

■ KENNETH E. KENDALL, Feature Editor, School of Business-Camden, Rutgers University

Early attempts at social networking on the Internet included Classmates.com (1995) and Six Degrees.com (1997). Then in 2004, MySpace made a transition from existence as a virtual storage space to a social networking site. That began the modern era of social networking. While MySpace and Facebook are the most popular social networking sites in North America, it is somewhat surprising to note that the popularity of different social networking sites in different parts of the world, even though ecommerce theory tells us that the Internet empowers us to have a global reach. In Europe, Bebo, and hi5 are popular. In Brazil and India, Orkut is it, while Asia adds Friendster and Cyworld. On the business side of social networking, LinkedIn has a different business model, selling information and social networking to business. Additional sites like Friendster and Twitter (which recently added micro-blogging for instantaneous updates on a friend's activities) are also becoming increasingly popular. If you want to create your own social networking site, go to Ning, which allows anyone to create your own customized social network for a topic of your choosing. One of my graduate students was excited to demonstrate a customized social network for engineers he just created on Ning. In this month's revealing article, Professor J.P. Shim explores differences between U.S. and Korean acceptance, adoption, and use of social networking sites. His provocative insights suggest several cultural, social, governmental, infrastructure, and even geographical features that foster or impede the adoption of social networking sites. [Kenneth E. Kendall, Feature Editor]

Social Networking Sites: A Brief Comparison of Usage in the U.S. and Korea

by J. P. Shim, Mississippi State University



J. P. Shim

is John Grisham Faculty Master Teacher, professor of MIS, and director of International Business Strategy Program at Mississippi State University. He received his PhD from

University of Nebraska, MBA from Seoul National University, and completed Harvard Business Executive Education. He has received grants and awards, including NSF, U.S. EPA, Microsoft, Booz Allen, Mississippi IHL and is a nine-time recipient of outstanding faculty awards. He has co-authored books and 150 articles, including EJIS, JAIS, CACM, IEEE, Decision Support Systems, Interfaces, among others. He has been a keynote speaker, program chair, and fellow chair at several international conferences/professional organizations.

jshim@cobilan.msstate.edu

Social networking sites (SNS) have emerged as a new breed of Web 2.0 websites. The sites are focused on user created content (UCC), having been designed so user profiles are integrated into the community development. These social sites are catered to friend-of-a-friend (FOAF) angles and individuals and groups are connected directly with others who share common interests, as users upload and share photos, videos, and ideas (in exchange for joining, as with sites such as Flickr and YouTube). As SNS becomes more popular, with increased exposure to personal data, the information becomes a goldmine for marketing and advertising companies, and political interest groups. Users are more likely to find value service with a social component.

Several recent studies has shown that Korea is currently leading the world

in every segment of the telecommunications market, broadband and Internet growth, mobile and cellular applications, and short message services. While third-generation (3G) wireless was introduced in Korea offering greater bandwidth in the earlier period of the 20th century, the U.S. did not see true nationwide 3G coverage until 2007. The purpose of this paper is to present the status of Web 2.0 and social networking sites: Korea vs. the U.S. And several issues in social networking will be discussed.

Status of Web 2.0 and Social Networking: Differences between the U.S. and Korea

Web 2.0 has grown in popularity over the past few years. It is based on social software where users generate content. In looking over the status of Web 2.0,

one can notice a few things; it's growing, becoming more recognizable. The growth is shown by the number of new Web 2.0 programs available. As quickly as popular programs (such as Cyworld, Flickr, Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube), get snapped up by a large company, new programs take their places. This allows Web 2.0 to become mainstream (via the large companies such as Google and Yahoo picking the best available Web 2.0 programs to add into their system). Since the late 1990s, there has been an avalanche of Web 2.0 sites.

Many of these Web 2.0 sites allow members to register to become "friends," in which the status is displayed through forged connections, which enables instant access to each other's communication channels and other resources. For instance, a registered member of MySpace or Facebook, two of the most popular social networks in the U.S., allow users to interact and socialize within their "friends" network through instant messaging, e-mail, blogging, photographs, videos, podcasts, and numerous other resources.

Currently, the disadvantage lies in users being unable to manage multiple social network accounts from a single site. The users must log into each social networking site to interact with and discuss topics with the particular community. Korea has been a hotbed of development for upcoming technologies

with its users in a condensed space with early adoption behavior. The Korean telecommunications industry is working on wireless broadband Internet technology (WiBro). Worldwide interoperability for microwave access will make social networking readily available at anytime with amazing speed. Table 1 shows history, visitors, and number of subscribers of three major social networking sites in Korea and the U.S. The sites include video sharing (Pandora TV vs. YouTube), portal/search engines (Naver vs. Google), and social network sites (Cyworld vs. Facebook). Interestingly enough, Korean social networking sites (Pandora TV, Naver, Cyworld) have been launched earlier than their U.S. counterparts.

Issues in Social Networking

There are several major issues to be considered in social networking: cultural differences, technological infrastructure, launch timing, and design are impediments for users to be acquainted with certain social networking sites. First, Cyworld has received much attention and popularity among Korean users. Facebook faced barriers during its attempt to enter Korea's SNS market. Likewise, Cyworld's attempted entry into the U.S. SNS market did not succeed. With the users' early adoption behavior in Korea, there have been numerous opportunities for technological advancement.

