

# Social Media

Subjects: **Information Science & Library Science**

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Social media is a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks and communities.

motivation

personality

predispositions

character

activity

impact

## 1. Introduction

Numerous studies demonstrated that the way social media (SM) is used depends on sex, age, and personality traits <sup>[1][2][3][4]</sup>. Their significant portions focused on SM use drivers and the question of actions motivated by SM <sup>[5][6][7][8]</sup>. Polish researchers investigated SM use by business and public institutions, but also the use of SM to contact these organizations <sup>[9][10][11][12]</sup>. Sedkowski <sup>[10]</sup> demonstrated that there is still a significant potential of SM left untapped in Poland. The question is, what area of SM is still to be harnessed and how to do it? One of such domains can be the user's motivation to use SM in the context of demographics, individual needs, experience, patterns, and motivational factors. Motivation determines engagement, frequency and manner of SM use <sup>[6][13][14][15]</sup>.

The motivational aspect of SM use has been investigated globally. Some relevant countries include Slovakia <sup>[9]</sup>, Norway <sup>[15]</sup>, Malaysia, India, and Pakistan <sup>[16]</sup>, the United States, Germany, China, and India <sup>[17]</sup>, South Korea <sup>[18]</sup>, Romania and Tunisia <sup>[19]</sup>, and Russia <sup>[20]</sup>. Unfortunately, the volume of research on SM and motivation in Poland is relatively modest. The problem has been appreciated only recently, but grows more popular <sup>[11][12][21][22]</sup>. This fact substantiates the need for relevant research. The present research addressed a specific gap.

## 2. Social Media, Motivation and Sex

### 2.1. Motivation and Social Media

Research on SM to date focused mostly on the impact of tools (technologies) for establishing relations on attitudes and behaviour that reinforce social capital of individuals. It demonstrated basic mechanisms through which SM generates social capital benefits and discussed the burdens and advantages of SM <sup>[23]</sup>. SM can, for example, provide emotional support from friends (from an SNS and through it) <sup>[24]</sup>. Steinfield et al. <sup>[23]</sup> demonstrated that social platforms significantly impact relationship management in large groups of people connected by an SNS. SNSs provide societal support and access to useful information. Other studies showed that people use SM to maintain bonds with friends and establish new relationships. Therefore, it facilitates specific social relationship-

building to a certain degree [7][25]. The studies exhibited positive relationships between SM use and mental well-being understood as experience of positive emotions, good mood, and high life satisfaction level. Nevertheless, many studies suggest otherwise. The growing use of SM can cause increased exposure to fake news or accumulated negative information (of xenophobic, pessimistic nature, for example) and psychological abuse, which is deteriorating for well-being (by causing mental stress) and could result in anxiety or depression in the long term [26][27]. Hence, the need for education regarding effective creation of information and messages and, perhaps mainly, verification of the authenticity and quality of content and handling excess negative information and mental abuse. Research shows that SM users often disseminate rather than question disinformation [28]. It is more important for them to gain attention, 'heat it up', and establish social relations (also through controversies) than to make sure the information they pass on is accurate and true [29].

Chou and Edge [30] investigated the impact of SM use on the perception of the lives of others. Their research showed that people who used selected social platforms longer and watched SM profiles of others for a long time more often believed that others were happier and had better lives. Therefore, longer use of SM makes the users forget that SM is a projection with controlled, moderated, or even 'doctored' content. The 'real life' or 'reality' is not necessarily as positive, happy, and colourful as its representation in SM. Many users build an image that fails to reflect reality. Paradoxically, such a creation can motivate them to change their lives, for example, increase physical activity or commence education. One example is athletes who often publish videos on SM where they train with fake weights. On the one hand, it could motivate their audience to increased physical activity and more intensive workout, but on the other hand, it may contribute to injuries. It is, therefore, important to take SM content with a pinch of salt.

SM postings can demotivate as well. Some people may feel overwhelmed by the number of success stories others boast about in SM. It can lead to demotivating mental attitudes 'I will never achieve this much. It is not worth even trying'. According to Kross et al. [31], SM use may be detrimental to two components of (subjective) well-being: how people feel at a specific moment and how satisfied they are with their lives. These results conform to those by Chou and Edge [30].

