

**DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF SNS USAGE AMONG
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN LABUAN**

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ABSTRACT

The paper presented insights into the descriptive usage of SNS from the integrated perspectives of TAM. Other than communicating with others, the respondents of the study are looking for fun and enjoyment from using SNS. In fact, the perceived enjoyment and attitude provides higher percentage as compared to perceived usefulness.

Keywords: *Social Network Service, Society-Based Communication, Internet*

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Introduction

The introduction to the World Wide Web (WWW) has changed the way people communicate with each other and led to a society of knowledge economy (Yuan and Fei, 2009). Internet is one of the main communication medium where connect people to the unlimited source of information and knowledge. The Internet information and knowledge sharing was very powerful where the volume of information and knowledge grows dramatically every second to be shared by millions of people around the world.

Therefore, this small survey aims to examine the communication pattern of the Universiti Malaysia Sabah Labuan International Campus or in short UMSKAL's students. As one of the branch campus of Universiti Malaysia Sabah, UMSKAL was formed on 1999 to focus on the aspect of management, international finance and information technology as part of the UMS aim for the Labuan territory which to develop more on management and information science. The campus starts its operation on 1 January 1999 with the first May intake of 356 students.

With the new area of communication and information sharing, it has change based on the people's interest and need for communication. People nowadays make the socializing activity as one of the highest priority in their life. The constraints on time and geographical factor made people difficulty in their socialising activity. With the help of the Internet technology, the problem on time and geographical factors can be reduce with the introduction of society based communication.

In this paper, we define the society-based communication is a communication on the social network services based on the society, group or community with a shared interest and ideology. The idea of society-based communication is not limited to the interest and ideology only, but it can be focus into the group's interest, ideology and activity. As an extension of the main campus, UMS KAL aims to create a global higher learning institute which mark Labuan as a centre of business based on excellence towards the country's and community's development. The UMSKAL consists of two schools namely Labuan School of International Business & Finance, School of Informatics Science Labuan and Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning as to support both school. The total number of student approximately around 2000 were originated roughly trough out Malaysia in multiracial and religions. Thus, as a branch campus and population, this paper present the descriptive use of the **SNS (Social Networking Sites)** based on the existing students' points of view. As we realize the potential of online SNS as a convenience medium for the students to be to communicate with family and friends. It was also a useful tool for reconnecting with people from one's past like from a schoolmates, college roommate or former childhood friends.

Social Network Services

SNS or Social Networking Sites are a community building website that allows people to share interests or activities and explore the interest or activities of others. As another definition Kwon and Wen (2009) defined SNS as an individual web page which enables online, human-relationship building by collecting useful information and sharing it with specific or unspecific people. Whereas Boyd and Ellison (2007) define SNS as a web-based service that allows its users to construct a profile that other users can see and list connections with other users. Thus, Yuan and Fei (2009) examined that the community-

based e-service represents the provision of e-service to a community of individuals or business partners. Where the communities addressed in their paper are on the open environments (i.e., the community individual can come and go without restrictions).

Based on Yuan and Fei (2009) linked innovative social network services are focusing their efforts on making it easier for users to participate and to engage in providers' services more freely. In their paper also mentioned that, the number of people who feel they are benefiting from social network service is also increasing dramatically. Despite the services' perceived impact, research on identifying the psychological process of using social network service is still in its early age.

In traditional social network theory, a social network is defined as a set of social entities that includes people and organizations that are connected by a set of socially meaningful relationships and who interact with each other in sharing the value (Garton et al., 1997). This also approved by Kwon and Wen (2009), with the traditional form of a social network service focuses on relationship types such as friends and face-to-face relationships, but social network services are recently bringing more focus to online virtual community and computer mediated communication.

Social network services can be regarded as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with those who share a connection, and view their list of connections and also those made by others within the system (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). However, Kwon and Wen (2009) on the other hand, stated that SNS as a web-based service which is based on certain meaningful and valuable relationships including friendship, kinship, interests and activities. Social network services allows individuals to network for a variety of purposes including sharing information, building and exploring the relationship.

The SNS is one of the web-based services that allow people communicate with other people or making a new friend. What makes SNS differ from other Internet application is SNS has emerged as a new media of communication and information sharing. A group of researchers like Ellison et al. (2007) eventually measure social capital among lot of people benefited from the SNS application, where they can trace back their long lost friends and relatives, getting together and socializing in a virtual way.

