

The Acceptance of Social Network Service of Generation Y in Thailand

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Abstract

This research is aimed to 1) study the relationship between the perceived usefulness in the use of social network service and the behaviour of Generation Y people in using social network service; 2) study the relationship between the perceived ease of use of social network service and the behaviour of Generation Y people in using social network service; 3) study the relationship between the subjective norms and the behaviour of Generation Y people in using social network service. The samples of this study are Generation Y of age between 20 - 35 years old who use social network service and live in Bangkok, Thailand. Data are collected by survey questionnaires from 400 respondents. Research results are analyzed with percentage and means. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient is used to test relationship between variables.

The results of the study showed that most of the samples are female, 20-25 years old, with Bachelor's degree. Most of them are company employees who get a monthly salary of 10,001-20,000 baht. The respondents had perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and subjective norms at a "high" level and behaviour in using social network service was at a "moderate" level. The test of hypotheses showed that perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and subjective norms had positive correlation with the usage of social network service in significant level at 0.01

Keywords: Acceptance, social network service, Generation Y, Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, Subjective Norms

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Introduction

Today we are in the age of information technology. Thanks to the technological advances, the forms and methods of communication have tremendously changed from the past. This is particularly true for distant communications through different forms and channels that allow the sender to pass the message to the receiver. New technologies have been developed to meet this demand of communications. The senders no longer have to physically send their messages to the receivers. There are different forms of communication, such as telephone and communicating through the Internet with online social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, Line and other similar applications.

A survey in 2013 on the behaviour of Internet users in Thailand, by the Information and Communications Technology Ministry's Electronic Transactions Development Agency (Public Organization) found that within 12 years since 2001, the weekly time that Internet users spent online increased constantly, by 76.3 per cent. The survey also found that 9 per cent of the respondents spent as many as 105 hours a week online. The Internet-based activity that has become increasingly popular is social network services (SNS).

Of the 23,907 Internet users surveyed, as many as 22,421 people, or 93.8 per cent, said they used social network services. Only 6.2 per cent of the respondents said they had never used SNS. The most popular social media is Facebook, used by 92.2 per cent of those surveyed, followed by Google+ (63.7 per cent), and Line (61.1 per cent). This is compatible with the number of Facebook users in Thailand, which stood at 19.2 million as of June 15, 2013. At present, the Generation Y (referring to those aged between 20 and 35 who were born between 1980 and 1995) are people with high flexibility. They are also optimistic, energetic and ready to prove their potential, as well as eager to learn new things and improve themselves. They are people with multi-tasking ability, technology-savvy, creative and they prefer to work as a team (Sirakidakorn, 2011). Generation Y has one common important quality -- they are familiar with technology and they are good at using computer and spend much of their time in the cyberspace. A large percentage of Generation Y uses social network services. A survey by the National Statistical Office in 2013 on the household ownership and usage of information and communications technology found that people aged between 15 and 24 had the highest percentage of Internet usage among the age groups surveyed, at 58 per cent.

The Generation Y people in Thailand number about 10 million, accounting for 16 per cent of the total population. And they also are an important group of consumers with high purchasing power because they are in the working age and they have income. It is interesting to know and understand the behaviour of Generation Y people in using online social network services. The findings can prove beneficial to marketers and people involved with information technology. A survey should be conducted to determine what factors lead to acceptance and usage of online social networks within Generation Y. The following are objectives of this research study.

Objectives of the study

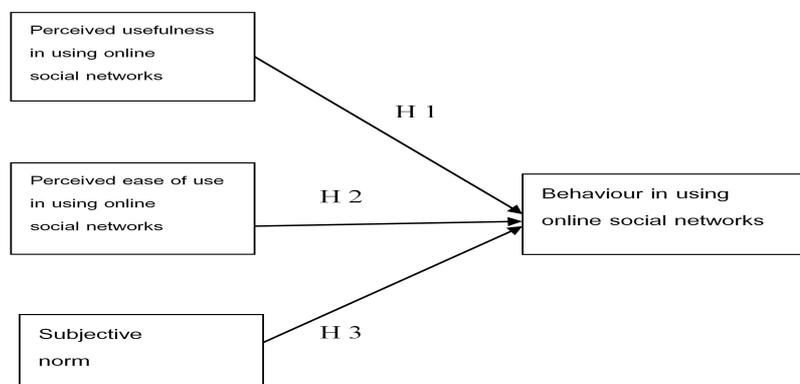
1. To study the relationship between perceived usefulness in using online social networks and the behaviour of Generation Y people in using online social networks,
2. To study the relationship between perceived ease of use in using online social networks and the behaviour of Generation Y people in using online social networks,
3. To study the relationship between the subjective norm and the behaviour of Generation Y people in using online social networks.