Social media facilitate interactions and are the key factor in relationship marketing. They motivate specific attitudes or activities (SM is a source of motivation), but their use is also motivated (SM is used to achieve specific goals). Research shows that sports fans are motivated to use SM to establish closer relationships with the team or athlete they cheer. Fans exercise four key motives as they draw value from the SM-enabled connection to the team: passion, hope, esteem and camaraderie [6]. Brands strive to create interaction and reinforce consumer involvement through their online presence, particularly in SM. Enginkaya and Yılmaz [5] investigated consumer motivation to interact with brands in SM. Findings of exploratory and confirmatory analyses revealed five distinct motivation factors: 'Brand Affiliation', 'Investigation', 'Opportunity Seeking', 'Conversation', and 'Entertainment'. Sweetser and Kelleher [32] demonstrated that identifying motivations for social media adoption and use is an important skill for leaders in public relations. Karahanna et al. [33] demonstrated, in turn, that psychological ownership motivation drives individuals to engage in SM use because SM has affordances to fulfil the underlying needs of psychological ownership.

## 2.2. Social Media Use and Sex

Chan and colleagues [29] demonstrated that women are more active in SM; they share information more often and more readily communicate through SM. Compared to women, men more often use SM to interact with others and express themselves [34]. Hassouneh and Brengman [35] demonstrated that the user motivation to use free-form/social virtual worlds depends primarily on sex. Manipulation, achievement, and relationship derive for males. Females: Friendship and escapism. Males are manipulators, uninvolved. Females are friendship seekers. Women who more often use chats and discussion groups exhibit higher levels of introversion and neuroticism [36]. Moreover, extraverts more often use social platforms, with less emotionally stable men being more regular users [1].

Content in SM affects women and men differently. It may be due to differences in the frequency and manner of SM use by women and men due to character differences. It is particularly true for engagement and susceptibility to SM content. Consequently, SM can motivate people belonging to a specific sex and with specific personality traits to particular actions more intensely and often. Moreover, sex and personality traits may predispose to certain attitudes (activities) in SM.

## 2.3. Social Media Use and Personality

The impact of personality traits on SM use is most often investigated with the five-factor model [37]. The Big-Five framework is a model of personality that contains five factors representing personality traits at a broad level: extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experiences, agreeableness, and conscientiousness [2][38]. Extraversion, emotional stability, and openness to experience are positively correlated with the degree of SM use [1][39]. Extraverts tend to use SM more as they crave social interactions [40]. Moreover, extraverts usually have more relationships with others in SM and in real life. They also tend to have better self-esteem [41][42]. SM users are dissatisfied with their lives less often, which suggests that SM could help cope with low satisfaction and self-esteem [43]. In addition, personality can affect the choice of social platforms to a large extent. For example, according to Hughes and colleagues [2], extraverts and more sociable persons prefer Facebook, while introverts and less outgoing people choose Twitter. Extraversion, openness and neuroticism are robustly linked to the use of diverse social media platforms. Personality accounts for the variance in social media use significantly more compared to sex and age [44].

The relationship between the frequency and scope of activities in SM and motivation to certain consumer or purchasing behaviour or refraining from such behaviour. Frequent exposure to specific content, both advertising and personal relations, such as tourist photographs, reviews of products and services (positive and negative both), can motivate others to a specific activity, such as a purchase, travel, or physical activity (along the lines of: 'my friends in social media did it', 'this product has many positive reviews', 'my friends in social media were satisfied with it' or to the contrary: 'my friends advised against it in social media').

# 3. Conclusions

SM affects people in at least two areas: the private domain of personal benefits and the social domain open to people. Hence, activities motivated by SM can be of a private, local nature (effects limited to a specific person and their immediate surroundings) or be global (effects surpassing local range, particularly regarding socioeconomics, culture, and the environment). Consequently, publication of specific content in SM (including its amount and form) can affect more people, motivate specific activities, elicit specific responses, or shape particular attitudes. There is room for further research in this regard.

It shows that content published in SM may be motivating and inspire people to act, engender enthusiasm, stimulate, drive demand, and/or will depending on personal user traits. On the other hand, it can demotivate (with such factors as excess negative content, overwhelming success of others, helplessness, or information flood). Moreover, social platforms alone are used for specific reasons, which means that their use is motivated.

It shows that SM motivated the respondents to travel and pursue their hobbies the most. SM was found to motivate consumption (shopping), health and beauty activities, and education. The motivational (impact) strength of SM differed depending on sex and personality traits. Women were more active SM users (reacting, browsing, and posting) than men. Moreover, active SM users noted a significantly greater impact of SM on their motivation to act in all the investigated domains. SM activity as such depended much more on sex than individual personality traits. The general conclusion is that sex and personality traits significantly impact SM use, while SM is a considerable motivator in stimulating activity.

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