There are few types of SNS which contains category of places, friends, interests and etc. The most popular SNS is a combination of the category where Facebook, Twiter and Bebo are widely used worldwide, MySpace and LinkedIn (North America), Tagged, XING, Badoo and SkyRock (Europe), Orkut and Hi5 (South America and Central America), Friendster, Xiaonei, Mixi, Orkut and Cyworld (Asia). There is certain country will focus on one particular SNS like Nexopia (Canada), Hi5 and StudiVZ (Germany), iWiW (Hungry), Tuenti (Spain), CyWorld (Korea) and Facebook (India) where the user for these SNS more suitable to their interest and needs.

The users for every SNS were growing every minute. There is a possibility for user to have more than one SNS account in order to keep in touch with friends, relative and other people with the same interest and activities. The Table 1 below is a table for the top 20 Social Networking Sites among US internet users dated on May 2008 and May 2009.

Table 1: Top 20 Social Networking Sites among US Internet Users, May 2008 & May 2009 (thousands of unique visitors and % change)

		May 2008	May 2009	% change
1.	Facebook	35,594	70,278	97%
2.	MySpace Sites	73,691	70,255	-5%
3.	Twitter	633	17,592	2,681%
4.	Classmates.com site	14,867	15,136	2%
5.	MyLife.com sites	-	9,862	-
6.	Windows Live Profile	-	9,666	-
7.	Buzznet	5,427	9,273	71%
8.	Bebo	-	8,801	-
9.	Digg	6,321	8,613	36%
10.	Yahoo! Buzz	5,786	8,017	39%
11.	LinkedIn	3,933	7,470	90%
12.	DeviantART	3,914	6,399	63%
13.	Tagged	2,763	6,248	126%
14.	hi5	3,433	3,848	12%
15.	Gaia Online	2,091	2,756	32%
16.	SodaHead.com	1,166	2,490	114%
17.	BlackPlanet.com	1,924	2,376	24%
18.	AOL Community	4,235	2,345	-45%
19.	Plaxo	1,167	2,339	101%
20.	FunAdvice.com	952	2,269	138%
	Social networking category	131,808	147,009	12%
	Total Internet audience	190,858	193,825	12%

The table 2 below show the existing SNS website based on the focused interest, activity and ideology. Its shows that, people around the world have similar interest and activity which will bring them together in the SNS. Information gathering and sharing will be happen in the appropriate SNS.

Table 2 display the most basic level of interest, activity and ideology for people use online SNS to make connections. Whether these connections are with family, friends, and current colleagues or with potential customers and possible new business contacts, SNS makes it easier than ever to stay in touch with large groups of people that are spread out across great distances within 24 hours per day 7 days per week .

Survey Framework and Design

Factors influencing user's adoption of technology varies depending on technology, target users and context. Thus, this small study use simple survey questionnaire to examine respondents' perception on SNS based on TAM. Dishaw and Strong (1999) were also suggesting that integrated model explains better than any model alone. Therefore this study suggest more simple direct approach classic TAM model despite apply several empirical studies of incorporating TAM with other theories and thus enhancing its predictive power.

Table 2: SNS Based on Interest, Activity and Ideology

	Name	Description / Focus	Registered Users	Registration
1.	Classmates.com	School, college, work and the military.	50,000,000	Open to people 18 and older
2.	devianART	Art community	9,040,962	Open
3.	Flickr	Photo sharing, commenting, photography related networking, worldwide	32,000,000	Open to people 13 and older
4.	Multiply	“Real world” relationships, Popular in Asia. Not popular in the western world.	10,000,000	Open to people 13 and older. No children allowed
5.	MyLife	Locating friends and family, keeping in touch (formerly Reunion.com)	51,000,000	Open
6.	LinkedIn	General but mainly business	53,000,000	Open to people 18 and Older
7.	Care2	Green living and social activism	9,961,947	Open
8.	MocoSpace	Mobile community, worldwide	3,000,000	Open to people 14 and older

Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites (2010)

The Respondents and Research Instrument

The respondents of this survey were university students range from first year until third year of their study in two of the school available in Labuan. From approximately 2000 students this survey manages to acquire 283 respondents who are voluntary participate in answering the survey questionnaire. The survey framework based on the classical technology acceptance model.

