

# **Users' Gratification, Self-Schema and Facebook Behaviour: A Study of Selective Young Facebook Users**

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*Major objective of the present study is to look at the relationship of personality traits of the young Facebook users with their behaviour on Facebook and the gratifications they obtain from Facebook usage. We have measured the gratifications with the help of 16 item scale developed on the basis of review of literature. The Facebook behaviour was measured in terms of number of friends and use of privacy settings on Facebook. The personality trait of users was measured in terms of the self-schema of Separateness-connectedness. A survey questionnaire was administered to the sample of 550 students who came from all over the country to attend the admission process of a well-known communication management school in India. Study concluded that perception of real self always gets reflected in the virtual behaviour of Facebook users. This can be considered as an extension of real self in their virtual behaviour. However, the comparison of the data between real space self-schema with the Facebook friendship behaviour gives more space to understand whether it is a mere extension or a modification in their real perception about their self.*

**Keywords:** New media, internet, facebook, users gratification, self-schema, identity, personality, online behaviour, social media.

The Internet has led the world to new ways of socializing that seem especially to attract young people. Novelty dazzles us. What is new is so striking and unexpected that the old, from which the new springs, is obscured from view. A page from Facebook can strike us a completely novel way of picturing oneself. With the path breaking penetration of the new media, social networking sites have ushered a new era in individual perception about life and society. Social media or web 2.0 technologies is an evolution in the development of social connectivity and is the new buzz word among the youngsters in society. From international friendship to regional

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conversation, the web is moving from a static collection of pages to a more social communication of platform where the word of mouth counts. Social media has become an integral part of online world. Around 82 percent of the world's Internet population age 15 and older that accessed the Internet. One out of every 5 minutes spent online is on a social networking sites (comScore Media Metrix, 2011).

The report of comScore Media Matrix (2010) on the growth of social networking market and respective shares of players in Indian market revealed that more than 33 million internet users who form 84 per cent of the total internet audience, visits social networking sites. The Indian social networking audience grew to 43 per cent in 2010, more than tripling the rate of growth of total internet audience. This report also revealed that among other social networking sites Facebook.com grabbed the number one ranking in the category for the first time in July 2010 with 20.9 million visitors. Face book grew rapidly at 179 per cent in July 2010 and India becomes the fourth fastest growing market for face book.

While providing an alternative space, the social networking sites like face book has given a new nomenclature to the understanding of individual satisfaction in presenting the self. Presentation of self through the user-generated content on the internet, civic engagement and psychological empowerment has received significant interest in recent years due to the phenomenal growth of the social networking sites like face book. While there have been studies which have examined online civic participation and political empowerment the way in which civic engagement offline and content generation online are related to psychological empowerment and presentation of self has not been thoroughly explored (Leung, 2009). This paper is an attempt to explore some of the underlying questions of user's gratifications and presentation of self in online social networking sites. Does user-generated content on the internet facilitate or impede psychological empowerment and presentation of self? In explaining media behaviour and its consequences, examining the objectives and underlying assumptions of uses and gratifications perspectives seems to constitute a good approach for the study of presentation of self in social networking sites. What motivates users to present themselves online by adopting different approaches viz. generating content, sharing pictures and interacting with fellow members and how the gratifications of generating internet content, psychological empowerment and civic engagement affect internet content-generation activities are important research topics.

With the underlying motives to present the self and gratifications derived from the presentation, sites like Facebook provides a platform where young people hang out together, and thus, where much identity work is done. In all identity work, the presentation of self is important. It is by mirroring themselves in the gaze of others that individuals develop a sense of who they are and who they wish to be (Harris, 1998).

