Facebook, the spice of life?

INTRODUCTION

Facebook has over 500 million active users and according to company’s website over 50% of the users log in every day. The organization has also become global, as 70% of its user base it located outside its origination place – The United States.

There have been quite a lot of studies conducted on various aspects of Facebook such as perception of users’ profiles, privacy etc. Quite few of them have reflected the usage of Facebook and the ones that have, focus on the social motivations for Facebook use. This study captures the dual-nature of the Facebook as a platform for social interaction and also commercial consumption (games, applications, advertising).

The objective of the study is to explain the nature on variety-seeking and satiation in Facebook context.

TERMINOLOGY

People often search variety in their lives, because repeat exposure to an experience impacts the preference the person holds for the experience. This process is called satiation. In the context of this study, two different forms of satiation are reflected – consumptional and relational satiation.

Consumptional satiation refers to decrease in enjoyment from consuming a product or service. For example, one might really like eating bananas. However, the more bananas one eats, the less he/she enjoys them with every subsequent banana consumed. Eventually this will lead them to stop eating bananas and look out for alternatives until bananas are attractive again.

Relational satiation is an increase in enjoyment that stems from feeling of belonging and social acceptance. The difference between relational and consumptional satiation is that relational satiation is a desired state. People who are relationally satiated feel that they belong and are valued by others.

THE STUDY

Facebook offers a variety of features to the users – the people are exposed to new products, different forms of entertainment and social settings which all offer a variety of different experience to the users.
It is said in the study that Facebook offers a platform for engaging in variety-seeking behaviour that gives a person control over both types of satiation and this is the main reason for Facebook’s incredible popularity.

There are five variety-seeking behaviours described in the study and the authors conducted a model that relates the different variety-seeking behaviours with consumitional/social satiation and also with computer-mediated social network (CMSN) usage. Next, the different variety-seeking behaviours and their relation with satiation and CMSN are described.

**Alternating among familiar** involves switching back and forth among familiar experiences. The key is that they are not new experiences, but switching raises the level of preference for a particular experience. Facebook offers lots of possibilities for alternation among familiar experiences – frequent interaction with members within user`s network, games, and applications.

The study claims that feelings of consumitional satiation are positively related [1] and feelings of relational satiation are negatively related [2] to individual’s inclination towards alternating among familiar. It is also stated that a person’s inclination towards alternating among familiar is positively related [3] to computer-mediated social network usage.

**Novelty-seeking** is variety-seeking behaviour when one is looking for totally new experiences. In consumption-based context this means acquiring new objects and wanting to try new forms of entertainment. In a social context it means people who form bonds and new friendships with new individuals. Facebook offers context-sensitive advertising, new friend requests, status updates about new things going on.

The study claims that feelings of consumitional satiation are positively related [4] and feelings of relational satiation are negatively related [5] to individual’s inclination towards novelty-seeking. It is also stated that a person’s inclination towards novelty-seeking is positively related [6] to computer-mediated social network usage.

**Information seeking** is form of variety-seeking in which a person impacts satiation through exploration of things they have done (to assure they are not missing on anything). This is seen in real life as well – gossip, small talk to find out where one stands in relations to others. Collecting information about consumer products lets us now what we might be missing out. Facebook offers a variety of features for information-seeking, such as friends’ experiences, posted videos, photos, status updates and information about relationships.

The study claims that feelings of consumitional satiation are positively related [7] and feelings of relational satiation are negatively related [8] to individual’s inclination towards information seeking. It is also stated that a person’s inclination towards information seeking is positively related [9] to computer-mediated social network usage.
**Computer-mediated social distinction** is a variety-seeking behaviour undertaken with purpose of acquiring resources that possess some perceived value in user’s network. In facebook context the number of friends could one indication of social distinction and status. Additionally, Facebook has many applications and games that user can participate in to climb rankings and obtain a wanted social status.

The study claims that feelings of consumptional satiation are positively related [10] to individual’s inclination towards computer-mediated social distinction behaviour. It is also stated that there will be a positive relationship [11] between a person’s inclination towards CMSN behaviour and CMSN usage.

**Computer-mediated social affiliation** is a variety-seeking behaviour when one follows the changing behaviour of the members of his/hers social network. People in facebook make fan pages, groups and people often take part to be socially accepted.

The study claims that feelings of consumptional satiation are positively related [12] and feelings of relational satiation are negatively related [13] to individual’s inclination towards computer-mediated social affiliation behaviour. It is also stated that a person’s inclination towards computer-mediated social affiliation behaviour is positively related [14] to computer-mediated social network usage.

**METHODOLOGY**

The model was tested using pilot data collected from 120 facebook users. Participant were recruited from undergraduate classes, participation was voluntary. Participants were asked to answer two types of questions. The first set consisted of five point Likert scales, ranging from 1 „Strongly disagree“ to 5 „Strongly agree“. The second set of questions were open ended.

**RESULTS**

The initial research showed that support was found for relations between consumptional satiation and variety-seeking behaviours with [1], [4], [7] supported. Relations between relational satiation and variety-seeking behaviour was not supported.

Partial support for was found for relation between variety-seeking behaviours and CMSN usage with [3], [9], [14] supported.