PRIVACY AND MOBILE SOCIAL NETWORKING APPLICATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Problem statement and Research purpose

This era has been characterized by the rapid development and adoption of communication
technologies especially mobile or cell phones. These phones have become part of user’s everyday
lives. Smart phones will move the focus of the consumer from hardware devices to software
applications. The smartphone device is not very useful by itself, but it can provide the user a rich
media, entertainment, environment sensing and communication experiences with software
application giving the smartphone’s capabilities and functionalities (Market Insight, 2012a). In
2012 alone users around the world have download 22180 million downloads of about 1.28
million different mobile applications. It is predicted that the size of the application market is
going to double by the end of 2013 (Market Insight, 2012b).

Also social networks applications have become exceedingly popular. The fusion of mobile
technology with social network applications is expected to change the marketing landscape.
Twitter and Facebook, currently two of the most popular social networks current, are seeing a
large percentage of their updates being made from mobile devices (Lică, 2010). With the
advancement in mobile technology video sites like YouTube and location based social network
service like Foursquare and Gowalla, have more users are accessing their services using their
mobile phones (Lică, 2010).

Mobile social network applications could present new opportunities for the field of marketing.
The new generation of mobile devices will become increasingly context aware. Hence, marketers
will be able to obtain location specific, consumer preferences, in real-time, from the consumers’
mobile devices (Magedanz and Simões, 2009). Marketers could have the capability to deliver
effective marketing messages, to the right consumer, at the right time, in the right location, using
mobile social marketing applications. Companies using the consumer mobile social network
profile could provide the consumer with relevant, important and useful service using simple data
mining techniques (Magedanz and Simões, 2009).

Given this growth, the issue of privacy of electronic communication is receiving a great deal of
attention from the public. According to the Pew Internet Project survey, 85% of adults believed it was
“very important” to control access to their personal information (Madden et al, 2007). On the other
hand, Magedanz and Simões (2009) assert that consumers are willing to give away personal
information in exchange for more “customized service”. However, there is no mention of when they
are willing to give information and for what purposes. Therefore, there is a research gap about the
occasions where the users’ are willing to trade-off their private information for better service. At one
extreme, the user feels that his/her privacy is being intruded upon, leading to dissatisfaction. On the
other hand, the company may lose valuable marketing information by not collecting enough data.
Hence, an optimum level of privacy for both the user and the firm has to be reached. Bata Privacy and
mobile social networking applications
Therefore, marketers and researchers need to identify the different requirements of the consumer that are fulfilled by mobile social network applications, and what the trade-offs are with regard to consumer privacy. According to Magedanz and Simões (2009), reaching the right people with the adequate designed messages and attention privacy issues are the major challenges for the fledging mobile applications market. To avoid marketing myopia, it is critical that businesses define themselves in terms of satisfying consumer needs (Levitt, 1960).

This article explores the consumers’ needs for mobile social network applications by applying the uses and gratification theory. The uses and gratification theory serves as a blue print to identify different users’ needs for mobile social network applications. The research further examines the impact of privacy on different types of usage in order to understand user’s privacy preferences for different contexts and uses of the technology. The research will attempt to demonstrate the extent the users are willing to trade-off between convenience and service quality for privacy. Mobile social networks applications are an important marketing medium that need to be developed according to consumer needs and preferences, balancing utility and privacy.

Hence the article raised the following research questions:

- What needs do mobile social network application fulfil?
- What is the impact of privacy on different uses of mobile social network application?

This will provide value, as the marketing practitioner will be able to classify consumers into market segments based on their needs. The marketing practitioner will also identify the type of social networking application most adequate for their product or service and the degree of privacy desired. This will enhance the effectiveness of marketing managers responsible for developing mobile marketing campaigns.