*"Aspectsofselfthatareaccentuatedwilltypicallycorrespondtonorms, conventions and ideals that are embraced in the group that the actor belongs to, or wishes to belong to. Thus young people's presentations of self at Facebook have something to say about what norms and ideals look like among young people today (even if it is impossible to talk about young people as one specific and homogenous group). It also has something to say about what norms and ideals prevail at the specific Internet arena, Facebook (Elm, 2007)."*

### **Background and Theoretical Understanding**

Wimmer and Dominick (1994) proposed that uses and gratifications began when researchers became interested in why audiences engage in various forms of media behaviour, such as

watching television (Rubin, 1983). Use and gratifications theory assumes that audience members actively seek out the mass media, fulfil expectations and actively select media and media content to satisfy individual needs. The most important assumption of this approach is that the audience is active and media use is goal-directed. As early as the mid-1970s, Rosengren (1974) suggested that certain basic needs interact with personal characteristics, and that the social environment of the individual would produce different motives and gratifications behaviours which could come from using a particular media or other activities (Leung, 2009).

Previous studies of uses and gratifications on computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools include such devices as email, the internet, Short Message Service (SMS, 'texting') and ICQ ('I Seek You'). So far, only a few studies have examined the gratifications or motives associated with user-generated content online. For example, Papacharissi (2003) in his paper presented in Toronto analyzed the content of 150 English-language bloggers and revealed that blog posts were intended for friends or family to fulfil a social utility motivation. In the content analysis of 358 randomly selected front pages of Polish language blogs, researchers explored six major motivations for blogging (ibid): self-expression, social interaction, entertainment, passing the time, information, and professional advancement (Trammell, et al., 2004).

Palmgreen and Rayburn (1979) argued that the primary task facing media research was to integrate the roles played by gratifications and other factors into a general theory of media consumption. To understand the relationship between the motives for internet content generation and the types and amount of content generated online, the concepts of psychological empowerment can be applied to describe how individuals present their 'self and identity' in online social engagements. This media participation may subsequently affect psychological empowerment. However, few of the available published studies on psychological empowerment have examined civic engagement in relation to activities in user-generated internet content.

### **User Gratifications and Presentation of Self and Identity**

Computer mediated identity as with that of real life is socially constructed. However, the 'presence' of identity within virtual spaces is experienced through the technological mediation of the screen. This is a homogenising influence which emphasises particular methods of interaction and, in turn, impacts upon the interpretation and ascription of identities that can be 'virtually' achieved. The construction of computer mediated identity is a fraught position found between the interposed detachment of the screen and the immersive qualities found 'in' virtual space. The articulation of this relationship is an environment of exotic otherness in which interaction is experienced as a distant interchange anchored by the screen (Argyle 1969: 75 as cited in Greenhill, 2009). This is a simulacrum in which layers of meaning electronically overlay, and 'interlay', the 'presence' of space. This exotic configuration apparently provides a disassociation from real life experience which, in turn, enables a rethinking of the social influences that contribute to the construction of identities in both real and virtual lives. Post-structural approaches to interpreting society are particularly suited to the examination of computer mediated identity. The human/machine polarisations claimed for this space imitate the heavily trodden terrain of the mind/body. This dualistic reduction, in turn, produces considerations of power relations as a facet of this single dimension of concern (ibid).

Cyberspace is, through the 'vision' of the Information Superhighway, viewed especially by the mainstream media as a new frontier. Many images have become available in the light of Al Gore's use of the term 'Information Superhighway'. Images such as roads, bridges, networks and areas under construction all suggest a masculinised domain. However, it is difficult to

discern just what sort or scale of gender bias these representations portray. The importance of the use of the mind/body dichotomy in maintaining structural inequalities is evident here. While women are seen to hold a heavily gendered association with the body they will continue to be marginalised in cyberspace and more generally. Equally while it is assumed that masculine attributes provide advantages for the acquisition of knowledge, and by implication the mind, a hierarchical order of male hegemony will be maintained (Farganis 1986, 157). As Greenhill (2009) asserted that cyberspace allows a rethinking of the mind/body dichotomy because the processes of identity formation and sociality move beyond simple ascriptions. The shifting nature and ability to alter one's 'self' in cyberspace forces a reconsideration of the authority and legitimacy of conceptualisation of the mind and body as separable 'things'. The complex interplay of sociality that exists between people is similar, at a generalised level, within this space and those spaces of 'real life'. The difference of cyberspace is evidenced in the differing parameters applied to the construction of identity. The existent notions of identity construction that are associated with 'real life' have been mutually extended, reprioritised and re-crafted. Popular representations of melded mind with machine - the cyborg - even in the most extreme situations do not reflect the experience of computer mediated identity construction.

