

The Role of Demographic Factors on Academic Social Networking Sites Use Behaviour from Academic Researchers Perspective

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Abstract

Academic Social Networking Sites (ASNS) is one of the important tools to facilitate the development of international collaborations among researchers. Academic researchers at different disciplines and different levels of their research activities are becoming more interested in ASNSs. Many factors impede using collaboration technology among academic researchers. Demography is one of those factors. The purpose of this paper is therefore to find out the differences among academic researchers' ASNS use behaviour in terms of demographic factors. Due to lack of ASNSs studies especially which studies regarding the different type of ASNS users, the result of this research gains its importance. Survey-based questionnaire has been used for this study. Hypotheses were tested using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) on data collected from 628 ASNS users. The results show that gender, age and experience are not significant predictors to academic researchers' ASNS use behaviour.

Keywords: Academic Social Network Sites, Researcher, Demographic Factors, Malaysia

1. Introduction

Web 2.0 led to the tremendous expansion of knowledge through real-time collaboration and knowledge sharing between people from all works of life, at any place, and at any time (Gunawardena et al., 2009). Academic Social Networking Site (ASNS), is a product of Web 2.0 technologies. Academic researchers use these tools for their research, such as sharing their work; collaborating and developing and maintaining their social networks; or getting research trends in their field (Rebiun, 2010). As suggested by He et al. (2009), technologies that facilitate the collaboration and sharing of knowledge and expertise among academic researchers can play a major role in research enhancement and productivity. The universities' academic rank has shown to be positively related to the university research productivity (Da Silva and Davis, 2011; Liu and Cheng, 2005). Consequently, ASNSs can play a major role in research enhancement and productivity by providing the platform that allows other researchers to see the results and exchange views with the authors of the research and to collaborate with other researchers for a project. Understanding its importance, universities seem like to pay attention on collaboration technology such as ASNSs in relation to increase research outreach, their effectiveness in fulfilling their vision and goals and their impact on society. Conrad et al. (2012) stated that the identification of successful factors toward usage of technologies at the individual level is critical to any

organization performance. Research on specific factors have been only received a little academic attention (Brown et al., 2010) particularly for ASNSs adoption. Therefore, it is vital to find factors affecting ASNS use behaviour among researchers including demographic factors.

2. Literature review

2.1 Academic Social Networking Sites

Analysis of the global movement regarding SNS application over the last decade indicates a need for an online social network system which can assist students, academics and scholars to connect and grow their academic network, share and show their research accomplishments. SNS that addresses these issues and targets this audience is known as ASNSs. Considering their potential of various uses, academic researchers can use ASNSs to improve scholarship (Vala Ali, 2014).

ASNS is a web-based service that allows individual researchers to maintain identity by creating a public or semi-public profile within a system, facilitate communication by sharing a list of other researchers in connection, to enable information sharing with other researchers in the system, and simplify collaboration with other researchers of the system (Bullinger et al., 2011). Some examples of ASNSs are Academia.edu, ResearchGate, Mendeley and Zotero.