The research model shown in Fig. 1 were based on the classical TAM with the additional element of enjoyment factor that used in many studies to represent intrinsic motivation in discussion of how intrinsic motivators influence individuals IT acceptance behaviour. Perceived enjoyment is defined as the extent to which the activity of using a technology is perceived to be enjoyable in its own right, aside from any performance consequences resulting from technology use. When a technology is fun and pleasing to use, users will be intrinsically motivated to adopt it.

The Research Framework

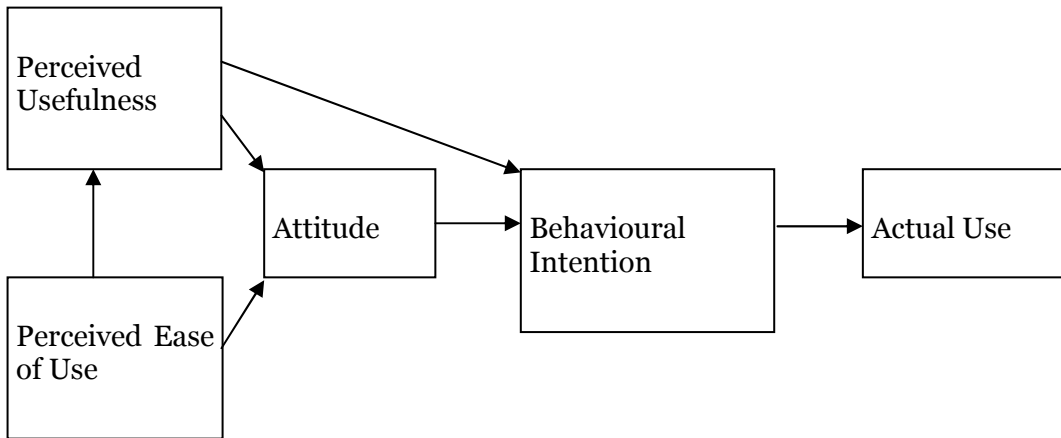


Figure 1: Classical Technology Acceptance Model

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Respondents’ Profile on SNS in Use

Year			LSSI	LIBF	Total
1	Gender	Male	9	13	
		Female	34	27	
	Total		43	40	83
2	Gender	Male	32	3	
		Female	51	41	
	Total		83	44	127
3	Gender	Male	7	9	
		Female	26	31	
	Total		33	40	57

N=283

Table 1 show the crosstabulation profile of the respondents in this descriptive study. The data profile organized based on school and gender to year of study. Based on year of study about 127 of the respondents is year 2 of their study whereby 83 from the Labuan School of Science Informatics and 44 respondents representing Labuan School of International Business and Finance. Amounted 210 (74%) of the respondents are female as compare 73 (26%) of the male respondents.