#### **Users' gratifications and sociability in Facebook in the context of self-schema separateness-connectedness(SC)**

In the context of users' gratifications in virtual communication, the present study is an attempt to connect both offline and online persona of young face book users. While many attempts were made to bring users gratifications in different online activities like email, blogging etc., present study is to bring the various aspects of sociability by highlighting major gratifications factors among face book users. To understand the dialogue on online vs. offline community and sociability in online communities, we need to understand the basic ethos that why people hang out in virtual communities. Despite the fact that virtual communities have existed in some fashion for over 25 years, little scholarly research has empirically addressed the reasons why people join virtual communities or choose to remain a patron of one. Indeed, Wellman (1997) specifically calls for research to examine whether online relationships are based on shared interests, similar social characteristics, or the need for frequent communication. Accordingly, the purpose of this exploratory research is to examine, based on first-hand accounts, what are the major gratifications derived by the users by being a member of a virtual community like face book. To bring the offline persona in online social interaction, the concept of self-schema separateness-connectedness would be analysed in the context of users' gratifications in face book. According to Wang and Mowen (1997),

*"Self-schema separateness-connectedness (SC) reflects and individual's self-perception in relation to others. A "separated" person has a sense of independence and perceives him/herself as an individual who is distinct from others ("I am me"). The separated person also tends to distinguish himself/herself by making clear boundaries between himself/herself and others as a part of his/her self-identity. A "connected" person has a sense of interdependence and sees himself/herself as continuation of others ("I am a part of others"), or sees others as an extension of the self. The connected person has a greater empathy towards others and view important others as "part" of the self."*

The offline separateness-connected persona will be analysed in the context of users' gratifications in virtual social communication. Three major questions will be answered to

understand different gratifications factors among Facebook users in the context of sociability and presentation of self will be derived from the Wang and Mown scale of SC. Following research question will bring the major connection between gratifications factors and presentation of self-schema separateness-connectedness online.

### **Research Questions**

Specifically this paper responds to following research questions:

RQ 1 - What are the gratifications users obtain from using face book?

RQ 2 - What are the personality traits of these users in terms of the self-schema of Separateness-connectedness?

RQ 3 - How self-schema of Separateness-connectedness is related to gratifications?

RQ 4.1 - What is the relationship between self-schema of Separateness-connectedness and use of privacy settings?

RQ 4.2 - How face book behaviour is related to self-schema of Separateness-connectedness?

### **Method**

A major part (53 per cent) of the face book user population of India is consists of youth within the age group of 18 to 25 years (Datta, 2011). Therefore we decided to focus on this age group. The sample of the study consisted of the candidates who were attending the admission process of the one of the top communication and management institutes in India, in the year 2011. These candidates came for the admission process from different parts of the country. Total 550 candidates, who constituted the universe of the study, were administered a survey questionnaire.

A clear announcement regarding the survey study having no relation with the admission process was made at the very beginning of the administration of the questionnaire. Responding to the questionnaire was kept optional. No names and contact details of the students were recorded on the questionnaire. Candidates who are the Facebook users only were asked to fill the questionnaire. After scrutiny, 455 questionnaires were selected for the study.