The researcher empirically examines the impact of privacy on the uses and gratifications of mobile social network applications. The article extends the research done by Magedanz and Simões (2009) on mobile social network by studying the impact of privacy on different uses of mobile social network uses from the uses and gratifications perspective. The issue of privacy has been examined by researchers in marketing, law, management, psychology, and many other fields. The focus of this study is to examine privacy from a marketing, information systems and communications perspective to have a holistic view on the privacy issue. The paper also build upon O’Bien, D., & Torres (2012) work on privacy in social network applications by looking at privacy in the mobile context and examining in what context privacy becomes important and in what context, privacy is not important from the users’ perspective. The research will perform a conjoined empirical analysis to examine the extent that consumers are willing to forgo privacy to get better service when using their mobile social network applications. Furthermore, a new scale will be created, validated and used to measure the uses and gratifications in the mobile social network context.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Uses & gratifications theory**

The theory was created originally in the field of mass communications research as part of the functionalist paradigm. The theory aims to research consumer motivations for media in this case (mobile social network applications) usage and access. It aims at studying the use of media at the individual level. The theory moves the focus of research from the effect of media on the users, to studying what users want from the consumption of media (Ruggiero, 2000). Bata Privacy and mobile social networking applications
The uses and gratifications theory attributes consumers’ motivation to use the media to satisfy their social and psychological needs. Media can satisfy certain types of consumer needs, such as cognitive (information and understanding), affective (emotional and aesthetic experiences), escapist or tension release (disconnect from reality) and integrative (the feeling of being a part of a community) (Katz & Blumler, 1974). The theory further explains how the media satisfies those needs; what the underlying motives are; and the consequences arising from the confluence of needs, motives and media use (Katz & Blumler, 1974).

The theory is built on the assumption that the audience (viewers, listeners, readers, and technology users) take an active part in understanding and incorporating the media into their lifestyle. In addition, the theory assumes that audiences bear the responsibility for selecting according to their needs. The approach suggests that people use the media to satisfy specific gratifications. Consequently, the media compete against other sources of information for user’s gratification. The individual choices are affected by personal traits and social context (Rubin, 2002).

Recently, the uses and gratification theory has been extended to include technologies such as software services, the internet and cell phones. The uses and gratifications perspective has been used to examine the motivations for public use of the Internet in general, as well as various computer-mediated communication devices such as discussion forums, e-mail, the Web (WWW), and Instant-Messaging (IM) (Dimmick et al., 2000; Dobos, 1992; Flaherty et al., 1998). There is a potential to be applied to mobile phones social network applications because of its user centeredness and media like properties.

Uses and gratifications research is done by simply asking participants about their media use and the reasons behind them. The use and gratification theory assume that consumers are active seeker of media to satisfy their needs, consumers make purposeful and goal-directed choices and consumers know their own motives behind media use.

Mobile social network applications

Social media is defined as using highly accessible publishing techniques on the internet for social interaction, hence changing one way traditional media interaction to two way dialogues. Social media sites allow users to create a profile. They also give the user the ability to connect and share connections with lists of other users. The user creates his/her profile by typically answering questions about lifestyle and preferences. The user also can add photos and multimedia to the profile, making it more interesting to other users. Most sites have messaging, and chatting capabilities where users can contact others within his/her network (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). For example, Facebook allows the user to post photos videos and multimedia links, comment on news, subscribe to groups that share his/her interests, send messages to friends and share their Mobile social network applications have become an increasingly popular way of accessing social media sites using smartphones (Wortham, 2010). A user can share his/her location and his/her statuses within the network of contacts using the GPS feature of his/her mobile phone (Humphrey and Laverie, 2011). A typical mobile social network application includes a user interface with a summary of activities page, nearby locations page, location-specific page, and accomplishments page. (Humphrey and Laverie, 2011).

CONSTRUCT DEVELOPMENT

Cognitive needs:

This is part of the uses and gratification theory dealing with the individual need to mentally organize relevant situations in meaningful, integrated ways and a need to comprehend and make reasonable the experiential world. Some individuals may have a high need for cognition; they
prefer engaging, evaluating ideas, and analyzing problems, and finding solutions. It is a trait characterizing thinkers and those who believe that it is fun and enjoyable to think (Cohen et al., 1955). On the other hand, some individuals will not put forth cognitive effort unless they are forced to think.

