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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA OVERLOAD ON
THE DISCONTINUATION OF ITS USE AND ON
INFORMATION AVOIDANCE

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Title: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA OVERLOAD ON THE DISCONTINUATION OF ITS USE AND ON INFORMATION AVOIDANCE	
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<p>This thesis explores the impact of social media overload on information avoidance and discontinuation of social media use. Three dimensions of social media overload were adopted: information overload, social overload, and system feature overload. The stress-strain-outcome model is used to hypothesize that these three overload factors affect the strain factor (social media exhaustion). In turn, social media exhaustion causes both information avoidance and discontinuance of the use of social media. The existence of a relationship between information avoidance and discontinuance of social media use is also hypothesized. To test the proposed model, data from 125 social media users were collected and analysed using SmartPLS 3.0 software. The analysis results show that information overload and social overload positively affect social media exhaustion. System feature overload had no effect on social media exhaustion. Social media exhaustion had positive effects on both information avoidance and discontinued use of social media. The relationship between information avoidance and discontinuance of use was non-significant.</p>	
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1 Introduction

This chapter will first explain the background and motivation of this study. It will then describe the research gaps and present the research questions.

1.1 Background and motivation

Social media has become an important part of social life, and today, millions use social media sites for communicating with each other. A social networking site (SNS) is an online service used widely in everyday life. Among the available SNSs, Facebook is the most used, with 2.7 billion active users monthly.¹ Social media platforms afford interactions among users in the form of creating, sharing, and exchanging information (Ahlqvist et al., 2008; Mäntymäki and Islam, 2014; Islam et al., 2020; Whelan et al., 2020). These platforms allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content with Web 2.0 websites (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Social media technologies can be tentatively classified into six categories, as suggested by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010): collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (e.g., Twitter), video-based social media platforms (e.g., YouTube), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft), and virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life). This thesis is conducted in the context of social networking sites.

Prior research has reported possible positive and negative impacts of social media use in day-to-day life (e.g., Islam et al., 2019, 2020; Whelan et al., 2020). When people overuse social media, they often lose control over their use, which in turn leads to addiction (Whelan et al., 2020). The overuse of social media reduces users' mindfulness, and they therefore pay less attention to their day-to-day life activities and work life. Social media platforms afford the building of social capital (Ellison et al., 2007) and promote well-being (Dhir et al., 2018), but at the same time, using social media platforms creates frustration and dissatisfaction in users' lives (Laumer et al., 2015). Prior literature has suggested that overusing social media may lead to stress (Maier et al., 2015), fatigue (Bright et al., 2015), depression (Brooks and Longstreet, 2015), narcissism

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/>

(Brailovskaia and Margraf, 2016), social overload (Cao and Sun, 2018), communication overload (Cho et al., 2011), and information overload (Milord and Perry, 1977) among users.

1.2 Research gaps and research questions

Using social media to exchange messages, update statuses, or share posts is sometimes informative if done purposefully. Prior literature has suggested that in social media, users receive many messages and many times, people are obligated to reply in order to maintain the network (Maier et al., 2015a). Sometimes these requests require some sort of feedback (Brandtzaeg 2012; Manago et al., 2012), which create extra strain on users' well-being, and usage of social media increases too (Amichai, 2013). When people send requests and messages on social media, the recipients feel the urge to respond. However, this state of affairs can be described as an exhausting social situation in which the users think that they are giving enormous social support to others who are on their social networking sites. At this point, social overload comes into play. Prior literature has identified four major dimensions of social media overload: information overload, communication overload, connection overload, and system feature overload (Lee et al., 2016; Whelan et al. 2020). Prior studies have also investigated several outcomes of social media overload (Lee et al., 2016; Whelan et al., 2020). Among these outcomes, information avoidance and discontinuation of use are least discussed (Fu et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2021). Indeed, a few recent studies have investigated how social media overload causes discontinuation of the use of social media (Fu et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2021). However, how social media overload affects information avoidance is not well researched. Furthermore, the relationship between information avoidance and discontinued use of social media has not been studied to a great extent.

Social media overload has an impact on users' psychology and attitude and can create a negative mindset for users (Maier et al., 2015a). Among the negative consequences, social media overload has the worst consequences (Whelan et al., 2020). This thesis attempts to determine whether social media overload can frustrate users, leading to information avoidance and discontinued use of SNSs. Consequently, the following research questions are addressed in this thesis.

RQ1. How do the dimensions of social media overload lead to information avoidance?

RQ2. How do the dimensions of social media overload lead to discontinued use of social media?

In order to answer the above research questions, a research model with a number of hypotheses that capture the consequences of and causes of social media overload is developed. In particular, the stressors-stress-outcome framework is used to build the research model. With a sample size of 125 social networking site users and by using a partial least squares approach, the model is tested and the hypotheses are evaluated.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter, which introduces the topic and research questions. Then in chapter 2, a detailed literature review has been conducted and subsequently research gaps have been identified. Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical background, especially the stress-strain-outcome framework, and the key concepts are discussed. Chapter 4 focuses on developing a research model and provides detailed justifications for the hypotheses. Thereafter, chapter 5 describes the research methodology, data analysis techniques, and results. Chapter 6 describes the theoretical and practical implications of the thesis. Finally, chapter 7 concludes the paper and presents limitations.

2 Literature review

This chapter conducts a literature review on social media overload. In particular, the consequences of social media overload are identified. Thereafter, a summary of the literature review is presented.

2.1 Related works

A literature review on social media overload, exhaustion, information avoidance, and discontinuation of social media use is carried out in this thesis. Appendix A presents a list of research studies that have been examined in this thesis. Table 1 presents a summary of the examined literature. As this table shows, three relationships have primarily been investigated in the prior literature: social media overload and discontinuation of use (e.g., Cao et al., 2017; Fu et al., 2020), social media overload and fatigue (Lee et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2021), and social media overload and exhaustion (Cao et al., 2017; Fu et al., 2020). Different theories have been used to explain the phenomena, such as situation-organism-behaviour-consequence (S-O-B-C) (Whelan et al., 2020), stressors-strain-outcomes (SSO) (Fu et al., 2020), person-environment fit model of stress, and transactional theory of stress and coping (Lee et al., 2015).

Table 1 Major topics of research conducted in prior literature

Topic of research	Example References
Social media overload and discontinuation of use.	Cao et al. (2017); Fu et al. (2020); Zhang et al. (2016)
Social media overload and fatigue	Lee et al. (2015); Lin et al. (2021); Whelan et al. (2020)
Social media overload and exhaustion	Cao et al. (2017); Fu et al. (2020); Maier et al. (2015a); Muhammad et al. (2018)

Next, these relationships are discussed in more detail.

2.1.1 Social media overload and discontinuation of use

Prior literature reported possible connection between social media overload and discontinued use. For example, Cao et al. (2017) conducted a study among 358 Chinese social media users to investigate how social media overload related factors impact discontinued use. They conceptualized social media overload using information overload, communication overload, and social overload. Their findings show that these overload dimensions impact discontinued use intention through exhaustion and regret. Similarly, Fu et al. (2020) conducted their study among 412 Facebook users and found that social media exhaustion mediated the relationship between social media overload and discontinued use. In contrast to Cao et al. (2017), Fu et al. (2020) conceptualized social media overload using system feature overload, information overload and social overload. Zhang et al. (2016) in their study reported that these social media overload dimensions impact social media fatigue and dissatisfaction. In turn, both social media fatigue and dissatisfaction influence discontinued use. Overall, according to prior literature, the effects of social media overload on discontinued use have been investigated by placing mediator variables such as social media exhaustion, fatigue, and dissatisfaction.

2.1.2 Social medial overload and fatigue

The relationship between social media overload and fatigue has been well-established in the prior literature. Whelan et al. (2020) conducted a study with 286 students to investigate possible connection among boredom proneness, social media overload, and social media fatigue. They conceptualized social media overload using only information and communication overload. Their study revealed that both information and communication overload influence social media fatigue. The use of social media positively moderated the relationship between information overload, communication overload, and social media fatigue. One notable limitation of this study is that the authors did not use any overarching theory to build the research model. Lee et al. (2015) on the other hand used person environment fit theory and coping theory to reveal that information overload, communication overload, and system feature overload impact social media fatigue. In this study, the authors also revealed possible factors that impact overload factors. For example, the study reported that information equivocality positively impacts information overload. Lin et al. (2020) reported that information overload, communication overload, and social overload positively impact fatigue.

2.1.3 Social media overload and exhaustion

The relationship between social media overload and exhaustion has also been investigated in prior literature. Some example research studies are highlighted briefly in this section. Maier (2015) conducted a study among 571 Facebook users and reported that social overload positively impacts social media exhaustion, which in turn impact discontinued use. Lingling (2019) found that information overload positively influences exhaustion directly and indirectly via technostress. Cao et al. (2017) also reported that information overload, communication overload and social overload positively impact social media exhaustion.

