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Research in Progress

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Abstract

In this paper, we study factors that may influence users' continued use intentions of social networking tourism sites. We develop and test a multi-theoretical model based on the theory of planned behavior, self-determination theory, and social capital theory. The study combines qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative method is being used through interviews to explore the factors that motivate continued use intention, followed by the use of quantitative method through survey-based empirical analysis to evaluate the proposed multi-theoretical research model. This research in progress paper reports results from the qualitative study and preliminary findings of the quantitative study. The final reports will be presented at the PACIS conference.

Keywords: Social Networking, Social Tourism, Multi-Theoretical.

1   INTRODUCTION

Social networks are online communities of people who share common interests and activities. Social networking tourism is a niche social networking site (SNS) where users logon for the intention to meet and interact with other users for the purpose of traveling. While the social tourism sites contain the same components as general purpose SNSs, the goals and outcomes from these sites are different. Individuals participating in social tourism SNSs such as Couchsurfing.org seek to connect to others whom they previously did not know at remote locations with the intention of traveling and meeting offline. This environment connects individuals together to make planning and sharing their travel funs and it primarily consists of weak ties among friends.

The social media has fundamentally reshaped the way tourism-related information is currently shared, distributed and the way people plan for and consume travel. The social networking tourism community allows its members to develop and maintain social and economic relationships and explore new opportunities. The success of such a community depends on the understanding of member participation in and active contribution to the community. Tourism related sharing in the context of collaborative economy includes, but are not limited to, sharing of space, local food, spare resources, transportation, and visiting local attractions.

In this research an exploratory study is conducted evaluating the antecedents to the continued use of social tourism SNSs. To gain insights on the factors that influence the continued use of the social networking tourism sites by their users, the study integrates three theories – the theory of planned behavior, self-determination theory, and social capital theory – to propose and evaluate the resulting multi-theoretic model using structural equation modeling. The study combines qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative method is used to extract potential key constructs to apply them to the quantitative (empirically-tested) method. The qualitative research involved systematic and detailed study of social network tourism users using interviews intended to elicit detailed, in-depth accounts of the interviewee's experiences and perspectives to understand their motivations for continued use of the site. The qualitative non-numeric data that was gathered from the interviews were analyzed to extract key constructs. The two research questions addressed in this study are: (1) what are the effects of social capital in the context of social networking tourism? And (2) what influences people to continue using these specialized (niche) social networks?

The contribution of this research is that it assists the research and business professionals with insights and understanding of the factors that affect the continued use of a niche social networking site and the motivations such a site has for their users. In a broader sense the study provides insights on understanding the value of social media for marketing and customer engagement.

2   THEORETITCAL BACKGROUND

2.1   Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) argues that an individual's intention to perform an action and their perceived behavioral control work together to influence the actual performance of a behavior (Ajzen, 1985). The behavior being evaluated in the current study consists of continuous use of social tourism SNSs. The intention to perform the behavior is argued to be the result of attitude towards the given behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. Due to the risk and stigmata of meeting unknown individuals when traveling that one met through the internet, it is likely that someone who has an unfavorable attitude towards social tourism SNSs would likely not use them. Due to the voluntary nature of social tourism and the focus of weak tie connections between individuals, it

is likely that behavior controls and subjective norms play an insignificant role in the intention to use them. To fill this gap and evaluate factors that influence intention to continue using social tourism sites, the current research incorporates social capital theory and self-determination theory.

2.2   Social Capital

Social capital refers to the intangible benefits gained through involvement in a community (Field, 2003) and is embedded in the relationships among its members (Schultze & Orlikowski, 2004). Social capital can be divided into two parts identified as bonding social capital and bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000; Williams, 2006). Social tourism SNSs are designed to connect individuals together whom they previously did not know when traveling. The expected benefits from these niche networks may include friendship, information about the intended travel destination, or alternative lodging accommodations. While bonding social capital is likely to play a significant role in the use of social tourism sites, it can also be argued that bridging social capital plays a secondary role for those who wish to develop stronger relationships with others whom they have met. It is likely that different motivations influence an individual's bonding and bridging social capital separately.

2.3   Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) identifies and explains motivations that result into actions being performed. SDT has been utilized to describe motivations for information systems use (Wu & Lu, 2013) and also to differentiate between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. The current research evaluates the influence of social capital on continued use intention. While social tourism SNSs contain a diverse collection of motivations and desires among users (Buhalis & Law, 2008), it can be argued that different motivations exist for influencing bridging and bonding social capital. There is a gap in the extant literature in this area. This study seeks to bridge the gap by evaluating motivations that influence bridging and bonding social capital. In order to identify the motivations that fit the context of this research, a qualitative analysis has been conducted, followed by model development, and an empirical analysis.