We measure the gratifications obtained from Facebook use with a 16 item scale, which were derived from review of literature. Each of these items explained a reason of using Facebook. Students were asked to mark their agreement to these reasons on the five point scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. To study the self-schema of connectedness and separateness, we adopted the nine item scale developed by Wang and Mowen (1997). Student-respondents were asked to rate the nine statements on a 5-point scale collectively describing traits of connectedness and separateness. Higher score on the scale indicated separateness.

We measure the Facebook behaviour of respondents in terms of whether they use privacy settings or not, type of privacy settings used, number of friends on Facebook, number of friends they are regularly are in touch with and number of friends request ignored. Questions asking above information were asked in the administered questionnaire.

### **Analysis and Findings**

RQ. 1 - *What are the gratifications users obtain from using Facebook?*

To find out the gratifications students seek from using Facebook, as part of the questionnaire we administered a gratifications scale containing 16 items. These items described various reasons of using Facebook. Students were asked to mark their responses to each of the item on a five point scale. Factor analysis of student responses revealed four major gratifications that are obtained from using Facebook: Relationship maintenance, User-friendliness, Relaxation, and Connecting with old friends.

Table 1. Gratifications of using Facebook

Factors	Factor loadings
Factor I Relationship maintenance	
Enable me to see people's status	.795
Allows me to see what my friends are doing	.715
Helps me connect to friends' friends	.639
Helps me share photos and videos	.563
Provides continuous updates on people, news and events	.521
Allows me in expressing opinions	.416
Factor II User-friendliness	
Easy to use	.881
Interface is clean and uncluttered	.845
No extra effort to learn, use	.725
Factor III Relaxation	
Helps me relax	.905
Helps me relieve stress	.889
Provides hours of leisure	.631
Factor IV Connecting with old friends	
Helps me connecting friends far away	.843
Helps me in getting in touch with old friends and colleagues	.787

The most obtained gratifications factor from Facebook use is 'relationship maintenance.' It includes the reasons such as sharing photos with friends, get to know what others are doing and what status message they have put on their profile. Through such activities they maintain their relationship. 'User-friendliness' is the second most obtained gratifications factor. This connotes use-friendliness of the Facebook application. It describes that these students use Facebook because it is very convenient for them to do all the functions on the application, it has very clean and uncluttered interface and they do not feel any difficulty and can use it very easily. This gratifications factor is very similar to what Urista, Dong and Day (2009) have found and called 'Convenient communication.'

The third gratifications factor is 'relaxation.' It explains that using Facebook also serves as a mean to get relief from stress and be relaxed. This factor matches the findings of Krishnatray et al (2009) regarding the gratifications of the Internet use. Fourth factor 'Connecting with friends,' explains that getting connected with friends who are away from home and contact those friends and relatives who were lost or not in touch for a long time, are the most popular reasons why these student users use Facebook.

#### RQ 2 - *What are the personality traits of these users in terms of the self-schema of Separateness-connectedness?*

We used Wang and Mowen's self-schema separateness-connectedness scale to find out Facebook users' self-perception in relation to others. This scale has nine items describing the Separateness-connectedness in the personality. Respondents were asked to mark their

responses to each of these items on a likert scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The descriptive inquiry of all of these personality traits of connectedness and separateness revealed that 67 per cent users prefer to remain cool and do not get excited even when they are surrounded by the excited people. These users (85 per cent) prefer to be like the way they are and are not bothered about what others want them to be alike. 76 per cent stick to their opinions if they think they are right, no matter even if their stand affects their popularity. This shows their independent thinking about themselves. 53 per cent of them feel that they are adult and that means they are independent and distinct of others, whereas 30 per cent prefer to be neutral on this issue. Only 25 per cent users prefer to rely on someone else to solve their problems whereas 46 per cent prefer to solve it on their own rather than relying on someone else. 53 per cent users don't share their private things with others. There is no clear cut pattern in the views of these users regarding statements such as solving problems on their own, keeping clear cut boundary between them and others and getting involved into other people's problems. All these traits indicate that there is a tilt of separateness in the personality of these youth.