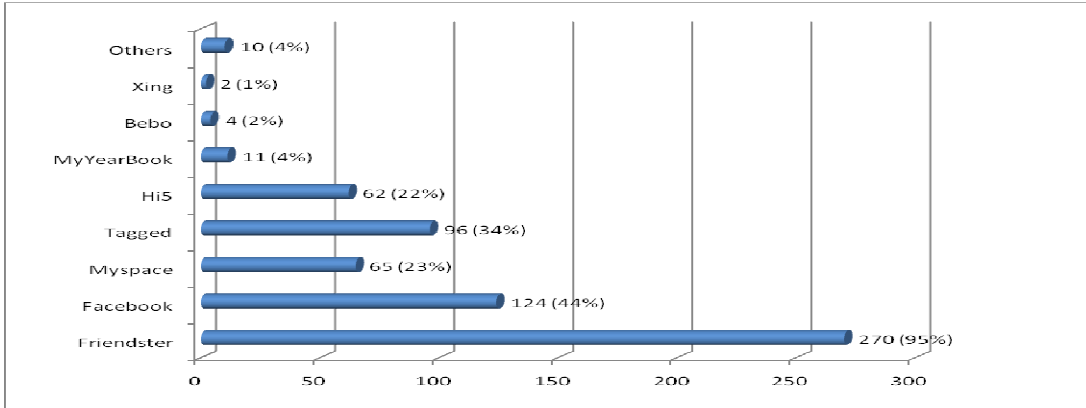


Figure 2: Respondents' SNS preferences

Figure 2 shows the SNS used by the respondents. Based on the table the majority 95% of the respondents prefer Friendster while 44% using Facebook and 34% prefer Tagged. But it was believe that the Facebook user expected to increase as the feature of Facebook more user friendly as compare to other SNS providers. Almost none of the respondents prefer Xing (1%) and Bebo (2%) because of the popularity for both SNS were very low compare to the well establish SNS like Friendster and Facebook.

Table 2: Respondents actual use of SNS

Weekly Frequency of SNS Use	Frequency	Percent
Less than once	29	10
1-3 times	105	37
4-6 times	52	18
Once a day	49	17
Several times a day	48	17
Time Spent Using SNS Each Time		
0-20 minutes	112	40
21-30 minutes	78	28
31-40 minutes	32	11
More than 40 minutes	61	22
Frequency of SNS Use		
Rarely	23	8
Seldom	25	9
Sometimes	129	46
Frequent	85	30
Extremely Frequent	21	7

N=283

Table 2 represent respondents' weekly frequency used of SNS and time respondents spending in using SNS each time they log-in to the SNS. Based on the table, about 37% of the respondents using SNS 1 to 3 times weekly with an average of 40% using it for at least 20 minutes each time log-in. However, about 17% of the respondents using SNS at least once daily throughout the week whereby 17% of the respondents spent approximately 22% of them used SNS more than 40 minutes. About 40% respondents

state that the frequency of using SNS as sometimes in between classes whereas 30% of the respondents frequent user of the SNS. The next section presents the descriptive statistics for the five dimensions of TAM namely ease of use, perceive of usefulness, perceive of enjoyment, attitude and social norm amongst respondents of the study.

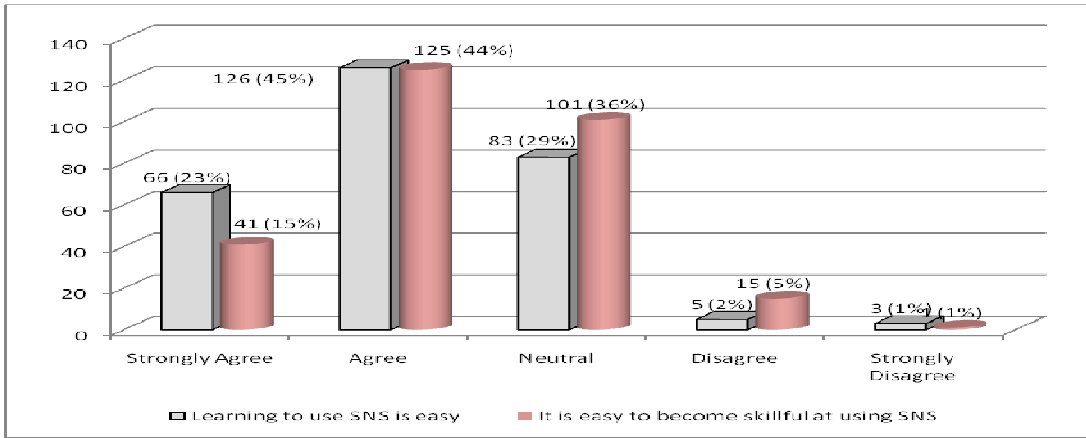


Figure 3: Ease of Use

Figure 3 shows the frequency items for ease of use of SNS based on one of the dimension in TAM model. Base on the figure, majority of the respondents agreed that learning using SNS is an easy tasks (68%) whilst 59% stated that it is easy to become skilful at using SNS to communicate.