What is important to note about the Korean culture is the collective society (compared to what some researchers characterize as an individualistic society in the U.S.). Due to the cramped and close living quarters often experienced in Korea, most people are subjected to intense peer pressure (i.e., social influence) to accept new models or technology. Second, technological infrastructures are one of the most powerful enablers for accepting "new" technology and model. Therefore, a government's initiatives make a significant difference as to whether a country moves to technological infrastructures.

For example, Korean "Chaebols" (business conglomerate) use aggressive information and communication technology (ICT) planning to implement cellular technology and the Internet. The Korean government has leveraged its power to be instrumental in stimulating consumer demand. Third, in general, the first movers did not necessarily capture the market share (except for a few rare instances). While certain sites (i.e., Friendster) were one of the first few SNS to pioneer the scene in the U.S., the second or the third movers (e.g., Facebook and MySpace) have been able to capture most of the market. Finally, design is one of the most important determinants of a firm's success. The Korean's search engine (Naver's Web site) is extremely flashy and crowded, compared to Google's simple aesthetics.

	Video Sharing		Portal/Search		Social Network Site	
	Korea	U.S.A	Korea	U.S.A	Korea	U.S.A
	Pandora TV	You Tube	Naver	Google	Cyworld	Facebook
History	2004.10	2005.02	1996.06	1998.07	1999.09	2004.04
Visitors (person)	8,697,247 (2008.07)	73,537,222 (2008.08)	32,584,433 (2008.06)	136,046,547 (2008.08)	22,397,010 (2008.07)	34,194,274 (2008.05)
Subscribers	3 million (2007.10)	55.1 million (2006.8)	32 million	N/A	22 million (2008.6)	100 million (2008.9)
% of total population	6.09%	18.11%	65.04%	N/A	44.65%	32.89%

Table 1. Comparison of video sharing, portal/search, and social network sites: Korea and the U.S.

Conclusion

There are times when certain aspects of cultural differences, social and technological infrastructure, and the launch timing of technology release can be impediments for users in their level of acceptance of certain social networking sites. The relevant issues include privacy, ownership of information, interaction among users, sharing and distribution of information.

The information technology strategists should consider the dynamic and crucial role in which cultural difference, social and technological infrastructure, and timing of launches play in determining the users' acceptance or rejection of the technology. The author believes that future research should consider

the issues of privacy and trust for social networking sites. Most importantly, future research should look to expand the social networking topic to other regions to evaluate global social networking usage.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals: Jongtae Yu and Chris Wagner, MIS graduate students at Mississippi State University for the data collection on Web 2.0 social networking Web site; Julie Shim, project manager at SoliderDesign in Cambridge, Mass., for the data collection on social networking materials.

References

- Budde, P. (2002). Asia and Austria telecommunications industry overview. *Annual Review of Communications, 55*, 243-250.
- Shim, J. P. (2005). Korea's lead in mobile cellular and DMB phone services. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems, 15*, 555-566.
- Shim, J. P., Shin, S., & Weiss, M. (2006). Digital Multimedia Broadcasting (DMB): Standards, competition, and regulation in South Korea. *Journal of Information Technology Theory and Application, 8*(2), 69-81. ■

POM, from page 12

assist managers in their understanding of empirical research. This use of common language will assist managers if they are interested in specific business issues since many managers will only read the conclusions of articles.

The most tragic flaw of all empirical research is for important academic findings to stay hidden in academic language and not become used to improve business practices.

Conclusion

Theory-building empirical research using statistical and case analyses can easily have many flaws. The avoidance of poor literature searches, poor definitions, over-emphasis on statistics, over-reporting statistics, data massaging for randomness, and using only recondite academic terms are common problems that can be overcome with only slight modifications to procedures. In one sense, if carefully examined, all research has some tragic flaws since no research is perfect. Yet, the goal of business academics is to assist business managers in their decision making. It was with this lofty goal that this article was written.

Suggested Further Reading

- Bunge, M. (1967). *Scientific research I: The search for system*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Hempel, C. G. (1970). Methods of concept formation in science. In O. Neurath, R. Carnap, & C. Morris (Eds.), *Formations of the unity of science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hunt, S. D. (1991). *Modern marketing theory: Critical issues in the philosophy of marketing science*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Southwestern Publishing.
- McCloskey, D., & Ziliak, S. (1996). The standard error of regression. *Journal of Economic Literature, 34*(1), 97-114.
- Popper, Sir K. (1957). Philosophy of science: A personal report. In C. A. Mace (Ed.), *British philosophy in mid-century*.
- Teas, R. K., & Palan, K. M. (1997). The realms of scientific meaning framework for constructing theoretically meaningful nominal definitions of marketing concepts. *Journal of Marketing, 61*(2), 52-68.
- Wacker, J. G. (1998). A definition of theory: Research guidelines for differ-

- ent theory-building research methods in operations management. *Journal of Operations Management, 16*, 361-385.
- Wacker, J. G. (2004). A theory of formal conceptual definitions: Developing theory-building measurement instruments. *Journal of Operations Management, 22*, 629-650.
- Wacker, J. G. (2008). A conceptual understanding of requirements for theory building research: Guidelines for scientific theory building. *Journal of Supply Chain Management*.
- Wilkinson, L., et.al. (1999). Statistical methods in psychology journals. *American Psychologist, 54*(3), 594-604. ■