Theory and Literature Review

This research study was conducted with an adaptation of the Technology Acceptance Model, or TAM, which was developed from Ajzen and Fishbein's (1970; 1972) Theory of Reasoned Action in the field of social psychology. The model, developed by Davis (1989), explains how users adopt and use technology. When users were introduced to new software, important factors that influenced their decision to use it were as follow:

1. Perceived usefulness: The level of individual belief that use of technology helps increase the efficiency of their work,
2. Perceived ease of use: The level of individual belief that use of technology does not require effort.

Several research studies were based on that model, with additional variations or factors. This study on the Generation Y acceptance of social network services is based on the Technology Acceptance Model, with an additional concept of subjective norm. Here is the conceptual framework of this research study.



Hypotheses of the Research

1. The perceived usefulness in using online social networks correlates with the behaviour of Generation Y people in using online social networks,
2. The perceived ease of use in using online social networks correlates with the behaviour of Generation Y people in using online social networks,
3. The subjective norm correlates with the behaviour of Generation Y people in using online social networks.

Research Methodology

This study on Generation Y people's acceptance of social network services is quantitative research, with the use of survey research method. Questionnaires were used as the main research tool in collecting data. Here are details of the research methodology.

Population, Sample Group and Sampling Method

The population of this research is people of the Generation Y who are aged between 20 and 35. They are residents of Bangkok and regular users of social network services. The size of the sample group was determined with the use of Taro Yamane's published table, at the confidence level of 95% and a 5% margin of error. The sample group totaled 400 people, and they were selected through the Accidental Sampling method. Data were collected from 200 samples through online social networks, and from 200 other samples through in-person questionnaire. The data were collected in May 2015.

Data Collecting Tools

The tool used in collecting data is questionnaire, which was created specially to meet the objectives of this study. The questionnaire has the following structure.

Part 1 contains questions about population factors, such as sex, age, education, occupation and income.

Part 2 involves questions about perceived usefulness in using social network services.

Part 3 consists of questions about perceived ease of use in using social network services.

Part 4 contains questions about the subjective norm.

Part 5 consists of questions about the behaviour of using social network services.

Before the questionnaire was used in collecting data, this researcher tested it with a sample group with qualities similar to those of the actual sample group. Thirty sets of the questionnaire were used in the test. The result was calculated for the reliability value of the questionnaire. The calculation was made with Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient formula, and the confidence value was 0.76. After being collected, the data were checked for accuracy. Then they were encoded and processed with the use of statistical computer software. The statistical methods used in this research study are as follows:

1. Descriptive statistics analysis: This researcher used this method in frequency distribution, calculation of percentage, mean and standard deviation to explain the demographic characteristics of the sample group, the level of perceived usefulness, the level of ease of use, the reference group and the behaviour of online social networks.

2. Inferential statistics analysis: This method was used to test the hypotheses by determining correlations between independent variables and dependent variables, through tests of correlation coefficients with Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient method.

Research Results

1. General information about the sample group

It was found that the sample group consisted mostly of women. A total of 284 of them, or 71 per cent, were aged between 20 and 25. And most of them were bachelor's degree graduates. The second largest group was those who obtained post-graduate degrees. Most people in the sample group were company employees and most of them earned between 10,001 and 20,000 baht in monthly salary.

2. Perceived usefulness

The sample group's perceived usefulness of social network services was in a high level, with an average value of 4.09. Most of the sample group shared a view that the online social network helped them to study and work more conveniently and quickly, with an average value of 4.25. The second largest group viewed that the online social network created an online community helping them to find information and share information with other people online, with an average value of 4.20.