2.2 Research Gaps

As explained earlier, prior studies have also investigated several outcomes of social media overload such as social media fatigue, exhaustion, and dissatisfaction (Lee et al., 2016; Whelan et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2016). A few studies also connected these outcomes with social media discontinued use intention (Cao et al., 2017; Fu et al., 2020). However, information avoidance as an outcome has not been discussed. Indeed, Sweeny et al. (2010) reported information avoidance as an important behaviour that needs to be investigated in the social media context. It may be that users first start to avoid information on social media before deciding to discontinue their use. Therefore, it is important to identify the factors that drive users to avoid information on social media. From the literature review, it was also observed that the relationship between information avoidance and discontinued use of social media has not been studied in the prior literature. This thesis fills these important research gaps by connecting social media overload factors, social media exhaustion, information avoidance, and discontinued use intention.

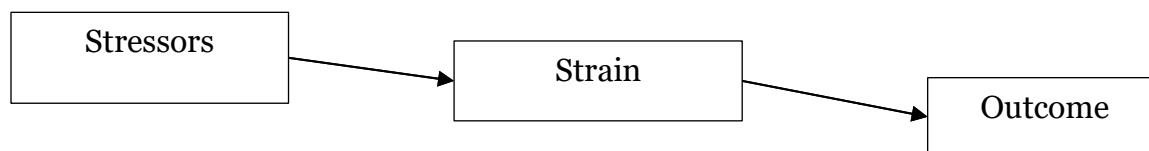
3. Theoretical background

This chapter first presents the stressor-strain-outcome framework, which has been adopted in this thesis. Next, discontinuation of social media use, information avoidance behaviour, and social media exhaustion are described. Finally, the three stressors – information overload, communication overload, and system feature overload – are discussed.

3.1. Stressor-strain-outcomes

The Stressor-strain-outcomes model (SSO) (shown in Figure 1) was first developed for psychological research to investigate the impact of stressors on strain and outcome factors (Koeske and Koeske, 1993). The theory describes how stressors impact strains and how strains influence behavioural outcomes of users. “Stressors” refers to the environmental factors that create stress and impact users psychologically (Newaz et al., 2018). The term “strain” refers to the psychological outcomes caused by stressors. “Outcomes” are the results of stressors, which influence strain responses (Newaz et al., 2018).

Figure 1. Stressors-Strain-Outcome model.



The SSO framework has been used in this thesis due to following reason. Prior literature has used the SSO framework, especially in the area of technostress research (Tarafdar et al., 2019). The SSO framework describes stress factors and how they affect outcomes (Dhir et al., 2018; Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008). In the context of social media, different overload factors are the stressors. The thesis seek to investigate how these stress factors impact outcome factors such as information avoidance and discontinued use. Therefore, SSO framework deemed compatible to the goal of this research. According to the SSO, stress factors impact strains. Dissatisfaction, exhaustion, and regret act as the strains for social media users. These strains have diverse

outcomes, including discontinued usage, decreased academic performance, and information avoidance (Cao et al., 2018; Dhir et al., 2018; Nawaz et al., 2018).

In the prior literature, the SSO framework has been used to explain discontinuation of the use of social media (e.g., Fu et al., 2020; Lingling et al., 2019). Most of the research work has been conducted on information system usage, and less has highlighted discontinuation of usage behaviours based on the SSO framework (see Fu et al., 2020). SSO is an approach to discovering the negative impacts of the stress factors and users' discontinuation of usage behaviours. Therefore, this framework is utilized in this thesis.

In this thesis, the stress factors examined are information overload, social overload, and system feature overload. The strain is social media exhaustion, and the outcomes are the discontinuation of usage of SNSs and information avoidance. In the following sections, these factors are discussed in more detail.

3.2. Discontinuance of social media usage

Information system (IS) discontinuance has been examined in some studies as a post-adoption behaviour (Shen et al., 2018). The post-adoption behaviour of IS continuance has been highlighted more in the literature, but it might not be the opposite of discontinuance use (see Turel et al., 2013). For example, several prior studies have argued that IS discontinuance is a distinct behaviour and not just the other side of continuance (Chao and Sun, 2018; Shen et al., 2018).

Most previous studies mainly focused on the reason for discontinuance among users. A study done on stress factors suggested that using SNSs increases stress among users, and by discontinuing, users are able to reduce the stress level (Maier et al., 2015b). According to another empirical study, when the user is satisfied, intention of discontinuation and feelings of discomfort are decreased. Furthermore, user guilt increases the intention to discontinue usage (Turel, 2015).

3.3 Information avoidance

In today's world, users receive information from a variety of sources, including social media, but all the received information may not be relevant and useful. Information avoidance occurs when the user comes across information that suppresses useful information. Information avoidance leads a person not to look for correct information. This hampers proper information-seeking behaviour and creates avoidance of important information (Sweeny et al., 2010). Moreover, information avoidance might foster people's unwillingness to ask for information and make them avoid information (Wilson, 2000).

Prior research has suggested that people tend to intentionally avoid information because they do not want to obtain updated information. For example, a study on genetic issues suggested that partners often do not want to know the results of specific genetic tests of their partners – an example of information avoidance (Yavin et al., 2004). Information can be useful, as it can increase knowledge, well-being, peace, and opportunities. However, there could be several reasons to avoid information. Cognitive dissonance is one possible reason (Festinger et al., 1957), which occurs when people hold contradictory thoughts, reasons, and vulnerable issues in their minds that lead to stressful situations in their lives. According to the theory of cognitive dissonance, when two ideas or thoughts collide, this affects people's psychology by making them uncomfortable with the situation and causing them to desire their thoughts to be consistent. The new perceived information might change their thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions of the thinking process. Therefore, people might avoid receiving new information, and information avoidance might occur (Festinger et al., 1957).

Excess information might create information overload, as humans have a small capacity for processing information. For example, an athlete might not follow all up-to-date information about his competitor because that might hamper his preparation and practice for games. A cancer survivor might avoid news related to cancer because it might remind them of a painful period of their life. Altogether, it can be concluded that a wide variety of factors might influence people to avoid information.

3.4 Social media exhaustion

Maier et al. (2015a) explained social media exhaustion as a common phenomenon and described it as a factor that leads to the accumulation of stress among users. In social media, users experience exhaustion when they need to participate in different activities, use different features, and write comments on fragmented content. Social media exhaustion can be described as a self-evaluated perception of being tired from the use of social media (Whelan et al., 2020). According to different research on social media exhaustion, social media use impacts users negatively and keeps them under pressure, creating stress (Bright et al., 2015). Dhir et al. (2018) reported that social media usage creates depression and anxiety among users, and Zhang et al. (2016) showed that social media creates tiredness and exhaustion. Bright et al. (2015) reported four factors that can influence social media exhaustion: privacy, social media confidence, social media helpfulness, and self-efficacy. Other studies carried out by Dhir et al. (2018) and Bright et al. (2018) found that the fear of missing out has an impact on social media exhaustion. This body of research has examined the impact of social media exhaustion, but why people stop using social media or what triggers them to stop using SNSs still merits attention.

3.5. Social media overload

In the previous literature, different dimensions of overload have been described (Fu et al., 2020; Maier et al., 2015a; Whelan et al., 2020). Overload is a phenomenon that explains how people become frustrated with the excess of something that is beyond their capacity to process. Previous studies have also noted that overload can be a psychological outcome of users' extensive search processes for online purchases (Swar et al., 2017).

The kinds of overload people face, particularly in the context of social media, are system feature overload, information overload, social overload, and communication overload (Fu et al., 2020; Maier et al., 2015a; Whelan et al., 2020). This thesis examines information overload, social overload, and system feature overload. Communication overload is not considered because it is already covered by the social overload dimension. Social overload encompasses requests (including communication requests) from others.

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When the information received is more than one's brain can process, information overload takes place (Saegert, 1973). Overload is described as a phenomenon that impacts people negatively and can lead to a negative outcome (Lee et al., 2011). Nowadays, people use the internet, different social media platforms, emails, newspapers, and different kinds of mobile applications, which can create overload (Davison et al., 2018). Overload negatively affects our decision-making capacity, decreases creativity and productivity, and creates dissatisfaction. Information overload is a common phenomenon. Prior research has reported a number of possible factors that create information overload, such as modern journalism, lack of evaluation of the authenticity of the information, different platforms upon which information is shared, an abundance of historical information, the ease of sharing information, and the ease of posting information on different platforms (Bhasin, 2019). The abundance of information might also create fear of missing out, which leads people to read more information, ultimately creating information overload (Hetz et al., 2015).

System feature overload occurs when users are overloaded with technology features (Thompson et al., 2005), especially when the number of features exceeds the value they add for users. Excess availability of system features in the platforms may create cognitive burdens for the user, as they need to learn how to use these features (Grandhi et al., 2005). In the case of Facebook and other social media platforms, multiple features are offered to the users, which can create system feature overload (Zhang et al., 2016).