Individuals with low cognition needs are more likely to rely on simple cues such as authority, appearances and stereotypes when making a decision. On the other hand, individuals with high cognitive needs are more likely to research relevant information and evaluate the argument before reaching a decision (Haugtvedt et al., 1992).

Affective needs:

This is a portion of the uses and gratification theory relating to the needs for aesthetic, pleasurable, and emotional experiences. It is the emotional dimension associated with the feelings or sentimental states generated by the products, as well as the human relationships (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). It is associated with the feeling of love and devotion. Emotions play a critical role impacting the user’s luminal and subconscious level. They serve as internal motivators attracting the user to the things that makes him/her feel good or have positive association in his/her mind (Williamson, 2002). Individuals will tend to focus on information about messages, products and technologies that are consistent with one’s mood state. Mood based consumption plays an important role in user’s evaluation of goods and service (Mattila and Wirtz, 2000).

Integrative needs:

This is a component of the uses and gratification theory involving the needs for strengthening credibility, confidence, stability, and status. It is the desire to gain the approval of others, allowing individual to attain recognition and to make a good impression. These integrative needs drive strengthening contact with family, friends, and the world. They are based on the individual desire or affiliation. Humans have the desire to create & maintain positive relationship with members of the community. Human beings have evolved to become social animals and tend to dislike loneliness and isolation. The need is satisfied when an individual cooperates in a positive, affective manner toward other members of his/her social group and receives positive, affective feedback.

Tension release needs:

Tension is state psychological reaction from an individual due to the presence of threat, thwarting, deprivation, or any apparently harmful situation. Tension release is individual attempt to cope with or remove this potentially harmful state of affairs (Mower, 1939). This is aspect of the uses and gratification theory concerning the needs for relaxation, escaping tension-release by weakening of contact between the self and one’s social roles. It is the human urge to perform activities “just for fun,” to be light-hearted and easy-going. Users have a need to relieve boredom, to gossip or chat, to seek the pleasure of talking, to pass time, and to relax (Leung and Wei, 2006). Play may relax the minds fostering innovation, motivation and flexibility.

Need for privacy:

Private is means that a matter is confined to, or intended only for, a certain person. Privacy is often confused with what is personal, what is secret and the need for solitude. Personal is a matter pertaining to an individual’s own affairs. Secret is something that is kept away from the
knowledge of others. The need for solitude is the desire to be entirely alone, without the want for companionship. Privacy could be seen as the desire for a conditional solitude; the need to keep certain facets of one’s life away from society, while sharing other parts (Ben-Ze’ev, 2003). The right to privacy is broadly defined as the right of non-intrusion from outsiders. Therefore, it is retained by keeping the unauthorized away. There are two types of privacy: communication privacy and information privacy. Information privacy pertains to the individual’s ability to take control of access to his/her personal information. According to Miller and Weckert (2000), certain information is considered private such as intimate relations, facts about a person’s public roles (e.g., voting, political affiliations), and about an individual’s property. Communication privacy deals with the individual’s ability to take control of control access of the content of one’s communications (Snyder, 2010). Violation of privacy is not allowing access to everyone; it is based on accessing the information by unwanted others (Ben-Ze’ev, 2003).

In social networking application the issue of privacy becomes more complicated. Social networking applications collect a plethora of personal information about their users to create the social profile and connect users with similar interests. The user may willing to share certain personal information publically, while restricting access to other types of sensitive information to a small circle of close friends (Majmudar, 2005, Ralph & Alessandro, 2005).

`Intention to use mobile Social network use:

It is defined as the self-reported user’s plan to use a particular mobile social network application.

**HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

Most mobile social network applications have the news feed and search features, where users can post important news stories, interesting events and their opinions. The more the user has cognitive needs means that he/she will be more motivated to seek information that he/she deems important regardless of its location. Mobile social networking applications give the users the opportunity to follow news stories and events shared by their network of contacts without the need to be connected to the computer. This information can help satisfy cognition needs. Smart phones are also able to sense more features of their environment such as location, orientation, temperature and lighting. Designers combine this ambient information with other data to make the mobile more adaptable to the user context (Hinz et al, 2010). Information needs are ubiquitous arising about any subject matter, and regardless of the location (Hinz et al, 2010). Many users high in cognition needs may take advantage of these features of mobile social network applications to share with and obtain more information from their contacts.

\[H1: \text{The more user have cognitive needs the stronger the intention to use the mobile social networking applications.}\]

Most mobile applications have a status and messages features that allows the user to express their feeling or emotions. People can express their love, devotion or distaste for others or issues, while on the go. The user may also comment on certain events, videos or photos. Individuals could belong to certain groups or join causes. A person could develop emotional connections with individuals and groups overtime (Cheung and Lee, 2010). To maintain affective personal relationships, an individual has to reveal personal information. Gradually with the passage of time partners feel themselves as one augmented self (Ben-Ze’ev, 2003).

\[H2a: \text{The more user have affective needs the stronger the intention to the mobile social networking applications.}\]

Most people are unlikely to share these personal information publicly; that they tend to share their only with a few trusted loved ones. Emotional issues are considered private and users need to feel a
sense of privacy with regard to this type of information or they are less likely to share it via social media. Therefore, a user would prefer to maintain degree discretion over his/her intimate affairs. The user will attempt to maintain privacy by controlling access to information.

H2b: The need for privacy negatively moderates the relationship between affective needs, and the intention to use the mobile social networking applications.

People need to relax in order to be able to function properly within society. Mobile social network applications allow the users the ability to relax by playing games, sharing those with high tension release needs their funny photos and watching movies. The user temporary steps away from his/her former role and reality to a new fantasy role to relax. Individuals play online for pleasure as well as entertainment, not to realize specific goals or improve job performance. The interactivity feature of the mobile social network application enables users to fantasize and be entertained.

H3a: The more user have tension release needs the stronger the intention to use the mobile social networking applications.

Nevertheless, the sense of humor is subjective; what someone finds funny or relaxing could be seen offensive to colleagues and employers. Consequently, users need privacy to limit access to their personal hobbies for few trusted social contacts. If they perceive low levels of privacy in their tension release behaviors, they are less likely to engage them.

H3b: The need for privacy negatively moderates the relationship between tension needs, and the intention to use the mobile social networking applications.

Humans are social animals needing to assert their status, relate effectively within their peer group. To create good impression with group member and maintain a good standing in the community, one has to keep activities that might not align with the community values private. Hence, privacy is privacy an integral part of individual’s social status. For example in the military, a new recruit is examined from head to toe by the sergeant, but due to his/her inferior status cannot inspect the sergeant in return (Margalit, 2001).

Privacy aids in association with people, rather than independence allowing individuals to intimately communicate (Schoeman, 1992). Most adults maintain a public façade that is different from their real private life. Individuals reveal parts of their private lives to different social circles. Privacy enable the individual to express feeling, preferences and emotions in a certain unique manner within a particular social framework, such as a state, neighborhood, a chat room, work, friends, or family. At the same time, the user has to follow social norms to avoid being censured by society. Privacy allows the users to keep his/her membership in the social group, while maintaining their individuality by expressing their feelings that could potentially conflict with social norms (Decrew, 1997). Unlike regular cyberspace where shame is uncommon because of less strict moral norms and Bata Privacy and mobile social networking applications anonymity (Ben-Ze’ev, 2003), shame is possible in social networking where user is known and is a part of a social group

H4: The more Integrative needs the user have the higher the need for privacy Bata Privacy and mobile social networking applications
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