3. Perceived ease of use

The sample group's perceived ease of use in using social network services was in a high level, with an average value of 4.01. The majority of the sample group shared a view that the online social network helped them to communicate with other people at anytime they wanted, with an average value of 4.33. The second largest group viewed that the online social network helped them to communicate with other people at any place they liked, with an average value of 4.26.

4. Subjective norm

The sample group had subjective norm in using social network services at a high level, with an average value of 3.46. Most of the sample group said they used social network services because they had to communicate with their colleagues about work and with teachers about their study, with an average value of 4.10. The second largest group said they were introduced or persuaded by their friends to use social network services, with an average value of 3.66. The smallest group said they were introduced or persuaded by their parents or guardians to use social network services, with an average value of 2.74.

5. Behaviour of using online social network

The sample group on average had the behaviour of using the online social network at a moderate level, with an average value of 3.02. Most of them used Line, with an average value of 4.60, followed by Facebook and YouTube respectively. The smallest group of them used blogs, with an average value of 1.97. The largest part of the sample group -- 129 people or 32.3 per cent -- spent an average 16 - 30 minutes consecutively a day using social online services. Those who used the SNS more than 15 times a day constituted 36.7 per cent of the respondents. Those who spent an average of more than four hours a day in the online social network constituted 36.3 per cent. Most of the respondents, or 59.3 per cent, used social network services between 20.01 and 24.00 hours. The majority of the sample group -- 351 people or 87.8 per cent -- said that their main objective in using social network services was for entertainment. The second largest group -- 333 people or 83.3 per cent -- said they aimed at communication. Another group -- 283 people or 70.8 per cent -- said their

goal was to research for information, exchange information and follow the current news.

6. Testing of the hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Perceived usefulness in using social network services correlates with the behaviour of Generation Y people in using social network services.

This study found that the perceived usefulness in using social network services has positive correlation with the behaviour of using social network services, with statistical significance at 0.01 and the correlation coefficient value at a low level of 0.299.

Table 1: Correlation coefficient value of the perceived usefulness in using social network services and the behaviour of using social network services

Variable	Behaviour of using social network services	P-Value	Result
Perceived usefulness in using social network services	.299**	0.000	Low
Statistical significance at 0.01**			

Hypothesis 2: The perceived ease of use in using social network services correlates with the behaviour of Generation Y people in using social network services.

It was found that the perceived ease of use in using social network services has positive correlation with the behaviour of using social network services, with statistical significance at 0.05 and the correlation coefficient value at a low level of 0.106.

Table 2: Correlation coefficient value of the perceived ease of use in using social network services and the behaviour of using social network services

Variable	Behaviour of using social network services	P-Value	Result
Perceived ease of use in using social network services	.106*	0.034	Low
Statistical significance at 0.05*			

Hypothesis 3: The subjective norm in using social network services correlates with the behaviour of Generation Y people in using social network services.

This study found that the subjective norm in using social network services has positive correlation with the behaviour of using social network services, with statistical significance at 0.01 and the correlation coefficient value at a low level of 0.263.

Table 3: Correlation coefficient value of the subjective norm in using social network services and the behaviour of using social network services

Variable	Behaviour of using social network services	P-Value	Result
Subjective norm	.299**	0.000	Low
Statistical significance at 0.01**			

Discussion of the Findings

This research study found that the Generation Y people have the perceived usefulness and the perceived ease of use in using social network services at a high level. This reflects an important quality of this generation of people who grow up with technologies. Therefore, they have good understanding and are well aware of the usefulness of technology. They are familiar with different technologies, particularly online social networks.

The Generation Y people are well aware of the benefits from using social network services. They view that the services can be used with ease and they see no complexity in using online social network. This is different from people in the Generation X or the Baby Boom generation.

