliable predictor of customer switching in a variety of industries. In fact, satisfaction/dissatisfaction greatly influences customer switching behavior [14, 24]. Satisfaction was also used as the mediating variable on switching intention [4] and a dependent variable to measure the success of information systems [9]. In this study, we will focus on the direct effects of the user level of satisfaction with the current SNS on the intention to switch. As low levels of satisfaction will result in increased user switching intent [4], the more the user is dissatisfied with Friendster, the more likely the user is to switch to Facebook.

H1 : User satisfaction with the current SNS (Friendster) is negatively related to switching intention.

Burnham, Frels, and Mahajan [7] defined switching cost as the one-time cost that customers associate with the process of switching from one provider to another. There are diverse sub-factors associated with switch-

ing cost; in this study, we conceptualized switching cost as the overall procedural cost required for the user to switch from one SNS to another. If switching costs are low, then users will be tempted to switch SNSs readily. In contrast, with an increase in switching costs, consumers are likely to manifest a "false loyalty" [3] and it is also assumed that a customer's willingness to change or switch SNSs will be reduced. Thus,

H2 : User perception of switching cost is negatively related to switching intention.

There is a fine line between switching cost and investment. Although most studies include investment in switching costs, investment is differentiated in this study as the extent and importance of the resources attached to the relationship with the current website [19]. Ping [26] further defined that these investment items dealt with overall relationship investment, investment uniqueness, and the time, effort, and energy that were put into building and maintaining the relationship. Additionally, invested resources presumably enhance commitment because the act of investment increases the costs of ending a relationship and, thus, serve as a powerful psychological inducement to continue the relationship [25]. It is assumed, therefore, that if the user has invested a lot of time and effort in personalizing [16], the

user's page and uploading pictures to a Friendster account, then this investment will influence the decision as to whether to switch to Facebook. Thus, we provide following hypothesis.

H3 : *User investment is negatively related to switching intention.*

Alternative attractiveness constitutes, simply, the positive features, both utilitarian and hedonic, of the alternative SNS (Facebook). These features include games, applications, profile pages, the chatting system, and other functionalities. Antón et al. [5] stated that the degree of subjective knowledge of better alternatives is a basic condition for repurchasing or, conversely, for relationship termination. As unattractive alternatives keep customers from defecting from their current services [15], attractive alternatives can motivate the customer's intention to switch. Keaveney [15] reported that attraction by competitors is one of the eight reasons that drive customers to switch services. Thus, if a user finds features in Facebook to be more attractive and effective than Friendster's, then it is more likely that the user will switch to Facebook.

H4 : *Alternative attractiveness of the competing product (Facebook) is positively related to switching intention.*

Previous studies have looked at social in-

fluence as analogous to the subjective norm construct incorporated in the Theory of Planned Behavior [1]. Ajzen [1] defined it as the, "Perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior." As users adapt their attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs to their social context, support from influential others, such as friends, has always been found to have important impacts on user behavior [20]. An innovation creates uncertainty about its expected consequences for potential adopters. With this uncertainty, individuals feel uncomfortable and will, thus, tend to interact with their social network for consultation [20]. Put simply, if the user switched SNSs because of the influence of the user's friends and special others, then it is logical to provide H5.

H5 : *Social influence is positively related to switching intention.*

Measures used in this study are from existing studies and were modified for the SNS context. <Table 1> shows a summary of all the measured items used and references.

A pilot survey was conducted with 17 participants. The participants answered an online questionnaire containing close-ended questions using a 7-point Likert scale with ranks 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) and a few open-ended questions. We modified the statements of some items to clarify the meaning of the items. After finalizing the survey items, Filipinos who had experience in us-

〈Table 1〉 Summary of Measured Items

Construct	Number of Items	Sample Item	References
Satisfaction	3	Friendster's services fulfilled my needs in relation to SNSs. In general, I was pretty satisfied with Friendster. All in all, my relationship with Friendster was very satisfactory.	[24]
Switching cost	3	On the whole, I spent a lot of time, money, and effort to switch SNSs. All things considered, I lost a lot in changing SNSs. Generally speaking, the cost in time, money, effort, and grief to switch from Friendster to Facebook was high.	[24]
Investment	3	Overall, I had put a lot of pictures and other personal things in Friendster. A lot of energy, time and effort had gone into building and maintaining my profile page in Friendster. Much of my investment in Friendster is unique (i.e. irreplaceable memories, testimonials and photos).	[24]
Alternative attractiveness	3	Facebook's services are better than Friendster's. I am ____ satisfied with the services and service quality available from Facebook than those provided by Friendster. In general, I am ____ satisfied with Facebook than/as I am with Friendster.	[24]
Social influence	3	All of my friends were using Facebook, which is why I felt that I should use it too. People who influence my behavior think that I should use Facebook. My friends think that I should use Facebook.	[20]
Switching intention	3	I considered switching from Friendster to Facebook. I intended to use Facebook more often in the future. I was determined to switch to Facebook.	[6, 15]

ing both Friendster and Facebook were asked to answer the survey for a reward of $3 to 20 lucky participants. The survey link was distributed through Facebook and 146 responses were collected; however, 28 had missing values and were excluded. Thus, total number of respondents was 118. Of the 118 responses, 56.8% were from female users and 43.2% were from males. Additionally, 83.1% of the participants were aged 16 to 26, while the age group 37-46 was the smallest (2.5%). The demographics of the participants are shown in <Table 2>. A scale of 1 to 5 was used for how often they used the SNSs for Friendster Usage and Facebook Usage (1-once per month, 2-twice per month, 3-once per week, 4-two or three

〈Table 2〉 Demographics of Survey Respondents

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	51	43.2
Female	67	56.8
Total	118	100.0
Age	**Frequency**	**%**
15 or below	6	5.1
16 to 26	98	83.1
27 to 36	11	9.3
37 to 46	3	2.5
Friendster Usage	**Mean**	**St. dev.**
Dual-SNS users	2	1.1195
Facebook Usage	Mean	St. dev.
Complete switchers	4.56	0.842
Dual-SNS users	4.49	0.798

times per week, 5-every day). We classified respondents as complete switchers if they did not use Friendster for at least 6 months. The rest were classified as dual-SNS users.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed and most indicators had loadings larger than 0.700, indicating a stable loading structure. Also, with a threshold value of 0.7, the reliability test results showed Cronbach's α values ranging from 0.760 to 0.865. The results of EFA and reliability test are shown in <Table 3>. The results confirmed that the measured items were reliable and related to their respective factors.

