A Case Study of User Vetted Social Networks:

Social Networking

Social networks sites might be defined as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site. What makes social network sites unique is not that they allow individuals to meet strangers, but rather that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks. This can result in connections between individuals that would not otherwise be made. One of the most important features of these sites is that they are continuously incorporating additional features to bridge online and offline social interactions.

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Social network sites are therefore a part of the extended social network. To emphasize this articulated social network as a critical feature of these sites, we label them “social network sites.”

DontStayIn, commonly abbreviated to DSI, is a social networking site based around clubbing. Primarily covering the UK it lists nearly 185,000 events and has over 430,000 verified members. The social media on the site is gathered by encouraging members to upload picture galleries to the site for events they’ve attended, add events and venues and otherwise contribute.

Based on the above, the presented work will attempt to gain an insight into vetted communities to explore the first two questions posed. The third question of change is not relevant as the entire goal of the SNS in question is a singular common interest.

Aside from the above, it is possible that users would rather treat a user-regulated SNS rather than commercial establishments promoting themselves. It might be assumed that this stems from the fact that people trust other like-minded peoples than commercial establishments. It might be assumed that this stems from the fact that people trust other like-minded peoples. The presented work attempts to ratify these assumptions.

Related Work

Most available research suggests that SNSs primarily support pre-existing social relations. In [3], Ellison et. al. have suggested that Facebook is used to maintain existing offline relations or social offline relations, rather than meeting new people. Within these relationships there is typically some common offline element among individuals who friend one another, such as shared experiences, interests or friends. The presented work attempts to add to this very fact taking DontStayIn as a case study. This specific SNS was chosen because a user’s online social capital is dictated by their offline activity. Most available research suggests that SNSs primarily support pre-existing social relations.

Studying the experiences of users within the vibrant Madeirian nightlife will help explore these assumptions. The questionnaires are still awaited and should further validate the observations mentioned above.

References


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Process and Results

Perspective users:

The study of user motivation to join and be part of a social community was based on the wealth of existing literature available and observations made within the vibrant Madeirian nightlife. Open-ended informal interviews were conducted to ascertain specific motivations a user might have to join a vetted community as opposed to a community online. The interviews were not of a high formal and structured nature so as to put the interviewees at ease and allow the environment in these sorts of social gatherings do not support long intrusive conversations.

It was observed that people new to the nightlife in madeira were looking for acceptance within one of the more visible social groups. This helped new-bees to acquaint themselves with the club scene on the island and build their social capital amongst it’s populace.

Joining such an exclusive group gives them access to a wealth of information, such as, various events which are not known to the general populace or insider information about venues, such as, when a venue is worth visiting or that when a certain venue is hosting an event the other venues are easier to gain entry to.

These social groups mimc a vetted social networks as the visible groups are only comprised of members that are dedicated to the interest and there is an innate social vetting process before any new member is allowed to join the group.

Existing users:

When considering existing user, ‘Spotters’ in DontStayIn were focused on as they were most involved in the vetting process. Questionnaires were distributed and an attempt was made to interview respondents further to gain an insight into their motivations and levels of satisfaction within the community. These results are still awaited.

From the observational viewpoint described above it is abundantly clear that a social structure similar to that of ‘Spotters’ is prevalent in the social groups described within. While within each group there exist members that are socially more adept and vocal, who usually introduce new-bees to the group. They usually look at what value a new member can add to the group. The value addition can range from their contacts at venues to the image they portray of the group. Though this might seem counter intuitive as making the group seem elitist but as described by Michihito Kandori in [7], where the exclusivity of groups make them more desirable.

Administrators:

Information from the administrators was meant to be collected through a number of questionnaires. The purpose of this interaction was to ascertain what factors they believe contribute to the popularity of the community and whether user regulated communities are more contextually aware and therefore more popular. These results are still awaited.

The results were then verified against other vetted communities and via observations made on ground.

Social Networks

This work proposes to study the successes of these strategies and the benefits and pitfalls of adopting such a process. The plan for this work is to gather information from users, spotters and the administrators to ascertain how well these strategies are accepted at various levels.

Objectives

While most SNSs focus on growing broadly and exponentially, others explicitly seek narrower audiences. Some, like HotOrNot and Squo are, intentionally restrict access to appear selective and site. Other activity-centered sites like Coastcurfing and DontStayIn are limited by their target demographic and thus tend to be smaller.

With a look at the ever increasing popularity of SNSs, a shift in the organization of online communities has been identified [1]. While SNSs dedicated to communities of interest still exist and prosper, SNSs are primarily organized around people and their connections in the offline world. Early interest based communities such as UserNet and public discussion forums were structured by topics or according to topical hierarchies, but social network sites are structured as personal networks, with the user at the center of their own community. SNSs today share more in common with unredacted social structures, where “the world is composed of networks, not groups” [2].

SNSs are continuously incorporating additional features to bridge online and offline Social Networks. The work presented attempts to illustrate this very fact taking DontStayIn as a case study. This specific SNS was because a user’s online social capital is dictated by their offline activity. Most available research suggests that SNSs primarily support pre-existing social relations.

DontStayIn, commonly abbreviated to DSI, is a social networking site based around clubbing. Primarily covering the UK it lists nearly 185,000 events and has over 430,000 verified members. The social media on the site is gathered by encouraging members to upload picture galleries to the site for events they’ve attended, add events and venues and otherwise contribute.

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Another avenue of research into user regulated communities might be in comparing it with socio-economic theories [7] looking at relationships on SNSs through cost-benefit analysis. This is beyond the scope of this work but might be inviable non the less.

Conclusions

Based on the popularity of DontStayIn it can be assumed that the strategies of vetting prospective users works rather well. Why they work so well can be ascertained based on the observations discussed above. The vetting process that exists within physical social networks in Madeira seem to mimic the ‘Spotters’ vetting process in DSI.

Such a system benefits every kind of user whether perspective or pre-existing. It allows for the sharing of social capital amongst a network allowing it to grow and it’s users thrive.

The questionnaires are still awaited and should further validate the observations mentioned above.

Related Work

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