There are various articles and research papers explaining about people in Generation Y. A research paper by Pricewaterhouse Coopers (in a report by Thai PBS television channel, <http://news.thaipbs.or.th,2013>) entitled “NextGen: A Global Generational Study 2013” stated that Generation Y people, who were born between 1980 and 1995 grew up during the digital age. So they are familiar with communicating with email, mobile phone technology, the Internet and online media such as Facebook, Skype, Facetime, Twitter and several others. This generation is confident in expressing their views and they can keep a balance between work and lifestyle. This is compatible with what Witawit-olan (2007) wrote about 11 important qualities of Generation Y people. One of the qualities is familiarity with technology. This group of people treat technology as part of their life. They regularly use Facebook, MSN chat program, and iPhone.

Regarding the factors on subjective norms, this study found that Generation Y people have a high level of the subjective norm. It may be because this group of people wants social acceptance. So, the reference group has much influence in the use of social network services. In particular, people need to use the services in order to communicate with colleagues about work, with teachers about study, and also with friends. The mean is the highest at 4.10.

Colleagues, teachers and classmates are an important reference group that has influence on people in using social network services. This is in line with the Theory of Reasoned Action by Ajzen and Fishbein(1970). The theory states that a human decision to engage or not engage in any behaviour is influenced by an important factor -- the reference group. This refers to people close to them, such as parents, friends, siblings or employers. Change or development of attitude depends largely on our own beliefs. People are influenced by society that we belong and also by their friends. These beliefs are collected and formed into personal attitude. This is called “subjective norm”.

The finding is also compatible with results of a study by Siam Commercial Bank’s Economic Intelligence Centre (2014), which found that Generation Y people are generally sociable through online chats. It was found that they shared their experiences and interesting stories through Line. In order to win acceptance from their friends or close circles, this group of people use social network services introduced to them by friends.

This study about the behaviour of using online social network found that the sample group's behaviour in using SNS was at a moderate level. The three most popular online social networks were Line, Facebook and Instagram. The finding was in line with an earlier survey by Nielsen Informat Mobile Insights (2013), which listed the top 10 most popular smart-phone applications among smart-phone users in Thailand. It was found that Line was the most popular app, followed by Facebook. Most of the users said their main goal in using social network services was for communication and entertainment.

Another interesting finding of this study was that Generation Y used social network services for more than 15 times a day. They spent an average of over four hours a day connected to the online social network -- which was a rather high number. This finding was in line with a survey by Zocial Inc. (<http://www.it24hrs.com/2014/thai-social-network-day-in-a-life/>, 2015). The company's business involves analysis of information regarding to online social networks. A survey on Thai people's everyday use of social media, from daybreak until nightfall, found that almost every day, Thai people's behaviour of using the Internet often involved social network services. This became part of an everyday life for the Thai people who liked getting online. Most of them started using social network services since waking up until shortly before going to bed. During the day, they used social network services while in restroom, when commuting to work and during work.

Hypothesis 1: The study found that the perceived usefulness of using social network services had a positive correlation with the behaviour of using social network services, with statistical significance of 0.01 and the correlation coefficient value at a low level of 0.29.

This means people with a high level of perceived usefulness of using social network services tend to have a high level of acceptance in using social network services. In this age of information technology, online social networks have increasing influence in people's everyday life. And they offer benefits involving work and study, not just entertainment alone. Therefore, it is easy for the Generation Y people, who have a high level of perceived usefulness, to accept and use social network services. This is compatible with the Technology Acceptance Model or TAM (Davis, 1989), which explains how users accept and use technology. When users are introduced to new software, an important factor that influences their decision to use it is the perceived usefulness. This refers to the person's belief that the technology involves will help them increase the efficiency of their work. The results of several previous research studies supported this theory. Many of them focused directly on the correlation between perceived usefulness and use of technology. It was found that the perceived usefulness also had impacts on the use of technology (Agarwa and Prasad, 1997; Chau, 1996; Igarria et al, 1997). This study's result also was compatible with a research work of Szajna (1996), which found that the perceived usefulness directly affected not only behavioral intention, but also the usage itself. Moreover, the finding also was in line with a previous study by Sasithanakornkaew (2004), which found that the perceived usefulness impacted the behavioral intention and the behaviour of using community IT service centres in Thailand.