*RQ 3 - How self-schema of separateness-connectedness is related to gratifications?*

Using percentiles of 33.33 and 66.66, we divided the respondents in the study according to their perceptions about self-schema in to three categories: low separateness, moderate separateness and high separateness. We compared the two extreme categories of low separateness and high separateness with respect to the gratifications these users obtain from using Facebook. T test revealed significant difference between the respondents with self-perception of low separateness and high separateness with regard to the gratifications factor of relaxation, it was found out that users having low separateness (M = 09.53, SD = 8.79) seek more gratifications than users with high separateness. There is no such significant difference between the two groups with regard to the gratifications of relationship maintenance, user-friendliness of Facebook, and connecting with old friends.

*RQ 4.1 - What is the relationship between self-schema of Separateness-connectedness and use of privacy settings?*

Though not significant, but the data indicate that more users (88.5 per cent) with high separateness use privacy settings on Facebook than the users with moderate separateness (85 per cent) and low separateness (84 per cent).

Table 2. Use of privacy settings

Self-schema	Use privacy settings	Do not use privacy settings	Total
Low Separateness	136 (84.0%)	26 (16.0%)	162 (100.0%)
Moderate Separateness	101 (84.9%)	18 (15.1%)	119 (100.0%)
High Separateness	154 (88.5%)	20 (11.5%)	174 (100.0%)

Most of the users prefer to use customized privacy setting rather than depending upon recommended by the Facebook. The data shows that as the level of separateness increases more users tend to use customized privacy settings (low separateness 78 per cent, moderate

separateness 81 per cent and high separateness 82 per cent). But this change is statistically insignificant.

Table 3. Type of privacy setting used

Self-schema	Recommended	Customised	Total
Low Separateness	30 (21.9%)	107 (78.1%)	137 (100 %)
Moderate Separateness	20 (19.2%)	84 (80.8%)	104 (100%)

#### RQ.4.2-How Facebook behavior is related to self-schema of Separateness-connectedness?

There is no significant difference between the users of low and high separateness with respect to the number of friends they have on Facebook, number of friends they are in touch with regularly and the number of friends' requests they have ignored. But the descriptive statistics found out some differences between these two groups. It was found out that on average, users with low separateness have 285 friends on Facebook whereas users with high separateness have 291 friends.

Students with low separateness ( $M = 64.66$ ,  $SD = 66.92$ ) are regularly in touch with more number of friends than the students with high separateness ( $M = 61.04$ ,  $SD = 64.98$ ). In the case of ignoring friends requests on Facebook it was found out that, users with low separateness ( $M = 63.95$ ,  $SD = 77.09$ ) ignored more friends' requests than that users with high separateness ( $M = 51.15$ ,  $SD = 74.70$ ), on Facebook.

### Discussion

Present study is aimed at to understand real and virtual space in the context of Facebook user's behaviour. To understand users behaviour in the virtual space we have consider two major dimensions and attempted to establish the link between virtual behaviour and real self. For the purpose of analysis we would like to compare self-schema of Separateness-connectedness in real space with the virtual behaviour in terms of factors of gratifications. This study attempts to bring real space self-schema and virtual behaviour gratifications of the Facebook users to understand weather there is a real life extension in virtual space with the content and discontent between the real and virtual space.

The virtual space behaviour is majored in terms of gratifications. The factor analysis revealed five major gratifications users obtain from using Facebook: Relationship maintenance, User-friendliness, Relaxation, Connecting with old friends. The most obtained gratifications factor from Facebook use is 'relationship maintenance.' Relationship maintenance in real space is a real space phenomenon and often people judge others in terms of the nature of relationship maintenance. Individual character always gets reflected in the way he/she maintain the social relationship. In the context of the virtual behaviour it is found that relationship maintenance is the most obtained gratifications. It includes the reasons such as sharing photos with friends, get to know what others are doing and what status message they have put on their profile. Relationship maintenance as a factor of gratifications among the Facebook users is followed by user friendliness, relaxation and connecting with old friends. Out of these four factors of gratifications relationship maintenance, relaxation and connecting with old friends can be discussed in the



context of individual's self and personality. These factors bring the relation aspects of an individual in the context of others. We considered these three gratifications factors to discuss in the context of self-schema of an individual in real space. While other gratifications represent the technical aspects of Facebook use. User friendliness as a gratifications factor is relative to individuals own expertise of use.