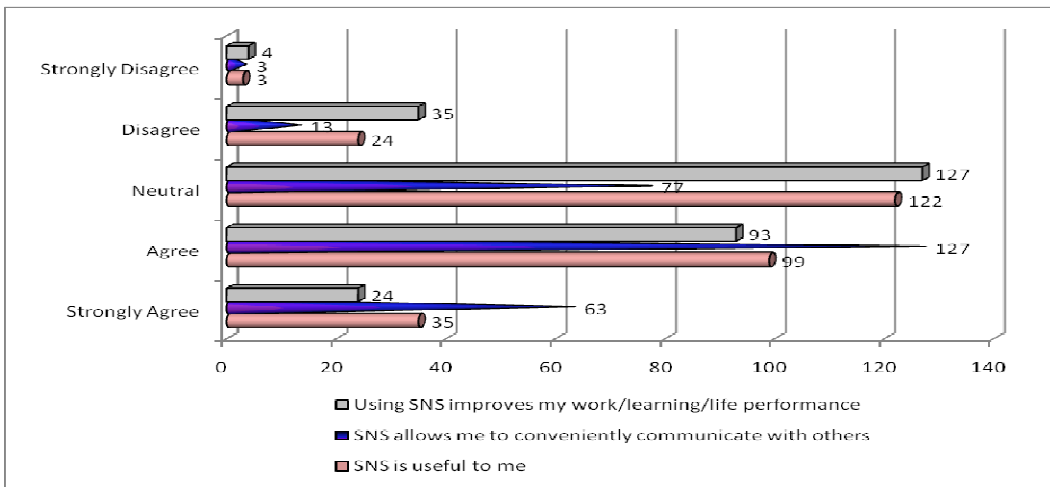


Figure 4: Perceived Usefulness

Respondents' purposes of using SNS are shown in above Figure 4. The descriptive data show a very good sense of understanding on how SNS had provides the convenient way to communicate with others (67%), whilst 62% respondents having fun using SNS. Thus, SNS play the tremendous useful and excitement of medium of communication amongst the youngster nowadays. This finding support Coleman (1988) early outcome on how the early social network sites happen to be an important resources accumulation of social capital through the relationship among people with common interest and culture background. However, 45% of respondents remarked SNS as a natural element in improving their working and learning experience. This result slightly consistent with

Anderson (2001) study SNS usage amongst the college students that SNS 81% (n=86) of the respondents using SNS primarily motivate by keeping in touch with friends and relatives instead of meeting new people and new online community.

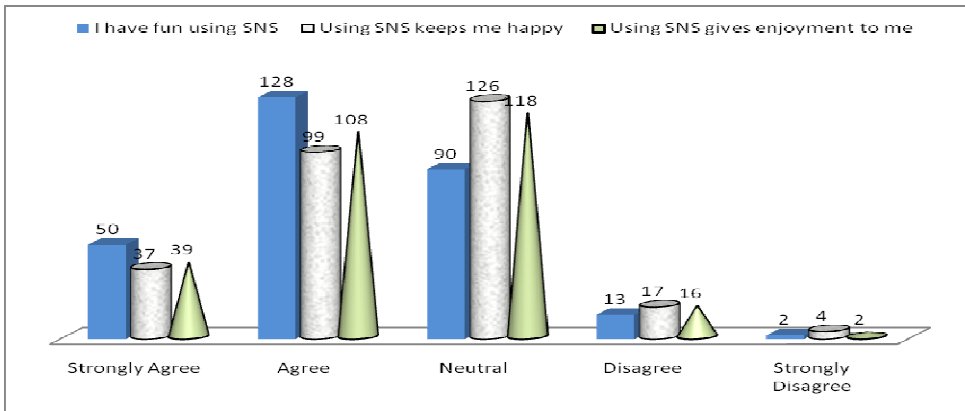


Figure 5: Perceived Enjoyment

Figure 5 describes the dimension perceived enjoyment among respondents when communicate using SNS. About 178 (63%) respondents agree they are having fun using SNS, while slightly 136 (48%) communication using SNS keep them happy as compare to slightly another 126 (44.5%) of the respondents stated 'neutral' as refer using SNS keep them happy. However, majority 147 (52%) of the respondents stated that they are enjoy using SNS as compare to 118 (42%) respondents stated 'neutral' using SNS gives them enjoyment.