3   METHODOLOGY

The current research consists of a mixed-methods approach exploring motivations through interviews followed by an empirical analysis to evaluate the proposed research model (Harrison & Reilly, 2011). The combination of semi-structured interviews and surveys are the most common sources of data for mixed-methods research (Bryman, 2006). Results from the qualitative analysis are used to develop a model that is empirically tested through surveys to generalize the findings.

3.1   Study 1: Qualitative Research – interview

To determine motivations for using SNETT websites, a qualitative analysis using interviews with self-reported CouchSurfing (CS) users was conducted. Participants were recruited using a networking approach among CS users that the researchers were previously familiar with. To be identified as a CS user, the participant must have at least created an account on CS, filled out their profile and participated in the community. All users have interacted with other members on the CS site but not all members have met others whom they met through the site. Two questions were asked in order to determine their motivations for using the SNETT website.

- Why did you join CouchSurfing?
- Have you traveled to a location and met someone you contacted from CouchSurfing.org?
    - If No: Thank you for your participation.
    - If Yes: Why did you seek a host at your travel destination?

The responses to each question will be discussed below using aliases to protect the identity of our participants. Aliases used and basic demographic information for the participants can be found in Appendix A. The list of motivations identified can be found in Table 1.

Motivation	Time Mentioned	# of people
Networking/Meeting people	*10*	*8*
Curiosity	*8*	*7*
Information Sharing	*5*	*5*
Economic Benefit	*3*	*3*
Belonging	1	1
Social Capital	1	1
Expectation	1	1
Pay-it-forward	1	1
Unique/Novelty	1	1

Table 1.   Motivations for Joining CouchSurfing

The results of study 1 are useful for identifying motivations for using SNETT websites. The current research does not distinguish between the various types of connections taking place but rather investigates motivations that will result in continued use of these specialized social networking sites. The two primary motivators identify from study 1 will be used to inform study 2 and develop a research model that can be empirically tested. This will test and validate factors that influence continued use intention and generalize the findings to a population of users.

3.2   Study 2: Quantitative Research – surveys

The empirical research conducted in study 2 integrates the findings from study 1 and the relationships among factors identified in the theoretical foundation. This resulted in a research model used to test the proposed hypotheses and generalize the finding. Using previously developed scales when possible, a survey instrument was developed and data was collected to test the validity and reliability of the measurement model. Finally, the structural model and hypotheses were tested and validated.

3.2.1   Hypotheses Development

There is limited research evaluating motivations that result in an increase of social capital, particularly in the IS community. Portes (1998) characterizes motivations for social capital as either consummatory or instrumental. Instrumental motivations are concerned with social exchanges between individuals and tend to be more extrinsic in nature. Motivations from this perspective tend to be concerned with rational calculations that can result in an increase of social capital. Economic benefit was identified in study 1 as a significant motivation for using SNETT websites to meet others when traveling to remote destinations. Under the assumption that users make the calculative decision

to connect to others motivated by the extrinsic desire to save money, it is hypothesized that economic benefits will positively influence bridging social capital.

Social capital has also been shown to be motivated by reciprocity, where an actor will perform an action for another actor with the assumption that the favor will be reciprocated sometime in the future (Portes, 1998; Putnam, 1993). This motivation would likely be linked to bonding social capital due to the need to developer stronger relationships prior to traveling to the intended destination where the meeting will occur. Based on this assumption, it is hypothesized that the motivation of networking value will positively influence an individual's bonding social capital.

Another key motivational factor that has been shown to significantly influence social capital is trust (Adler and Kwon, 2002). Trust has become one of the most studied concepts within social capital theory. It has been studied within the relational dimension of social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998) with some models portraying it as the primary relational feature of social capital (Coleman, 1990). Based on previous research, it is hypothesized that higher levels of trust will result in higher levels of bridging and bonding social capital.

There is a lack of research connecting social capital to attitudes towards objects. However, due to social capital being the intangible benefits gained through social interaction, it is predicted that an increase in social capital through the SNETT website will likely positively influence the users' attitude toward the website.

Few studies have evaluated the relationship between social capital and satisfaction in general with no SNS studies to date displaying a direct relationship between these constructs. However, a positive relationship between social capital and satisfaction has been evaluated in other contexts such as job satisfaction (Requena, 2003), life satisfaction (Bjørnskov, 2003) and technology service delivery (Sun et al, 2012). Based on these relationships between social capital and satisfaction in other contexts, it is hypothesized that this relationship will also be significant in the context of SNETT websites.