In the RQ 2 the attempt was made to understand the self-schema of users in real space to understand the spiritedness and connectedness. A descriptive inquiry of the users' personality traits of connectedness and separateness revealed that 67 per cent users prefer to remain cool and do not get excited even when they are surrounded by the excited people. These users (85 per cent) prefer to be like the way they are and are not bothered about what others want them to be alike. 76 per cent stick to their opinions if they think they are right, no matter even if their stand affects their popularity. This shows their independent thinking about themselves. 53 per cent of them feel that they are adult and that means they are independent and distinct of others, whereas 30 per cent prefer to be neutral on this issue. Only 25 per cent users prefer to rely on someone else to solve their problems whereas 46 per cent prefer to solve it on their own rather than relying on someone else. 53 per cent users don't share their private things with others. Using percentiles of 33.33 and 66.66, we divided the respondents in the study according to their perceptions about self-schema in to three categories: low separateness, moderate separateness and high separateness.

However, as per the major objective of the research paper and RQ 3, the relationship between self-schema and gratifications obtained from using Facebook, privacy setting in Facebook and virtual friendship behaviour brings the major question of extension of self in the context of real vs. virtual. The data suggests that the respondents who consider themselves as low separated seek more gratifications of relationship maintenance while using Facebook than users who perceive themselves as high separated. Major findings of the comparison between real self-schema and virtual gratifications also indicates significant difference between the respondents with self-perception of low separateness and high separateness with regard to the gratifications factor of relaxation, it was found out that users having low separateness seek more gratifications than users with high separateness. However this is also important to notice that in other two gratifications cases of relationship maintenance and connecting with old friends it is found that users' perception in real space reflected in their virtual behaviour and also supports the theoretical observation of real space behaviour reflected and get an extension in virtual space.

Similarly in case of privacy settings also we have found that more users (88.5 per cent) with high separateness use privacy settings on Facebook than the users with moderate separateness (85 per cent) and low separateness (84 per cent). Level of separateness increases more users tend to use customized privacy settings (low separateness 78 per cent, moderate separateness 81 per cent and high separateness 82 per cent). Facebook friendship behaviour of users also suggests that users with low separateness have 285 friends on Facebook whereas users with high separateness have 291 friends. Users with low separateness are regularly in touch with more number of friends than the students with high separateness and users with low separateness in the self-schema scale ignored more friends' requests than that user with high separateness in Facebook. It indicates that though the users perceive themselves as highly separated persons than others, their behaviour is no significantly different than low separated users on virtual space of the Facebook. They don't keep themselves away from making friends and getting in touch with them regularly on Facebook. That means though users perceive

themselves as high separated in material world, they make more friends on virtual world of Facebook than the low separateness users.

### Conclusion

Findings of the RQ 1, 2 & 3 leads to the RQ 4 of this study on users' perception of self in real space and their behaviour in virtual space or Facebook. The answers of RQ 3 which gives the comparison between users perception of their self in real space with gratifications factors, Facebook friendship behaviour and privacy setting indicates that perception of real self always gets reflected in the virtual behaviour of Facebook users. This can be considered as an extension of real self in their virtual behaviour. However, the comparison of the data between real space self-schema with the Facebook friendship behaviour gives more space to understand whether it is a mere extension or a modification in their real perception about their self. Going back to the theoretical orientation of this present study this is also to note that while providing an alternative space, the social networking sites like Facebook has given a new nomenclature to the understanding of individual satisfaction in presenting the self.

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