Finally, social overload occurs when users have too many friends on social media and are unable to maintain relationships due to huge demand. When people are unable to manage social interaction and connections with people on social media due to volume, social media overload occurs (McCarthy et al., 1978; Whelan et al., 2020).

4. Research model development

The research model was developed based on the SSO framework (Koeske and Koeske, 1993). SSO focuses on stress and strain factors of users and explains behavioural outcomes. As described in the previous chapter, the term “stressors” represents different factors that create stress. The term “strain” explains the psychological outcomes created by stressors. The outcome can be defined as the response to strain. Therefore, SSO provides a framework for investigating social media overload and discontinuation of usage.

In the research model, there are six hypotheses, as depicted in Figure 2. This thesis supports the hypotheses based on findings from prior studies of social media. This thesis, therefore, observes how information overload, system feature overload, and social overload cause users to discontinue their use of social media. The study done by Maier et al. (2015a) explained discontinuance behaviour based on social overload only. Social media overload has multiple dimensions, and the dependence of discontinued use on these dimensions have not been examined thoroughly in the previous literature (Fu et al., 2020). These dimensions can also affect people’s information avoidance behaviour. This thesis studies three overload dimensions thoroughly to gain a better understanding of overload in the social media context.

Past studies have provided the insight that the demographic characteristics of users have a role in social media use. Therefore, demographic characteristics are included in the model as control variables. In the following, the hypotheses included in the research model are described.

4.1. Information overload and social media exhaustion

Excessive use of social media can affect users’ cognitive states and make them too exhausted to process information (Fu et al., 2020; Karr-Wisniewski et al., 2010; Whelan et al., 2020).

According to Ayyagari et al. (2011), when users search for information specific to their needs, it may not overload them. However, when users encounter information that is not related to their needs, they experience exhaustion. When users experience serendipitous information, they might find it useful, but the new information might still create a cognitive overload, which could make

them psychologically exhausted. According to the study by Bright et al. (2015), information overload is positively associated with social media exhaustion. Recently, Fu et al. (2020) also validated this association. Thus, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H1: Information overload positively impacts social media exhaustion.

4.2. Social overload and social media exhaustion

Prior studies have claimed that social overload occurs when people encounter unnecessary requests on social media (Maier et al., 2015a), which might in turn create dissatisfaction and distraction (Evans et al., 1989). Nowadays, Facebook is used as a social media platform for communicating with friends and maintaining net-based relationships (Ravindran et al., 2014). When users receive comments or any sort of notification on Facebook, they feel an urge to address the issue, which might create stress and exhaustion (Maier et al., 2015a). The negative emotion arises as users receive many notifications, and sometimes, they feel irritated, as receiving them makes them tired and stressed. Even with this type of stressful situation, users often need to maintain a good number of relationships through Facebook. As people have limited cognitive capacity, they cannot handle social overload (Zhang et al., 2016). When users have more relationships to manage on Facebook, these extra social relationships affect their psychological well-being (Kim and Lee, 2016). A study done by Salo et al. (2016) showed that social overload has a positive impact on social exhaustion. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Social overload positively impacts social media exhaustion.

4.3. System feature overload and social media exhaustion

When a system updates its features very often, it might also create stress among users. Social media service providers update features frequently and adjust the interface for users. This frequent change of user interface and features might lead users to spend more time on Facebook in order to become experienced with the new features, and very often it is found that these new

features are not in accordance with the users' preferences (Ayyagari et al., 2011). Even if the updated features are useful and meet users' needs, some find the feature changes more difficult than the previous. Thus, the updated features might create technical overload for users and social media exhaustion (Lee et al., 2016). According to a study carried out by Ayyagari et al. (2016), unnecessary updates in system features can create social media exhaustion. Lee et al. (2016) explained how changes in system features may create stress and how system feature overload due to the updating of features can create social media exhaustion. Thus, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H3: System feature overload positively impacts social media exhaustion.

4.4 Social media exhaustion and information avoidance

Social media exhaustion is created by the different kinds of overload, which can lead to an outcome such as information avoidance. This can be viewed as a coping mechanism for users. When users are overly stressed and exhausted, they seek to take corrective action in order to remove the stressors. Lin et al. (2021) described how people adopt different coping strategies to handle social media stressors. Based on this work, it can be suggested that by avoiding information, people try to cope with stressors. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Social media exhaustion positively impacts information avoidance.

4.5 Social media exhaustion, information avoidance, and discontinuation of usage

According to a study carried out by Pires et al. (2018), when people experience psychological exhaustion, it can affect their participation and lead them to reduce their use of social media (Pires et al., 2018). Another study explained that when users experience exhaustion, they might make behavioural changes regarding the use of social media (Cao et al., 2018). In other words, when exhaustion takes place, it demotivates users from using social media (Luqman et al., 2017). When people are exhausted and overloaded with social media, they might withdraw from social

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media, and in some cases stop using social media altogether, even cancelling their social media accounts (Dhir et al., 2019). The study carried out by Maier et al. (2015b) explained that social exhaustion leads to discontinued usage behaviour. Furthermore, once users start to avoid information on social media, they might decide to back away from social media itself. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Social media exhaustion positively impacts discontinuation of usage.

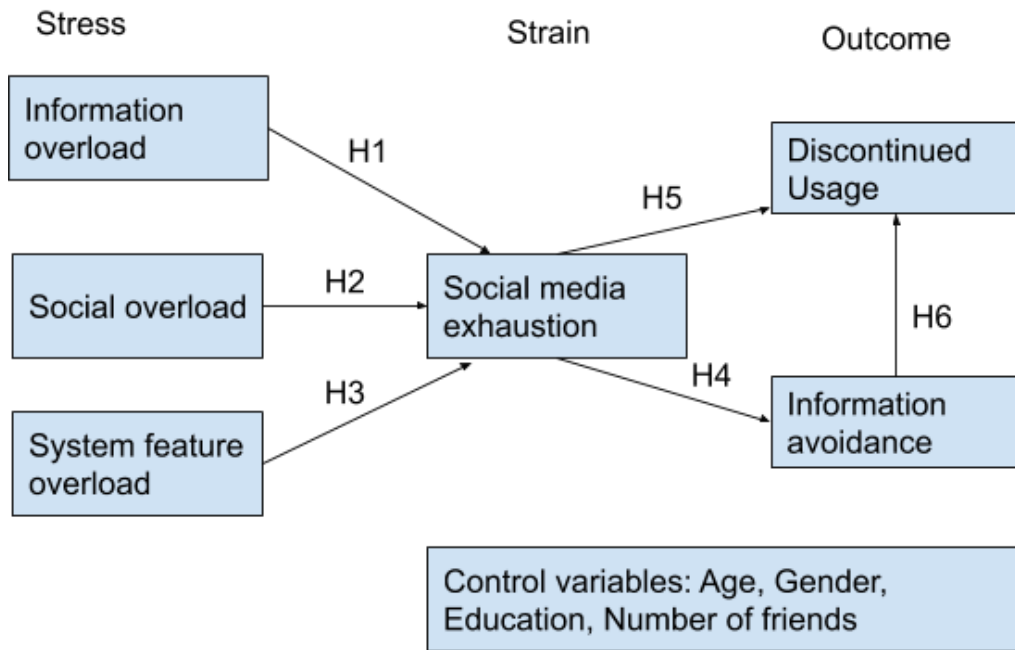
H6: Information avoidance positively impacts discontinuation of usage of social media.

Demographic variables – for example, age, gender, education, and frequency of use – can impact social media usage (Cao et al., 2018). The negative impact of social media might vary based on gender (McAndrew et al., 2012). Another study showed that age can impact the use of social media and information technology (Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008). Discontinuation behaviour might also be related to current frequency of use. Thus, demographic variables are added to provide a wider understanding of discontinuation and information avoidance of social media users. The demographic variables act as control variables in the research model to estimate the outcomes.

The research model is shown in Figure 2.

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Figure 2. Research model



5. Research Methodology

This chapter describes the data collection strategies, followed by analysis and results.

5.1 Construct measurement

The research model was tested by collecting data from a survey. The items, which measured the constructs in the research model, were based on the previous literature. The measurement items were adapted to fit the context of the social media platform Facebook. After creating the initial version of the questionnaire, it was sent to two senior researchers for their feedback. Based on their feedback, some minor edits were made to the overall questionnaire.

For measuring information overload and system feature overload, the items developed by Zhang et al. (2016) were used. The social overload items were adapted from the study of Maier et al. (2015a), and the social media exhaustion and discontinued use items were taken from the study of Maier et al. (2015b). Finally, for information avoidance, items from the studies of Cho (2004) and Shin and Lin (2016) were used. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the construct items with answers ranging from “strongly disagree (1)” to “strongly agree (5)”. The survey items are presented in Appendix B.