Attitude, as evaluated in the current research refers to the attitude towards an object and is behavior in nature. Satisfaction is the result of an emotion state that is based on interaction with the object. While there is little research evaluating the direct effects between attitude and satisfaction, it has been shown that object based attitude will ultimately result in an increase of behavioral attitude (Wixom and Todd, 2005). Based on this assumption, it is hypothesized that attitude towards the SNETT website will positively influence the user's satisfaction towards interactions through the website.

The relationship between attitude and intention has been well established in the literature beginning with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985) and a countless number of other research papers that have followed. Based on a well-established stream of research displaying this relationship, it is hypothesize that attitude towards the SNETT website will positively influence continued use intention in this context.

There is a plethora of research evaluating satisfaction as a predictor of IS success and more specifically system use, re-use and continued use. In a study conducted by Petter et al (2008), it was shown that 17 out of 21 empirical studies showed a positive relationship between user satisfaction and use. Based on the history of this relationship, it is hypothesized that user satisfaction will positively influence continued use intention in the context of SNETT websites. Table 2 presents the hypotheses developed for the quantitative part of this study.

Hyp	Hypotheses Description
H_1	Economic benefit will positively influence bridging social capital within social tourism websites.
H_2	Networking will positively influence bonding social capital within social tourism websites.
H_{3a}	Trust will positively influence bridging social capital within social tourism websites.
H_{3b}	Trust will positively influence bonding social capital within social tourism websites.

H$_{4a}$	Bridging social capital will positively influence attitude towards social tourism websites.		
H$_{4b}$	Bridging social capital will positive influence satisfaction with social tourism websites.		
H$_{5a}$	Bonding social capital will positively influence attitude towards social tourism websites.		
H$_{5b}$	Bonding social capital will positive influence satisfaction with social tourism websites.		
H$_{6a}$	Attitude will positively influence satisfaction with social tourism website.		
H$_{6b}$	Attitude will positively influence continued use of the social tourism website.		
H$_7$	Satisfaction will positively influence continued use of the social tourism website.		

Table 2.   Hypotheses

3.2.2   Study design, procedure and participants

We collected a total of 593 valid responses spanning 56 different countries. Table 3 demonstrates the descriptive statistics of the sample population for this study.

Variable	Freq (%)	Variable	Freq (%)
Sample Size	593	Gender	
		Male	323 (54.47)
Age		Female	267 (45.02)
18 – 22	103 (17.37)	NR	3 (0.51)
23 – 27	184 (31.03)		
28 – 32	123 (20.74)	Education	
33 – 37	81 (13.66)	High School	52 (8.77%)
38 – 42	38 (6.41)	Some College	95 (16.02)
> 42	63 (10.62)	College Graduate	217 (36.59)
NR	1 (0.17)	Masters	187 (31.54)
		Doctoral	20 (3.37)
Ethnicity		Other	17 (2.87)
White	441 (74.37)	NR	5 (0.84)
Hispanic	5 (0.84)		
African American	56 (9.44)	Avg. Days Per Week	3.32
Asian	47 (7.93)	Minutes Per Day	23.16
Other	41 (6.91)	Avg. Months Using	29.96
NR	3 (0.51)	Avg. Friends	14.54
		Avg. # Met from Site	16.63

Table 3.   Descriptive Statistics of Sample Population

3.2.3   Measurement Model

The research model is presented in Figure 1. The measurement model was tested with confirmatory factor analysis using LISREL. The overall model fit was assessed using goodness-of-fit indices such as $\Box$ 2 /degree of freedom, comparative fit index (CFI), goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The results of these indices suggest satisfactory with the data as shown in Table 4.

Goodness-of-fit Indices	Value
Sample size	593
χ^2 /degree of freedom	2.13
Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)	0.92
Adjusted Goodness of fit index (AGFI)	0.90
Normed fit index (NFI)	0.98
Comparative fit index (CFI)	0.99
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	0.044

Table 4.   Goodness-of-fit Indices for Model Fit

Content validity can be evaluating using the confirmatory factor analysis results obtained from the measurement model analysis. Table 5 displays the factor analysis results and cronbach alpha values for each construct. All items load significantly on their respective constructs with adequate reliability based on the alpha values.

Construct	Item	Loading	t-value	SMC	Alpha
Economic Value	EB1	.86	26.04	.75	.935
	EB2	.85	25.17	.71	
	EB3	.82	23.79	.66	
	EB4	.89	27.45	.79	
	EB5	.89	27.30	.79	
Networking Value	NET1	.92	29.28	.86	.942
	NET2	.93	29.80	.87	
	NET3	.90	27.80	.80	
Attitude	Att1	.82	23.80	.67	.926
	Att2	.85	25.15	.72	
	Att3	.90	27.75	.81	
	Att4	.85	25.44	.73	
	Att5	.82	24.07	.68	
Trust	TR1	.85	25.19	.71	.932
	TR2	.87	26.33	.76	
	TR3	.91	28.30	.82	
	TR4	.81	23.62	.66	
	TR5	.86	25.75	.73	
Satisfaction	SAT1	.87	26.35	.76	.918
	SAT2	.90	27.59	.81	
	SAT3	.89	27.10	.79	
Continued Use Intention	CUI1	.96	31.60	.92	.970
	CUI2	.95	31.22	.91	
	CUI3	.96	31.56	.92	
Bridging Social Capital	BRSC1	.78	21.51	.60	.834
	BRSC2	.86	25.11	.75	
	BRSC5	.85	24.36	.72	
Bonding Social Capital	BOSC1	.68	17.53	.46	.829
	BOSC2	.88	24.31	.78	
	BOSC3	.81	21.92	.66	

