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## Who are the Heavy Users of Social Networking Sites Among College Students? [Slides]

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# **Who are the Heavy Users of Social Networking Sites among College Students?**

## **A Study of Social Networking Sites and College Students**

paper presented at Communication Technology Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Association Annual Convention, August 10-13, 2011 St. Louis, Missouri.

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# Background

- SNS popularity: 7 out of the top 10 most visited Web sites worldwide are SNSs (Alexa.com, 2008)
- Extensive SNS usage among college students: 73% teens (12 – 17) and 82% young adults (18 – 29) use the SNS (Pew Research Center, 2011)



# Introduction

- Demographic predictors of college students' SNS usage
- How sociability gratifications and information-seeking gratification contribute to college students' SNS usage
- The relationship between college students' cell phone usage and SNS usage

# Uses and Gratifications of SNS

- People select media or messages from an array of functional alternatives in response to their expectations and desires (Rubin, 2009).
- The assumptions of uses and gratifications underscore the role of audience initiative and activity (Rubin, 2009).
- Our study focuses on sociability gratification and news information seeking gratification

# Research Method

- Web survey of a public university in the Midwest from October 2010 to December 2010
- 476 students
- Students were asked about
  - SNS usage
  - Specific media usage—newspaper, television, radio, digital device
  - Demographic information

## Demographic Differences

- **RQ<sub>1</sub>**: Are there significant differences by gender, residence type, household income, age, ethnicity among college students' SNS usage?

<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	
13.2 hours/week	17.2 hours/week	p<0.01
<b>Caucasian</b>	<b>Minority</b>	
14.9 hours/week	19.5 hours/week	p = 0.04





# Sociability Gratification

- Sociability gratification definition
- Studies on the relationship between sociability gratification and SNS usage include Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Chen, 2011
- **H<sub>1</sub>**: Students with more friends in SNS are more likely to spend more time on SNS → *Generally supported*

Under 100 (n = 22)	101 – 500 (n = 193)	Over 500 (n = 194)	
9.8 hours/week	14.2 hours/week	19.1 hours/week	F = 6.36, p < 0.01

# Complementary Relationship between Cell Phone Usage and SNS Usage

-  SNS accompanied by  cell phones
- Is the relationship between SNS and cell phone usage complementary or substitutive?
- H2: Positive relationship between time spent on cell phone and time spent on SNS. → *Supported*  
( $r = 0.29$ ,  $p = 0.001$ )

# News Information-seeking Gratification

- Limited number of studies on news information-seeking gratification of SNS usage
- Internet users also used SNS to seek news online from professional news to personal news (Pew Research Center, 2010)
- Students use SNS as sources of political news (Baumgartner and Morris, 2010)

# News Information-seeking Gratification

- **H3a:** Students who follow Twitter or Facebook news feed for breaking news spend more time on SNS than those who do not. → supported ( $p = 0.001$ )
- **H3b:** Students who read soft news forwarded by friends spend more time on SNS than those who do not. → generally supported ( $p = 0.007$ )

# News Information-seeking Gratification

- **H<sub>3c</sub>**: Students who read political and social news forwarded by friends spend more time on SNS than those who do not. → generally supported ( $p = 0.05$ )
- **H<sub>3d</sub>**: Students who read personal or family news forwarded by friends spend more time on SNS than those who do not. → not supported

# News information seeking gratification

<b>Breaking news follower</b>	<b>Breaking news non-follower</b>	
20.26 hours/week	11.47 hours/week	P = 0.001
<b>Soft news reader</b>	<b>Soft news non-reader</b>	
19.43 hours/week	14.66 hours/week	P = 0.007
<b>Political news reader</b>	<b>Political news non-reader</b>	
18.98 hours/week	15.09 hours/week	P = 0.005

## Discussion

- Females and minorities are the mostly likely intensive users of SNS
- SNS as an indispensable socializing channel of college students explains their intensive use in SNS
- News information-seeking gratification needs to be considered as an important reason to understand college students' intensive consumption of SNS
- The popularity and widespread use of SNS is not related to SES and residence type