5.2 Sample and data collection

An online survey was conducted to collect data from social media users. The online survey was developed using Google Forms. The survey link was shared in six Facebook groups for collecting data. The Facebook groups were related to research, student groups in the Turku area, and university networks. The members of the groups ranged from approximately 200 to 10,000. The author is a member of all these groups. The author herself posted the invitation in these groups to participate in this research after receiving permission from the administrators of the groups.

Before starting the survey, the respondents were told why the survey was important and why the study was being conducted. It was also mentioned that the participants could leave at any time if they did not want to participate anymore or wanted to stop answering. A total of 131 responses were collected. After removing the invalid responses, 125 usable responses remained to test the research model. The demographics of the respondents are shown in Appendix C.

5.3 Data analysis

For the data analysis and testing of the proposed research model, the partial least squares (PLS) approach (Chin, 1998) was used. The SmartPLS 3.0 tool was used in this thesis to analyse the data. With the help of SmartPLS 3.0, the reliability and accuracy of constructs were tested. The significance level and path between the constructs were also measured. PLS is a regression method that combines confirmatory factor analysis with linear regression. PLS is a reliable approach for checking the validity of research models and testing hypotheses (Hair et al., 2017). According to Hair et al. (2011) the covariance approach (CB) could also be used for this kind of data analysis. However, PLS was preferred, as the sample size of this study was small. PLS is considered to be a robust tool when the sample size is small (Hair et al., 2011).

5.4 Measurement model

According to Cook et al. (1979), measurement reliability is achieved when there is consistency and stability present in a tested measurement. It can be checked by the item loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR). Table 2 values show that the CR values and AVE for the constructs were above 0.7 and 0.5, respectively (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). In Figure 2, composite reliabilities are shown in the graph, which shows that the values are above 0.7. In Figure 3, the AVE values are shown, which also demonstrates that the AVE values for the constructs are above 0.5. Analysis of the test result thus ensures that the related measurements have acceptable reliability (Moss et al., 1998). Table 3 shows the constructs and the item loadings. In the construct of discontinuation of use, there were initially five items; however, DU1 was removed because it was below 0.7. In the information avoidance construct, IA1 and IA2 were removed, as their loadings were below the threshold. Information overload

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item IO4 was also removed because of lower loading than the threshold. For the system feature overload construct, SFO2 was removed due to insignificant loading.

Table 2. Constructs and item loadings

Construct Name	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Age	1.000	1.000
Discontinued Use	0.925	0.756
Education	1.000	1.000
Gender	1.000	1.000
Information Avoidance	0.776	0.636
Information Overload	0.853	0.661
Number of Friends	1.000	1.000
Social Overload	0.909	0.714
Social Media Exhaustion	0.934	0.778
System Feature Overload	0.736	0.584

Table 3. Composite Reliabilities and Average Variance Extracted Values

Construct Name	Items	Loadings
Discontinued use	DU1	Removed
	DU2	0.82
	DU3	0.90
	DU4	0.89
	DU5	0.85
Information Avoidance	IA1	Removed
	IA2	Removed
	IA3	0.70
	IA4	0.88
Information Overload	IO1	0.73
	IO2	0.88
	IO3	0.81
	IO4	Removed
Social Overload	SO1	0.77
	SO2	0.90
	SO3	0.89
	SO4	0.79
Social Media Exhaustion	SME1	0.88
	SME2	0.90
	SME3	0.87
	SME4	0.87

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System Feature Overload	SFO1	0.83
	SFO2	Removed
	SFO3	0.69

Figure 3. Composite Reliabilities

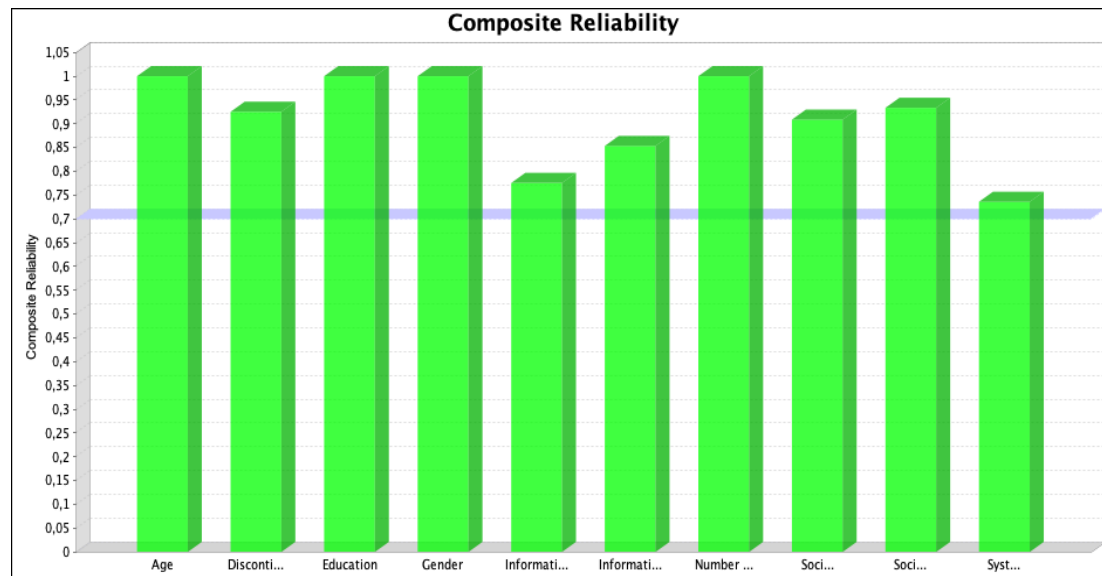
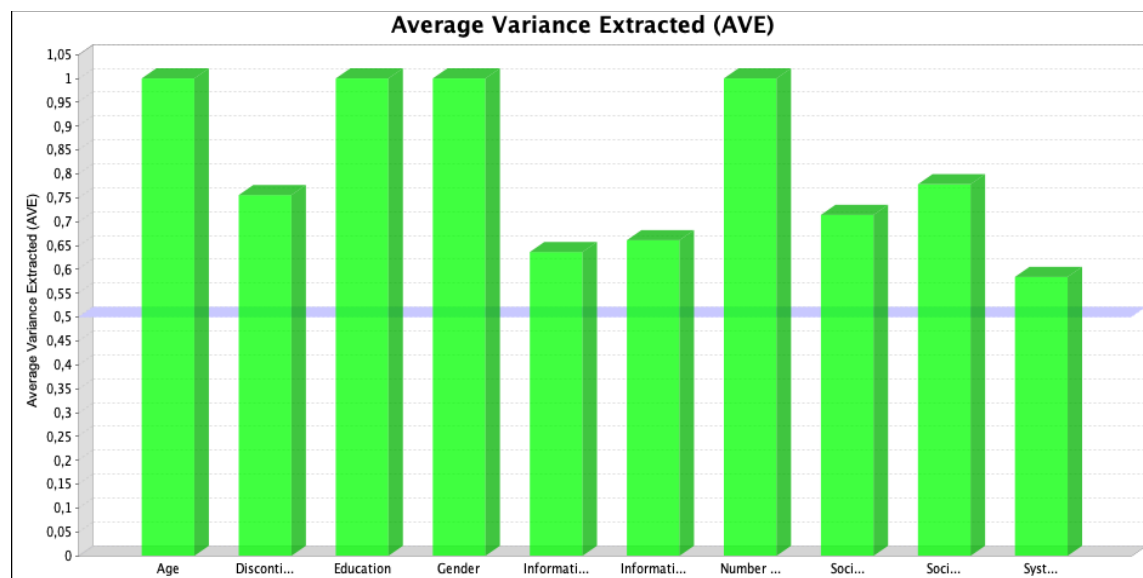


Figure 4. Average Variance Extracted



Next, the tests for discriminant validity were conducted in three ways. First, the correlation matrix (presented in Table 4) was checked. In this table, the diagonal values represent the square

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roots of AVEs. From the table, one can see that the square roots of the AVEs are greater than the correlation values – this confirms the discriminant validity. Second, the HTMT table (presented in Table 5) was also checked. From this table, one can see that the values are below 0.85 – this also indicates that discriminant validity has been achieved. Finally, the cross-loadings table (Table 6) was checked. From this table, one can see that the loadings were higher than the cross-loadings. Altogether, these tests ensure that there is sufficient discriminant validity in the data.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

	DU	IA	IO	SO	SME	SFO
DU	0.869					
IA	0.186	0.798				
IO	0.069	0.215	0.813			
SO	0.121	0.235	0.420	0.845		
SME	0.289	0.354	0.512	0.424	0.882	
SFO	-0.004	0.283	0.364	0.114	0.273	0.764

Note: DU (Discontinued Use), IA (Information Avoidance), IO (Information Overload), SO (Social Overload), SME (Social Media Exhaustion), SFO (System Feature Overload)

Table 5. HTMT Table (for discriminant validity)

	DU	IA	IO	SO	SME	SFO
DU						
IA	0.275					
IO	0.193	0.349				
SO	0.160	0.337	0.537			
SME	0.319	0.554	0.615	0.462		
SFO	0.280	0.809	0.748	0.353	0.520	