Table 5.   Reliability, Variance and Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Variables	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	[8]
1. Economic	0.7437							
2. Networking	0.60*	0.8404						

3. Trust	0.51*	0.50*	0.7406				
4. Bridging	0.47*	0.62*	0.54*	0.6902			
5. Bonding	0.16*	0.22*	0.37*	0.41*	0.6310		
6. Attitude	0.36*	0.46*	0.52*	0.46*	0.26*	0.7200	
7. Satisfaction	0.42*	0.48*	0.60*	0.60*	0.35*	0.52*	0.7863
8. Continued Use	0.33*	0.45*	0.39*	0.39*	0.23*	0.30*	0.28*	0.9152

Note: Diagonal shows the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct
* p-value < .001

Table 6.   Bivariate Correlations with AVE on the diagonal for discriminate validity

3.2.4   Structural Model

Based on the literature review and the qualitative results obtained from study 1, a research model was developed. Figure 1 displays the research model of the current research in progress.
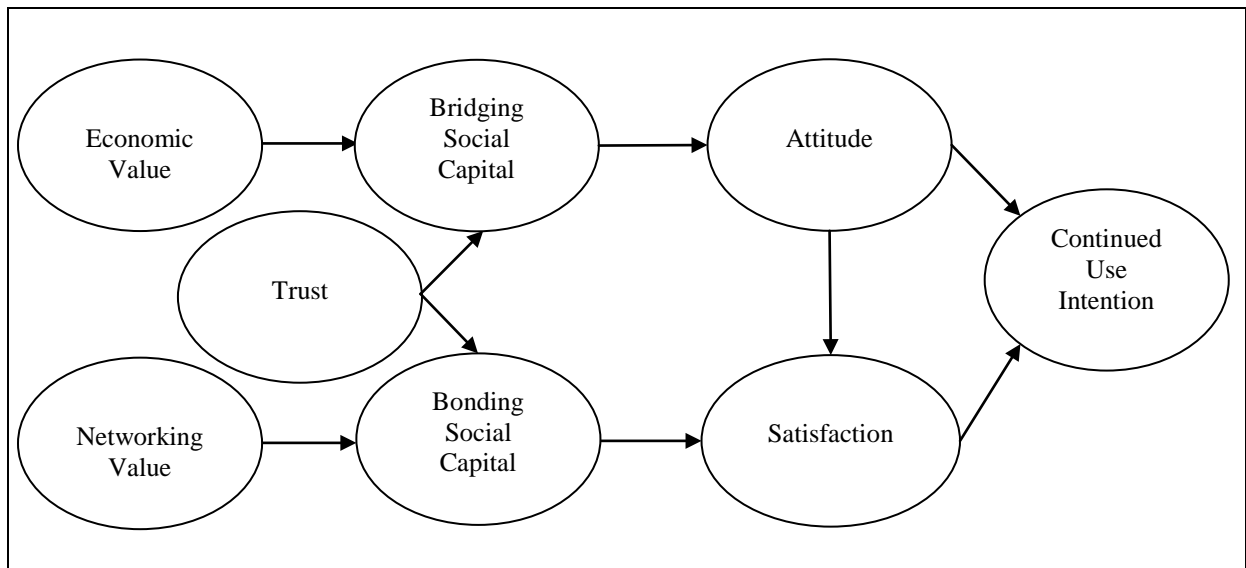

Figure 1.   Structural Model and Results

4   PROPOSED FULL MODEL ANALYSIS AND EXPECTATIONS: RESEARCH PLAN

Based on the preliminary findings, it is hoped that further SEM analysis will be conducted. In essence, an analysis on full model will be presented. Before the full path analysis is to be conducted, we will empirically assesse the measurement quality of all scales based on their convergent validity, reliability, and discriminant validity. It is expected that common method variance will also be checked by 1) Harmon's single-factor test, 2) calculating the magnitude of CMV and its impact on correlation coefficients among the latent constructs. The final empirical findings of this study are expected to be presented at the PACIS conference in June.

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