〈Table 3〉 The Results of EFA and Reliability Test

	Factors						Cronbach's alpha
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
SI1	0.875						
SI2	0.872						0.865
SI3	0.842						
SAT1		0.861					
SAT3		0.856					0.846
SAT2		0.837					
INT3			0.856				
INT3			0.834				0.760
INT1			0.756				
AA2				0.860			
AA3				0.844			0.825
AA1				0.753			
SC2					0.875		
SC3					0.818		0.769
SC1					0.754		
INV3						0.849	
INV1						0.791	0.760
INV2						0.764	
Eigenvalue	2.397	2.375	2.317	2.312	2.124	2.105	

5. Results and Discussion

Along with the responses, the hypotheses of the study were tested using multiple regression and the results are shown in <Table 4>.

〈Table 4〉 Regression Results

Variables	B	Std. Error	P	VIF
Satisfaction	-0.141	0.054	0.010[*]	1.150
Switching cost	-0.006	0.055	0.907	1.156
Investment	0.045	0.058	0.438	1.185
Alternative attractiveness	0.463	0.082	0.000[***]	1.102
Social Influence	0.149	0.049	0.003[**]	1.151
R^2	0.367			
Adj. R2	0.339			

Note : Dependent variable - Switching intention
[*]: $p < 0.05$; [**]: $p < 0.01$; [***]: $p < 0.001$.

As hypothesized, user satisfaction with Friendster negatively affected the user intention to switch to Facebook (β = -0.141; p = 0.010). Social influence (p = 0.003) and alternative attractiveness ($p < 0.001$) were also significant and showed a positive effect on switching intention. However, in contrast to H2 and H3, switching cost and investment were not found to be significant. Thus, H2 and H3 were rejected.

Motivated by the lack of information on switching intention with regard to SNSs and the curious shift of SNS usage in the Philippines, we attempted in this study to identify factors that affected user intentions to switch SNS by measuring users' past switching intentions.

The results confirmed that satisfaction negatively affected the users' switching intention. Alternatively, user *dis*satisfaction positively influenced the user's intention to switch from one SNS to another. Users switched completely to Facebook because they were dissatisfied with Friendster. There were certain issues about privacy in Friendster that were rumored to have been the cause of its fall in popularity in both the U.S. [23] and the Philippines. Some users claimed that their profiles had been hacked and that they were unable to open their accounts any longer. Others complained about the amount of spam messages they have received and there were also users who simply said that they *did not like Friendster anymore*. <Table 5> shows some of the respondents' actual comments gathered from the survey.

Although the dual-SNS users maintained both their Friendster and Facebook accounts, 62.8% reported using Facebook every day. It was found that 51.2% of the dual-SNSs users only opened their Friendster account once per month. Alternative attractiveness and social influence were also confirmed to positively affect users' intentions to switch. Facebook appeared at a time when the issues with the Friendster system occurred. Whether it was just chance timing or not, Facebook immediately gained many users because of its attractive and almost addictive features.

Users also said that Facebook was more

〈Table 5〉Respondent Comments

Dissatisfaction
- I don't like Friendster anymore …
- No one is in Friendster. There is a lot of spam.
- My Friendster account was hacked.

Alternative attractiveness
- Facebook has more features than Friendster.
- Facebook is WAY COOLER than Friendster. It has everything Friendster has to offer, and MORE.

Social influence
- I was influenced by my friends.
- All my friends and contacts are more active on Facebook.

user-friendly, and the fact that so many people were using Facebook made it easy for users to connect and search for their friends. Social influence was also found to have a big role in influencing user switching intention, especially in young adults who were the majority of our respondents. Additionally, switching cost and investment were not found to be significant. These results are consistent with those of previous reports, including that of Ping [24], which notes that switching costs were minimal in the online environment, having little or no effect in user switching intentions. Also, due to the ease of jumping from one website to many other websites that offer similar products or services with the mere click of a mouse, users can readily make new investments (upload photos, add friends, etc.) in new SNSs. Furthermore, although they switched to a new SNS, users can still access their previous SNS account.

As our findings were consistent with the results of previous studies, our study also serves as a stepping stone for other behavioral and post-adoption SNS studies in the future. This study can also be practically applied by a management team; it is important to focus on security and to continue to create features that attract users to "stick" to a site.

This study has some limitations. First, it was limited only to the Philippine setting and its top two SNSs (Friendster, Facebook). For future studies, the use, adoption and new perspectives of other countries' SNS use could be explored. Another limitation is that the research only made use of factors that had been demonstrated to have effects on switching behavior from existing studies (e.g. Ping, 1993) and then applied them in the SNS context. According to the limited number of factors that are related to switching behavior on SNS, further interesting factors (e.g., perceived enjoyment) or sub-factors could be studied in the future. Also, although switching cost was found to have no effect on switching intention, perhaps its sub-factors would yield significant results.

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