Note: DU (Discontinued Use), IA (Information Avoidance), IO (Information Overload), SO (Social Overload), SME (Social Media Exhaustion), SFO (System Feature Overload)

Table 6. Loadings and Cross-loadings

	DU	IA	IO	SO	SME	SFO
DU2	0.82	0.14	0.10	0.22	0.31	-0.03
DU3	0.90	0.17	0.12	0.14	0.29	0.06
DU4	0.89	0.13	-0.02	0.02	0.19	-0.07

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DU5	0.85	0.19	0.03	0.03	0.20	0.02
IA3	0.02	0.70	0.11	0.10	0.26	0.28
IA4	0.23	0.88	0.21	0.25	0.30	0.19
IO1	-0.10	0.13	0.73	0.41	0.32	0.34
IO2	0.02	0.13	0.88	0.35	0.44	0.22
IO3	0.20	0.25	0.81	0.28	0.45	0.33
SFO1	-0.09	0.25	0.38	0.20	0.23	0.83
SFO3	0.12	0.17	0.13	-0.06	0.18	0.69
SME1	0.25	0.39	0.43	0.32	0.88	0.33
SME2	0.35	0.31	0.47	0.39	0.90	0.21
SME3	0.20	0.25	0.45	0.40	0.87	0.23
SME4	0.18	0.28	0.44	0.37	0.87	0.16
SO1	0.14	0.15	0.34	0.77	0.24	0.10
SO2	0.14	0.23	0.38	0.90	0.41	0.12
SO3	0.12	0.14	0.38	0.89	0.31	-0.00
SO4	0.01	0.22	0.30	0.79	0.40	0.14

Note: DU (Discontinued Use), IA (Information Avoidance), IO (Information Overload), SO (Social Overload), SME (Social Media Exhaustion), SFO (System Feature Overload), bolded values represent loadings.

5.5 PLS results

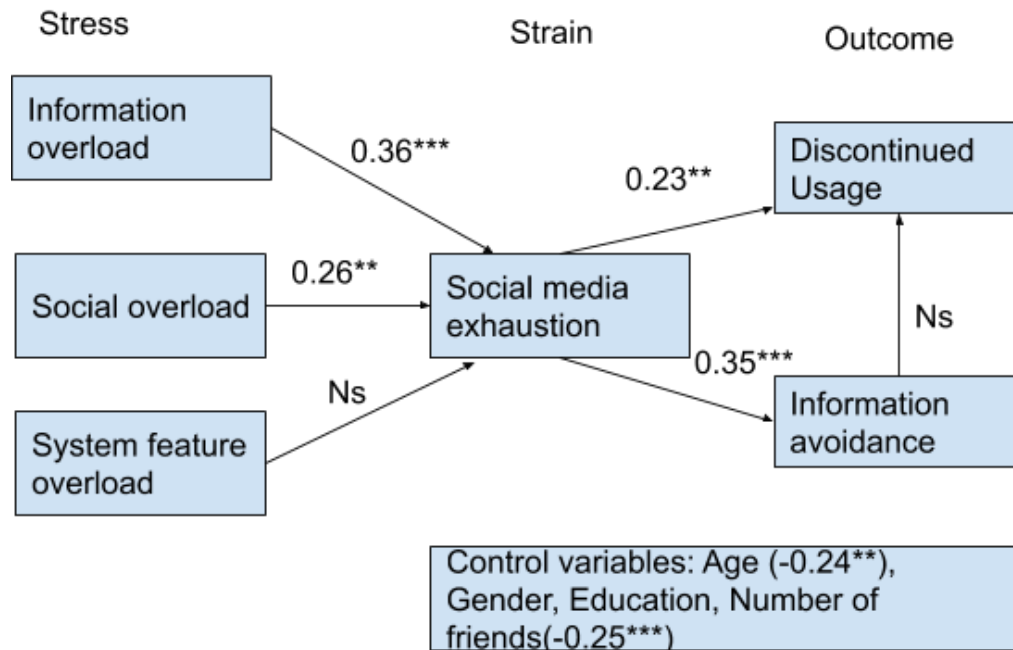
After ensuring that the data were valid, the proposed model was tested. Figure 4 shows the model test results. Information overload has a positive significant impact on social media exhaustion ($\beta=0.36$; $p<0.001$), and thus hypothesis H1 is supported. Social overload has a positive impact on social media exhaustion ($\beta=0.26$; $p<0.001$), and thus hypothesis H2 is supported. System feature overload does not have a positive impact on social media exhaustion, as the path value of the result is not significant – thus hypothesis H3 is rejected. Social media exhaustion has a positive impact on information avoidance ($\beta=0.35$; $p<0.001$), which supports hypothesis H4. Social media exhaustion has a positive impact on discontinued usage ($\beta=0.23$; $p<0.001$), which supports hypothesis H5. Information avoidance has no impact on discontinued usage; therefore, hypothesis H6 is rejected.

Finally, among the control variables, age has a negative effect on discontinued use. This means that younger people manage to discontinue their social media use more easily. Number of friends

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also has a negative effect on discontinued use. This means that people who have more friends on social media find it difficult to discontinue their use.

Figure 5. Research model with results.



Note: (*: $P < 0.05$, **: $P < 0.01$, ***: $P < 0.001$)

In Figure 5 and Table 7, R^2 values are shown. The predictors explained approximately 14% variance of discontinued usage. The predictors of information avoidance explained approximately 12% of the variance. Finally, the predictors explained 32% of social media exhaustion.

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Figure 6. R² Values

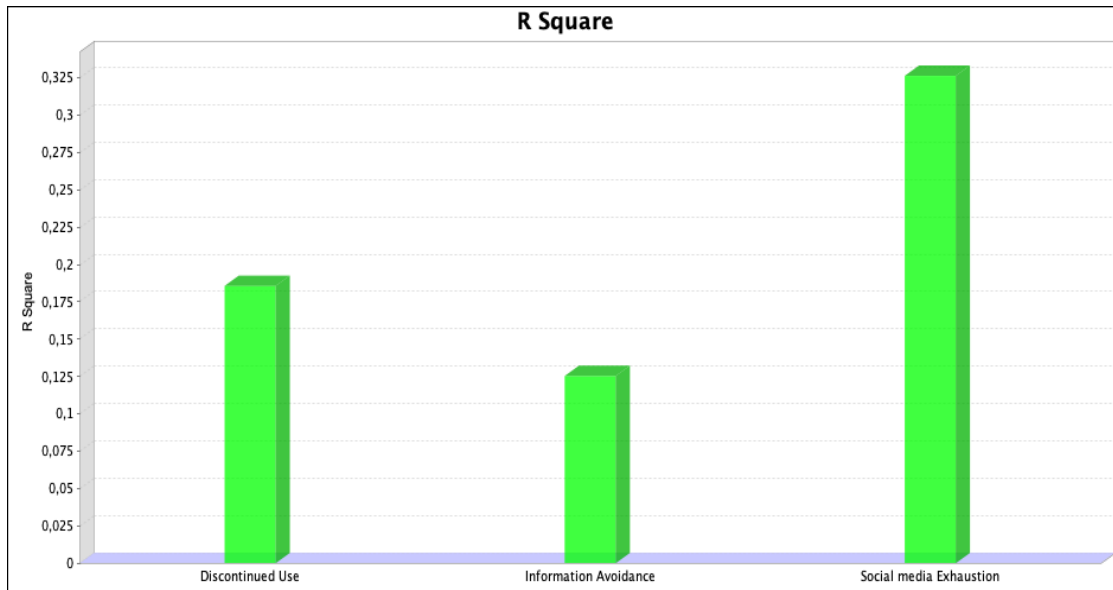


Table 7. R² Values

Dependent Variables	R ²	R ² adjusted
Discontinued Use	0.186	0.144
Information Avoidance	0.125	0.118
Social Media Exhaustion	0.326	0.310

The indirect effects of stress factors on the outcome factors were also checked. The results are shown in Table 8. From this table, one can see that social media exhaustion mediated the relationship between information overload and discontinued use ($p < 0.05$). It also mediated the relationship between information overload and information avoidance ($p < 0.01$). Finally, it mediated the relationship between social overload and information avoidance ($p < 0.05$).

