

Typology of Facebook Posts: An Examination of Data

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Abstract

Previous studies have examined the activities of Facebook users. This fall into five categories we differentiated and named: Scrapbooker, Social butterfly, activist, Entrepreneur and Observer. In the present study, data was collected from 468 subjects who were asked to indicate what percent of their FB behaviors fell into each of the typological categories. For the group in general, Results revealobserver activities accounted for 36.53% of their overall time on Facebook; Social butterfly behaviors accounted for 35.07%;Scrapbook activities accounted for 13.62%; Activist activity accounted for 7.02%;and Entrepreneurial activity for 6.28%. An examination of gender differences in typological behavior reveals that women are significantly more likely than men to engage in Scrap booking activities.

Keywords: Facebook, Facebook Research, Facebook Typology, Gender differences.

Introduction

A previous publication (1) presented a framework that was developed to categorize and examine Facebook behaviors and postings. Specifically, five independent FB behaviors were identified: Scrap Booker activity, i.e., posting pictures of oneself, family and friends; Social Butterfly activity, which focuses on engagement and involvement in the activities of others; Activist activity, posting or sharing posts dealing with social, political or cultural issues; Entrepreneur activity, posting or sharing posts related to one's own or others' businesses; Observer activity which involves a nonresponsive, passive viewing of the profiles and postings of friends and others.

A series of studies conducted by the FB research group (FBRG) at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) has utilized this typological framework and in particular has studied the reliability of coding typological responses (2); the consistency of typological responses over time (3); a comparison between an older and younger cohort with regard to their respective typological behavior (4); photo posting behaviors as a function of typology (5); and a comparison of received "likes" as function of typology (6).

In the process of employing this typological framework it has become evident through personal observation and research that while many users have a dominant and preferred typological approach they also include other behaviors as well. This study was designed to examine this behavioral range by requesting subjects to estimate the percentage of their total time on Facebook they spent in specific typological activities.

Method

During the spring of 2014, the FBRG developed a questionnaire to examine the range of FB behaviors, personality variables and activities. The survey received CSULB Institutional Review Board approval.

As indicated above, one key item on the survey became the focus of the present study. The item reads as follows: “*Of your total time on Facebook, estimate the percentage of time you spend in engaging in the following activities. (Note: Your answers must add up to 100%).*”

- a) *Posting Pictures of oneself, friends, and recreational activities*
- b) *Liking the posts and status updates of friends*
- c) *Commenting on posts of friends*
- d) *Posting or sharing posts related to information on social or political issues or showing support for cultural media icons*
- e) *Posting or sharing posts related to business activities of oneself or others*
- f) *Viewing and exploring the postings and profiles of friends without commenting or liking”*

Item a assesses Scrapbooking behavior; **items b and c** operationalize Social Butterfly behavior; **item d** assesses Activist behavior; **item e** assesses Entrepreneurial behavior; **item f** assesses Observer behavior.

Participants

Subjects were students drawn from undergraduate Psychology and Marketing courses at California State University, Long Beach. From a total pool of 583 subjects, 468 -- 210 male, 258 female -- were active on Facebook and successfully completed the typological assessment item. Those who were not FB users or did not complete the relevant item were eliminated. The subjects ranged in age from 18 to 76 ($M=24.26$, $SD=8.22$).

Results

In presenting the data we have elected to provide the means and standard deviations for the total group for each of the typological behaviors as well as present the percent that each category represented.

Scrap Booker $M=13.62$, $SD=17.48$, percent=14%; Social Butterfly $M=35.07$, $SD=25.41$, percent=35%; Activist $M=7.02$, $SD=12.05$, percent=7%; Entrepreneur $M=6.28$, $SD=11.27$, percent=6%; Observer $M=36.53$, $SD=30.04$, percent=37%.

The Social Butterfly category combined scores from two other items: one that assessed subject’s “liking” behavior and the other that assessed their “commenting” behavior. The means, standard deviations and percent are here presented: Liking posts, $M=23.31$ $SD=20.79$ percent=23%; Commenting on posts, $M=11.36$, $SD=11.74$, percent=12%.

Gender differences were examined in all five typological categories. The only category which yielded a significant gender difference was the Scrapbooker where women ($M=16.32$, $SD=18.52$) displayed greater activity than men ($M=10.31$, $SD=15.51$) $t=3.82$, $p<.001$.

Discussion

The present study provides a clear cut and objective means to assess distinct typological activities of Facebook users. Subjects in the study differentiated and self-reported six typological activities. Whether such self-reported activities are an accurate reflection of a subject's actual FB behavior awaits further investigation.

The most common behavior reported by FB users was that of the Observer at 37%, closely followed by the Social Butterfly at 35%. Less frequent were the Scrap Booker at 14%, the Activist at 7%, and the Entrepreneur at 6%.

It is not surprising that Social Butterfly and Observer behaviors are the more frequent because viewing or liking a post can be done quickly and require much less effort and especially less risk taking than posting materials, sharing political and social opinions or soliciting economic support or discussing business opportunities.

It should be mentioned that the preponderance of the sample was young college students. An assessment of an older, established cohort might yield a different typological configuration.

The gender differences found in Scrap Bookers indicate that women are more likely to post pictures of themselves, their family and friends. This finding is consistent with prior FB research (7), which demonstrated that women are more comfortable and probably more skilled than men in emotional and personal interactions on FB.

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