The perceived usefulness is an important factor in the Technology Acceptance Model that affects the behavioral intention and leads to the behaviour of using technology. Individuals tend to accept and use technology when they perceive the usefulness towards their work, making them work faster, more conveniently and more efficiently. The perceived usefulness is a factor that has the same meaning as relative advantage, which is a quality of an innovation that impacts the acceptance of innovations described by the Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 1995).

Hypothesis 2: The study found that the perceived ease of use in using social network services had positive correlation with the behaviour of using social network services, with statistical significance at 0.05 and correlation coefficient value at a low level of 0.106.

The finding pointed out that people with a high level of perceived ease of use have a more tendency to accept social network services and have the behaviour of using social network services. This is compatible with the Technology Acceptance Model, which states that perceived ease of use is a factor stemming from the use of a system that is independent from effort. That means only little effort is required in using technology. The ease of learning and use impacts the perceived usefulness and the intention to use that particular technology. The users will attempt to use it and they are likely to accept and continue using it in the future – which is acceptance. Therefore, the more the social network service is created or developed in a way that is easy to use, the more acceptance and usage it gets. Moreover, the study's finding also was consistent with some previous studies, which found that the perceived ease of use impacted the behavioral intention, with the effect value less than that of the perceived usefulness (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh and Davis, 1996; Szajna, 1996; Davis et al, 1989; Mathieson, 1999; Taylor and Todd, 1995b).

Hypothesis 3: This study found that the subjective norm in using social network services had positive correlation with the behaviour of using social network services, with statistical significance at 0.01 and correlation coefficient value at a low level of 0.263.

The finding pointed to the fact that the reference group, such as people close to Generation Y, had influence on their behaviour of using social network services. It was because Generation Y people were sociable and regularly shared information with their friends or people within their circles. The reference group tends to have influence on people's use of social network services. If they are introduced to social network services, Generation Y people tend to be convinced although they are highly self-confident. Due to their need to communicate and exchange information, a network is necessary for them. This group of people needs to rely on social network services that are also used by others in their network. This finding is in line with the Theory of Reasoned Action by Ajzen and Fishbein (1970). The theory states that people develop or improve their attitude, which results from their beliefs, because they are influenced by society. People belong to society and they are influenced by their friends. People's beliefs are accumulated and form their attitude. This may be called subjective norm. The finding is in line with a previous study by Kaewkhiew (2012), which focuses on the acceptance of accessing the Internet on mobile phones by young people in Bangkok. That study found that the subjective norm had positive correlation with the behavioral intention in accessing the Internet on mobile phones.

When someone in a group accessed the Internet on mobile phone, other members of the group tended to follow suit. And finally all members of the group did the same thing. This reflected the fact that young people often copy the behaviour that is acceptable to society.

Recommendations Derived from the Study

The following are recommendations being derived from this study on the acceptance of social network services by Generation Y:

1. It was found that the perceived usefulness correlates with the acceptance of social network services by Generation Y people. So, people involved with information technology, including developers of software or applications relating to online social network should make the SNS further benefit the user's work, educational and entertainment demands. As a result, their products will earn more interest and acceptance from social network users.
2. Software and applications relating to social network services should be developed in a way that makes their use easier and more convenient. Although the study found that the Generation Y's perceived ease of use was at a high level, a finding showed an interesting fact that the sample group viewed that new SNS applications developed to replace the older ones became more complex and more difficult to use. Although Generation Y people grow with technology, SNS products that are easy to use will attract more users to their services. Many developers of SNS have attracted only a small number of users, including Google+ and Pinterest.
3. Online social network is an important channel of marketing communication with people in Generation Y. Marketers should consider using online social network in communicating with them. This study found that Generation Y people used social network services frequently every day. And they spent several hours online each day. We may say that online social network is part of their life.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. As this is a quantitative research study, future studies of a similar subject should be carried out as qualitative research for in-depth study of the perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, subjective norm, as well as the behaviour and usage of social network services. In-depth interview or focus group discussion may be used to collect data.
2. In the future, additional factors involving the acceptance of technology may be studied, such as anxiety of users, enjoyment and attitude toward technology.

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