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Table 8. Indirect effects

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values
Information Overload -> Social Media Exhaustion -> Information Avoidance -> Discontinued Use	0.010	0.012	0.015	0.697	0.486
Social Overload -> Social Media Exhaustion -> Information Avoidance -> Discontinued Use	0.007	0.008	0.011	0.664	0.507
Social Media Exhaustion -> Information Avoidance -> Discontinued Use	0.029	0.030	0.038	0.753	0.451
System Feature Overload -> Social Media Exhaustion -> Information Avoidance -> Discontinued Use	0.003	0.003	0.007	0.473	0.637
Information Overload -> Social Media Exhaustion -> Discontinued Use	0.082	0.082	0.040	2.047	0.041
Social Overload -> Social Media Exhaustion -> Discontinued Use	0.059	0.061	0.035	1.696	0.090
System Feature Overload -> Social Media Exhaustion -> Discontinued Use	0.025	0.026	0.026	0.964	0.335
Information Overload -> Social Media Exhaustion -> Information Avoidance	0.129	0.133	0.046	2.825	0.005
Social Overload -> Social Media Exhaustion -> Information Avoidance	0.092	0.096	0.037	2.462	0.014
System Feature Overload -> Social Media Exhaustion -> Information Avoidance	0.040	0.045	0.040	0.990	0.323

Note: The significant effects are in bold

Looking at the total effects (Table 9), one can see that the effect of information overload on discontinued use was significant ($p < 0.05$); the effect of information overload on information

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avoidance was significant ($p < 0.01$); and the effect of social overload on information avoidance was significant ($p < 0.05$).

Table 9. Total effects

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Age -> Discontinued Use					
Education -> Discontinued Use					
Gender -> Discontinued Use					
Information Avoidance -> Discontinued Use					
Information Overload -> Discontinued Use	0.093	0.094	0.042	2.194	0.028
Information Overload -> Information Avoidance	0.129	0.133	0.046	2.825	0.005
Information Overload -> Social Media Exhaustion					
Number of friends -> Discontinued Use					
Social Overload -> Discontinued Use	0.066	0.069	0.036	1.831	0.067
Social Overload -> Information Avoidance	0.092	0.096	0.037	2.462	0.014
Social Overload -> Social media Exhaustion					
Social Media Exhaustion -> Discontinued Use	0.029	0.030	0.038	0.753	0.451
Social Media Exhaustion -> Information Avoidance					
System Feature Overload -> Discontinued Use	0.029	0.029	0.028	1.001	0.317
System Feature Overload -> Information Avoidance	0.040	0.045	0.040	0.990	0.323
System Feature Overload -> Social Media Exhaustion					

Note: The significant effects are in bold

6. Discussions and implications

This chapter first discusses the main findings of this thesis, after which the theoretical and practical implications of the findings are presented.

6.1 Main findings

The results showed that information overload had a significant effect on social media exhaustion. Among the overload dimensions, the effect of information overload was the strongest. This finding implies that an abundance of information on social media is the most important factor creating social media exhaustion. This finding is in line with prior literature. For example, Whelan et al. (2020) reported similar findings showing that information overload had a stronger effect on social media fatigue than communication overload. In contrast to Whelan et al. (2020), this thesis found that social overload also positively affects social media exhaustion.

It is interesting to observe that system feature overload had no significant effect on social media exhaustion. This finding implies that users are very used to using social media platforms. Therefore, the features are relatively easy to use. Karr-Wisniewski and Lu (2010) suggested including system feature overload as a dimension of technology overload. Based on the results of this thesis, system feature overload may not be an important dimension leading to social media exhaustion in the context of social media use. However, this finding regarding the non-significant effect of system feature overload on social media exhaustion contradicts the recent finding of Fu et al. (2020).

Social media exhaustion was found to have significant effects on both information avoidance and discontinuation of use. These findings suggest that once users are exhausted with their use of social media, they try to recover by avoiding information or even sometimes discontinuing their

use. Therefore, these findings are also in line with the recent work conducted by Osatuyi and Turel (2020), who argued that people try to reduce their social media use as a self-regulatory mechanism.

It is interesting to observe that the effect of information avoidance on discontinuation of social media use was non-significant. This finding implies that people mainly discontinue their use of social media because of strain (i.e., social media exhaustion), not because of information avoidance.

6.2 Theoretical implications

This research can make five theoretical contributions.

First, the thesis used the SSO model to build a theoretical framework for understanding the effects of social media overload on social media users. The thesis shows the efficacy of the SSO model in providing an understanding of social media overload and its impact on discontinued usage and information avoidance. Although past literature has used different models – for example SOR, SOBC, post-adoptive model, stress dynamics, and coping theory – to establish the link between social media overload and the discontinuation of its use, the thesis empirically shows that the SSO model explains the social media overload situation elaborately and explains human motives and behaviours (Davis et al., 1980).

Second, this study provides an understanding of social media exhaustion in terms of information overload, social overload, and system feature overload. It should be noted that Fu et al. (2020) also used these three predictors to explain social media exhaustion. They found that all three overload-related factors had significant effects on social media exhaustion. In contrast to Fu et al. (2020), this thesis found that system feature overload had a non-significant effect on social media exhaustion.

Third, previous studies have ignored the factors that lead to information avoidance behaviour. This thesis has developed a research model to analyse users' information avoidance behaviour

based on social overload, information overload, system feature overload, and social media exhaustion. This finding can benefit future research on social networking sites' use and give guidance to researchers in adding more constructs and testing them to discover the factors that drive information avoidance behaviour of users.

Fourth, the study provides an understanding of discontinued usage behaviour of users of social networking sites. Previous studies done on social media have interpreted the discontinuance intention behaviour of users as the opposite of continued use (Zhang et al., 2016; Cao et al., 2018). One study, by Zhang et al. (2016) indicated that more precise research is required to understand discontinued usage behaviour. This thesis investigated and focused on the discontinued usage intention of users (Maier et al., 2015; Fu et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2019) to fill the above research gap.

Fifth, the analysis shows that social media exhaustion has a positive impact on discontinuation of usage and information avoidance. The relationship between social media exhaustion and discontinuation of use has been identified by Fu et al. (2020). In this sense, the findings of this thesis validate the findings of Fu et al. (2020). However, this thesis advances the study conducted by Fu et al. (2020) by showing that social media exhaustion can also affect information avoidance behaviour.

6.3 Practical Implications

The research findings provide guidelines for social networking site users, SNS managers, and SNS marketers.

The findings of this thesis can inform users about the possible negative effects of social network sites. They should keep in mind that when they use social networking sites, they might also experience unwanted effects – meaning that they might get tired and exhausted, which could create a negative attitude towards the use of SNSs. It could also lead to their avoidance of information available on SNSs.

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The results showed that information overload had the strongest effect on social media exhaustion, and social media exhaustion might lead to discontinuation of social media usage and to information avoidance. These findings have implications for marketers. Social media is a powerful tool for marketers to display their products, and it has become a strategy for businesses (Dwivedi et al., 2015). As marketers are using social media platforms for displaying products, they should consider the possibility that excess information sharing on social networking sites might create social media exhaustion, tiredness, and information overload for users. This might demotivate them from using SNSs as well as cause them to avoid the marketers' products. This in turn might lead to a loss of paying customers. That is why marketers should control the wave of information they post on social media.

Although millions use SNSs around the world, in recent years, we have also observed that many people are showing discontinuance behaviours, and the avoidance of SNSs has been becoming more common. SNS managers should pay great attention to this issue because when users stop using SNSs, that also leads to information avoidance behaviour. SNS managers could create a system in which only a certain amount of information is given to the users. There could be a filtering mechanism, which could help users avoid negative thoughts and social exhaustion due to information and social overload. If there is a limit on information, then exhaustion and fatigue will not affect users. It is also important for SNS managers to create good content for users, which can add value for users and inspire them to use social networking sites in a moderate way. SNS managers should try to understand the needs and requirements of the users so that all types of people can benefit. Finally, all people are not the same, and there are some users who use networking sites only for a short time. For them, the content should be simplified, and the SNS managers should provide content that aligns with the interests and choices of people who are using the platforms in specific ways.

7. Concluding remarks

In this section, the limitations of this study and future research directions will be discussed. Then, the conclusion of my thesis will be presented.

7.1 Research limitations and future research

This thesis has several limitations. First, the data were specifically collected from Facebook, and questionnaires were fully focused on Facebook. If the focus had been diversified to include other social media networks, then the results could change and present a different picture. To address this limitation, future research could be conducted to test the same model with different social media networking sites – for example, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok.

Second, future researchers can collect data from different cultural backgrounds to validate this study's results as well as to determine how results may vary among different cultures. In this way, cultural background can be used as a moderator in the proposed framework of this thesis.

Third, the model was tested using a small sample size. Therefore, the findings of this thesis need further validation using a larger sample size.

Fourth, specific age groups could be focused on to get more accurate results. In this thesis, data were collected from all age groups, and analysis was done at aggregate levels. Future research may conduct an analysis of how the results vary among different age groups.

Fifth, in the present study, the stressor-strain-outcomes model was used. To measure the outcomes, two constructs – namely information avoidance and discontinuation of use – were used. Apart from this, future researchers could add more constructs as outcomes. Specifically, psychological outcomes could be measured for a more comprehensive understanding of social media exhaustion of users.

Sixth, there is a chance of bias in the self-reported data; therefore, for more clarity, a future study should incorporate different research methodologies for collecting data to get a better overview of the research outcomes.