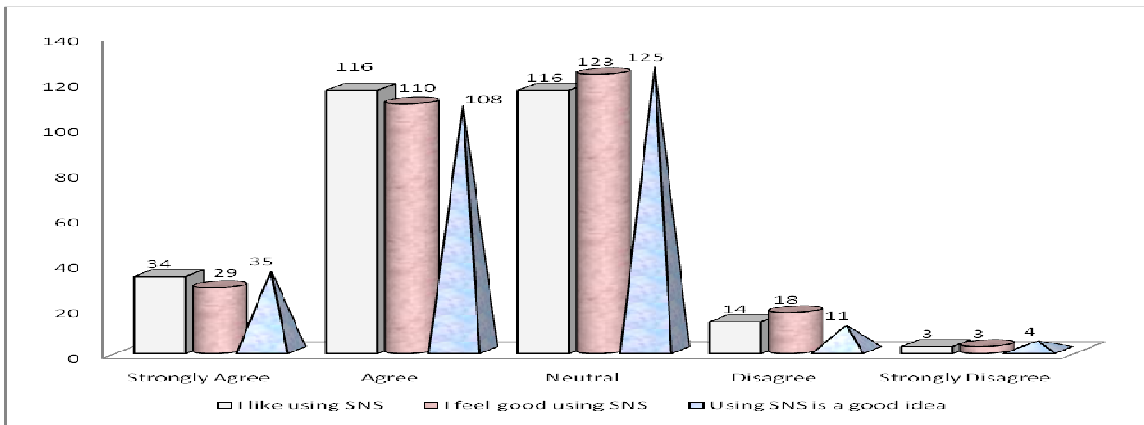


Figure 6: Attitude towards SNS

Figure 6 provides descriptive dimension of attitude towards SNS. Majority of the respondents did find positive attitude using SNS as main stream of communication as 53% of them like using SNS, 49% feels good about it and 50% remarks using SNS is a good idea. Anderson (2001) suggested that among college students, excessive Internet use might be related to developmental issues such as establishing new relationships and identity formation.

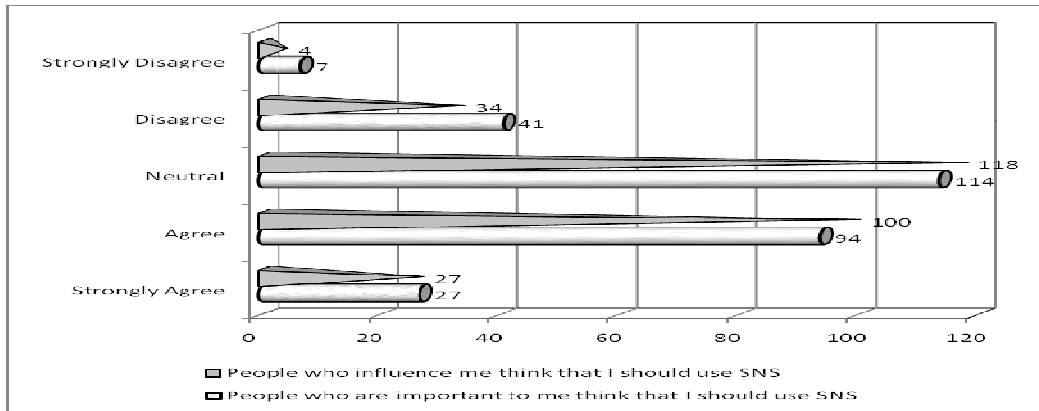


Figure 7: Social norms

Above Figure 6 shows social norms dimension of TAM model. 118 (42%) of the respondents sign-up to SNS with their own intention, whilst 127 (45%) of the respondents agree that people who influence them to sig-up to the SNS, and 121 (43%) of the respondents sig-up to SNS with the influence from people who are important to them. Only slightly small number of respondents 38 (13%) and 48 (17%) sig-up to SNS disagree and strongly disagree that people who have influence and important to them motivate them to sign-up for SNS account.

Conclusion

In conclusion, results from this descriptive study help to clarify the role of Internet and SNS in the lives of an university student. Nowadays, the mass adoption of SNS points to an evolution in human social interaction regardless age, culture background, occupations and general demographic profile includes university students. Thus, it is evidence that a university students will eventually used the SNS as a main medium of communication to maintain their relationships with friends and family members as well as expanding their niche community and connectivity to the outside world. Therefore this study provides the same conclusion form the study done by Anderson (2001) for college students, whereby SNS activities involved interacting with more specific groups of users that share specific issues and interest like music, art work and subjects.

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