Seventh, this study covered information overload, system feature overload, and social overload of Facebook users and its impact on discontinuation of usage. However, the study did not address communication overload, which could be investigated by researchers for further investigation.

Finally, in this thesis, only social media exhaustion and information avoidance were employed as predictors of discontinuation of use. Therefore, future researchers could make extensions to the current model by adding more predictive variables for discontinued usage behaviour.

7.2 Conclusion

Social media is perhaps the most used platform to maintain communication among friends, families, and acquaintances. Social media platforms are also used for information seeking and for marketing products and services across the globe. Social media has positive impacts on users' lives and businesses and can benefit users in various ways.

At the same time, giving too much time to social media may be detrimental to one's well-being, as shown in this thesis. In particular, this thesis focused on the relationships among the stress and strain factors and how these strains may affect outcomes. The analysis results show that social media increases social media exhaustion among users. The results also demonstrate that social media exhaustion triggers discontinuation of usage as well as information avoidance.

The study has been used for a comprehensive understanding of social media usage and social media exhaustion among users. The findings can help to improve the theory and can also benefit policy makers, businesses, and practitioners. Also, the thesis will lay the groundwork for more research to examine intentions of discontinuance and information avoidance.

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Appendix A. Summary of prior literature

Authors	Sample	Context	Theory	Key findings
Whelan et al. (2020)	182 students	Social media use among Irish students	S-O-B-C	Fear of missing out impacts both communication and information overload. Both information and communication overload cause deficient self-regulation. In turn,

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				deficient self-regulation negatively impacts academic performance.
Maier et al. (2015)	571 Facebook users	Facebook use	No theory	The findings suggest that SNS usage, number of friends, and subjective social support positively impact social overload, and types of relationship negatively impact social overload. Social overload positively impacts SNS exhaustion, and intention to discontinue SNS usage negatively impacts SNS satisfaction.
Wirth et al. (2015)	461 participants	Facebook use	No theory	The findings suggest that envy, information overload, and social overload have positive impacts on frustration. Perceived enjoyment has a negative impact on frustration. Frustration can lead to dissatisfaction, and that can create intentions of discontinuance intentions. Frustration can directly impact intentions of discontinuance as well.
Fu et al. (2020)	412 Participants	Facebook use	Stressors -strain- outcome	The research findings suggest that system feature overload impacts both information overload and social overload. System feature overload, along with information overload and social overload, positively impacts social media exhaustion. In turn, social media exhaustion positively

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				impacts the discontinuation of usage.
Whelan et al. (2020)	286 students	Social media use	No theory	The research findings suggest that proneness to boredom positively impacts information overload, social media fatigue, and communication overload. Information overload and communication overload influence social media fatigue. The use of social media positively moderates the relationship between information overload, communication overload, and social media fatigue.
Lee et al. (2015)	250 Participants	Social network use	Person-environment fit model of stress, transactional theory of stress and coping model.	Findings suggest that information equivocality positively impacts information overload. System pace of change and system complexity positively impact system feature overload. Information overload, communication overload, and system feature overload positively impact SNS fatigue.

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Lingling et al. (2019)	249 users	Chinese social media use	Stressor-strain-outcome (S-S-O) theory	Findings suggest that information overload, communication overload, and social overload positively influence technostress. Information overload positively influences exhaustion, and exhaustion negatively influences academic performance. Information overload positively affects technostress, and technostress leads to exhaustion. This continued exhaustion negatively affects academic performance.
Cao et al. (2017)	258 users	Chinese social media use	Stimulus organism response (S-O-R) theory	Findings suggest that information overload, communication overload, and social overload positively impact exhaustion and intention to discontinue use. Social overload positively affects regrets, which leads to an intention to discontinue use.

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Dhir et al. (2018)	Two samples (1554 users and 1144 users)	Indian social media use	Stressor-strain-outcome (SSO) and transactional theory of stress and coping	Findings suggest that compulsive SNS use and fear of missing out positively impact SNS fatigue. SNS fatigue highly affects depression and anxiety.
Zhang et al. (2016)	social media users	Social media use	Stressor-strain-outcomes theory	Findings suggest that system feature overload, information overload, and social overload have a positive impact on social network fatigue and dissatisfaction. Social network fatigue and dissatisfaction lead to intentions to discontinue usage.
Muhammad et al. (2018)	505 users	SNS use	Stressor-strain-outcome theory	Findings suggest that social media has a positive impact on dissatisfaction. Information overload has a positive impact on dissatisfaction and regret. SNS exhaustion positively impacts dissatisfaction and regret, and regret leads to dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction and regret positively impact intention to discontinue use. Age, gender, and education also impact intention to discontinue use.

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Kefi et al. (2015)	320 users	SNS use in France	Post-adoptive Model (PAM)	Findings suggest that confirmation positively impacts perceived usefulness and habit. Perceived usefulness and confirmation positively impact satisfaction. Satisfaction and confirmation positively impact habit. Perceived usefulness positively impacts intention for SNS continuation. Habit positively impacts information overload, and information overload leads to intention to continue SNS use. Perceived usefulness positively impacts satisfaction, and satisfaction leads to an intention to continue SNS use.
Lim et al. (2017)	210 users	Facebook use	No theory	Facebook interactions positively impact social overload. The existence of a <i>persona non grata</i> positively impacts social overload and partially impacts Facebook interactions. Social overload positively impacts the threat to freedom of usage and dissatisfaction, and that leads to discontinuation of usage. Threat to freedom of usage positively impacts dissatisfaction, which leads to an intention to discontinue usage.

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Maier et al. (2013)	246 participants	Online social network use	No theory	Finding suggests that gender, age, extent of usage, number of friends, content, and media richness positively impact social interaction overload. Social interaction positively impacts intention to continue usage. Satisfaction, perceived usefulness, and perceived enjoyment positively impact intention to continue usage.
Lin et al. (2020)	Not mentioned	Social media use	S-O-R theory	The findings suggest that information overload, communication overload, and social overload positively impact fatigue. Flow experience weakens the relationship between fatigue and intentions of discontinuance. Control variables (age, gender, friends, use years, extent of use) negatively impact fatigue and positively impact discontinuation intentions. Fatigue positively affects discontinuation intentions.

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Lin et al. (2021)	502 users	WeChat use	Stress dynamics and coping theory	The findings suggest that information overload and communication overload positively impact adaptive coping strategies. Communication overload and social overload positively impact maladaptive coping strategies. Information overload and social overload positively impact adaptive coping strategies and maladaptive coping strategies. Adaptive coping strategies create fatigue and positively impact intentions of discontinuing usage. Maladaptive coping strategies negatively impact flow experience and lead to intentions of discontinuing usage.
Bontcheva et al. (2013)	587 social media users	User-generated media us (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)	No theory	The findings suggest that microblogging users perceive that they get the right number of post responses compared to SNS and PNS users. The users of both SNS and PNS perceive that they receive too many posts on SNS. Microblogs and PNS users are more likely to receive too many posts Those who receive too many posts on social media also have the same perception of PNS and microblogging sites.

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Dhir et al. (2014)	102 social media users	Social media use	Stressor-strain-outcomes theory	The findings suggest that information overload, social overload, and techno overload positively impact OSN burnout. OSN burnout positively impacts intention of discontinuance and privacy control intentions.
Sweeny et al. (2010)	Literature review	Social media use	No theory	Findings suggest that individual differences and situational factors positively influence motivations to avoid information seeking or information avoidance.
Whelan et al. (2020)	286	Social media use	S-S-O theory	The findings suggest that boredom proneness positively impacts information overload and communication overload. Boredom proneness positively impacts social media fatigue. Information overload and social media use intensity positively impact social media fatigue. Communication overload and social media use intensity positively impact social media fatigue.
Shen et al. (2018)	428 Participants	E-health wearable device use	Expectation disconfirmation theory	The findings suggest that neutral satisfaction positively affects intermittent discontinuance. Attitudinal ambivalence positively impacts neutral satisfaction and intermittent discontinuance. Neutral disconfirmation positively impacts

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				attitudinal ambivalence. Breaks in use, controlled use, and suspended use are positively associated with intermittent discontinuance.
Turel et al. (2013)	86 web-based users	Web based service	No theory	Findings suggest that authenticity of treatment by service providers positively impacts information satisfaction. Authenticity of treatment by service providers positively impacts the friendliness of service providers. Information satisfaction positively affects perceived usefulness. Perceived usefulness positively impacts intentions of continuance. Friendliness of service providers is positively associated with intentions of continuance. Age has a negative impact on intentions of continuance.
Turel et al. (2014)	510 participants	Facebook use	Social-cognitive Theory	The findings suggest that feelings of guilt while using hedonic information systems (IS) have a positive impact on intentions of discontinuance. Self-efficacy in discontinuing the use of hedonic IS has a positive impact on one's intentions of discontinuation. Hedonic IS use habits negatively impact intentions of discontinuance. Satisfaction with a hedonic IS

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				negatively impacts one's intentions of discontinuation. Satisfaction with a hedonic IS positively impacts one's usage habit. Hedonic IS usage habits are positively associated with addiction to using IS. Addiction to using hedonic IS positively impacts guilt feelings for using IS. Addiction to using hedonic IS negatively impacts discontinuance self-efficacy.
Salo et al. (2019)	32 Participants were interviewed	SNS use	SSO theory	The findings suggest that strains are related to a set of SNS stressors. Different features, notifications, multipurpose functionality, and real-time information renewability create SNS overdependence and overload stressors, which lead to lack of sleep and to concentration problems. Self-disclosure features and information sharing lead users to make comparison discrepancy, discussion conflict and privacy stressors, which can lead to identity problems and social relation problems.
Yin et al. (2018)	178 participants from China	Mobile information and communication	Cognitive load theory, coping model of	The findings suggest that perceived threats of information overload and interruption overload negatively impact job satisfaction. Coping strategies negatively impact perceived

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		technology use	adaptation	threats and positively impact job satisfaction. Control variables positively impact job satisfaction.
Swar et al. (2017)	380 respondents	Online health information use	Information processing theory, theory of planned behaviour	The findings suggest that perceived information overload has a positive impact on negative affect. Perceived information overload has a positive impact on depressive symptoms. Perceived information overload has a positive effect on trait anxiety. Perceived information overload has a positive impact on trait anger. Negative affect has a negative impact on behavioural intention for the use of online health information searches. Depressive symptoms have a negative impact on behavioural intention for the use of online health information searches. Trait anxiety has a negative impact on behavioural intention to continue the use of online health information searches. Trait anger has a negative impact on behavioural intention to continue use of online health information searches.

Appendix B. Measurement items

Social media overload and its impact on discontinued usage

You are invited to participate in my survey on social media overload and its impact on discontinued usage. In this survey, I would like to know your response about the impact of social media (Facebook) and how users react to the excess information on social networking sites, for example Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, etc. Moreover, it is important to know how the information adds value and demotivates users from stopping use of the networking sites.

I would be very happy if all of you just have 5 minutes to complete the survey questionnaires. This study will be used for my thesis as a part of my MSc in Governance of Digitalization program supervised by Professor Gunilla Widén at Åbo Akademi. Your participation in this survey is voluntary, and there are no foreseeable risks associated with this survey. Data from this research will be reported only in the aggregate and used for academic purposes.

If you have any questions at any time about the survey, you are welcome to send a query to me, Nasreen Azad (nazad@abo.fi). Thanks for your valuable time and support.

* Required

Which social networking sites do you use mostly? *

Facebook

Instagram

Snapchat

Tiktok

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Twitter

Other:

Required

What is your gender? *

Female

Male

Prefer not to say

Other:

Which age group do you belong to? *

18-24

25-32

33-39

40-46

47-53

54-60

60 or above

What is your educational background? *

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Bachelor's degree

Master's

PhD

Vocational

Other:

How many hours do you spend on Facebook per day? *

0 to 30 minutes

30 minutes to 1 hour

1 hour to 2 hours

More than 2 hours

How many friends do you have on Facebook? *

10-50

50-100

100-500

500 and above

Now please respond to the following questions in a way that best represents your position on the following statements.

Reply to the following questions as truthfully as possible (1. strongly disagree -5 strongly agree)

I am often distracted by an excessive amount of information available to me on Facebook. *

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- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I find that I am overwhelmed by the amount of information I have to process on a daily basis on Facebook. *

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

There is too much information about my friends on Facebook, so I find it a burden to process. *

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I find that only a small portion of the information on Facebook is relevant to my needs. *

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- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I care too much about my friends' well-being on Facebook. *

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I deal too much with my friends' problems on Facebook. *

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I care for my friends too much on Facebook. *

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- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I pay too much attention to my friends' posts on Facebook. *

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I am often distracted by the features that are included in Facebook but are not related to my main purpose in using Facebook. *

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

Facebook is helpful in adding features, which makes social performance even better. *

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA OVERLOAD ON THE DISCONTINUATION OF ITS USE AND ON INFORMATION AVOIDANCE

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

The features of Facebook I use are often more complex than the tasks I have to complete by using these features. *

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I feel tired from my Facebook activities. *

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I feel drained from activities that require me to use Facebook. *

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- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

Using Facebook is a strain for me. *

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I feel burned out from my Facebook activities. *

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I sometimes discontinue my use of Facebook, but that does not mean that I will completely abandon the use of it. *

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- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I have suspended my use of Facebook. *

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I have discontinued my use of Facebook. *

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I have stopped using Facebook. *

- Strongly disagree

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Somewhat disagree

Neutral

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

I have quit Facebook. *

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neutral

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

Initially, I ignore some posts on Facebook. *

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neutral

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

I intentionally do not pay attention to some posts on Facebook. *

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

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- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I scroll down web pages to avoid some posts on Facebook. *

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I use technical means to avoid some posts on Facebook. *

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

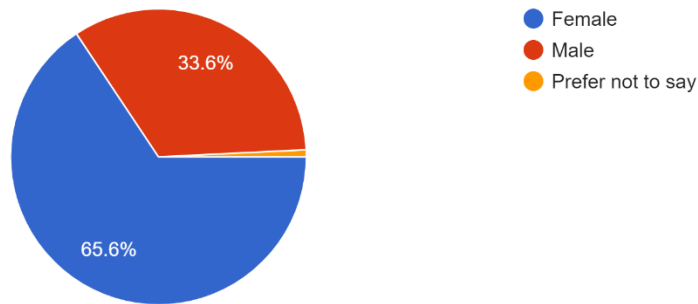
Thanks for your participation and contribution to the research.

Submit

Appendix C: Demographics

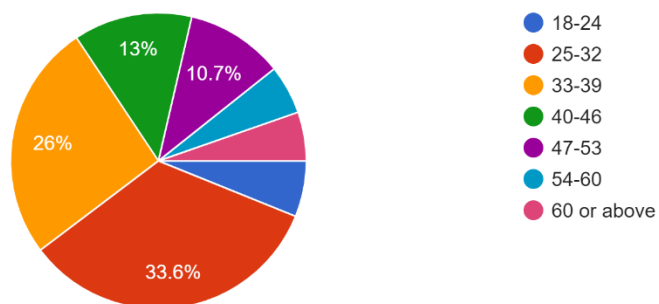
What is your gender?

131 responses



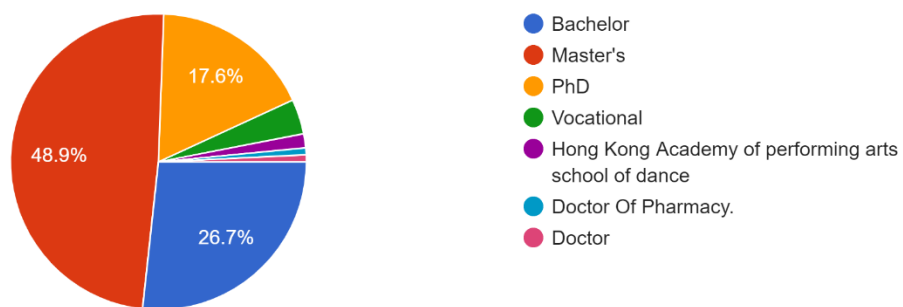
Which age group do you belong?

131 responses



What is your educational background?

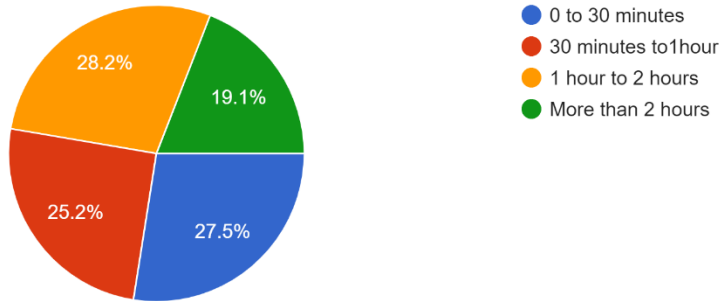
131 responses



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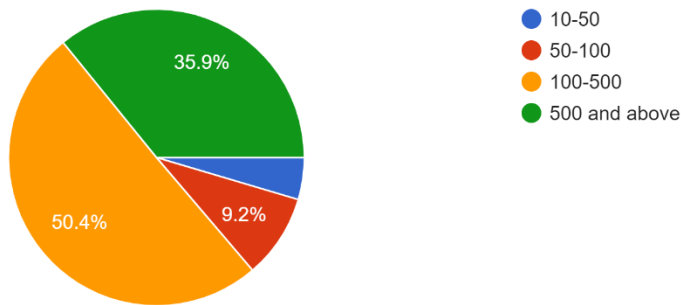
How many hours do you spend on Facebook per day?

131 responses



How many friends do you have on Facebook?

131 responses



Which social networking sites do you use mostly?

131 responses

