

[Original Article]

The Use of Facebook in International Multi-course Collaborative Projects in Fashion Merchandising Curriculums

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Abstract

This study examined students' perceived importance of the benefits derived from an international multi-course collaborative (IMCC) project and how these perceptions impact students' extrinsic and intrinsic motivations for using the project Facebook (i.e., perceived usefulness and enjoyment), attitude toward the project, and intent to participate in future IMCC projects. The data were collected from 96 students who participated in the IMCC project and were enrolled in four different fashion merchandising courses in two different countries, the U.S. and South Korea. This study found that perceived enjoyment of the project Facebook influenced attitude toward the project and intent to participate in future IMCC projects. Perceived usefulness and enjoyment were predicted by the perceived importance of cultural understanding and feedback exchange among international group members. Attitude was influenced by the perceived importance of networking through the IMCC project, while intent to participate in future IMCC projects was predicted by perceived importance of cultural understanding and networking through the IMCC project. This study provides educators in the related disciplines insights about how to incorporate social network sites into course curricula to motivate students' project participation and learning.

Keywords: Collaborative, Facebook, International, Motivation, Project

I. Introduction

Educators have shown increasing interest in the use of social network sites (SNSs) in formal education settings because of the benefits these sites provide to students and instructors: SNSs can facilitate knowledge exchange, improve apprehension, and foster socialization and community among students (Ryan, Margro, & Sharp,

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2011). Because learning is a social activity, SNSs can be a powerful learning tool to connect and engage both students and instructors within the learning community and linked pedagogies (Duffy, 2011). Among SNSs, Facebook is the most popular worldwide with more than 1.49 billion monthly active users (Smith, 2015). Facebook and other SNSs are a familiar environment for college students: among college-aged adults in the U.S., about 95% of SNS users use Facebook, while 58.6% use Instagram, the second most popular SNS ("College students," 2015).

Collaborative learning is an instruction technique in which students at various performance levels work together in groups to achieve a common goal by sharing and distributing knowledge and skills as well as exchanging and communicating ideas through the processes of explanation, discussions, and inquiry (Gokhale, 1995; Hakkinen & Jarvela, 2006). Researchers have found that collaborative learning allows students to develop interpersonal and communication skills (Looi, Chen, & Ng, 2010) and enhance their critical thinking and problem-solving skills by evaluating others' perspectives (So & Brush, 2008). The collaborative learning pedagogy embeds the constructivism theory (Piaget, 1969), which focuses on the importance of the learner being actively involved in the learning process, generating and sharing knowledge, skills, experiences, and ideas by collaboratively interacting with others. A constructivist learning environment is described as a setting in which the learners are engaged and participate in activities among members (Harasim, 1990). Therefore, the characteristics of SNSs may well reflect the learner-centered paradigm emphasized in the social constructivist learning theory (Ractham & Kaewkitipong, 2012).

Furthermore, Ma and Pendergast (2010) pointed out the importance of heterogeneous grouping in computer-based collaborative learning and argued that learners' mastery of major concepts is enhanced by diverse members from various academic and cultural backgrounds, life experiences and skills, and geographic locations. Specifically, collaborative learning in a cross-cultural setting improves student learning by broadening students' scope of knowledge and applications (Chen, Hsu, & Caropreso, 2006). A cross-cultural setting is particularly important for students in fashion-related majors. The fashion industry is extensively collaborative, and consumers have become more globalized as they shop from multi-national firms that expand their businesses in foreign cultures physically and virtually. Thus, to help fashion students understand the collaborative nature of the industry, as well as distinctive retail systems and unique consumer demands in different cultures, it is essential for instructors to utilize multi-national, multi-course collaborative projects in their curricula.

Although some researchers have investigated the use of SNSs, particularly Facebook, in classroom settings in higher education (e.g., Cheung & Vogel, 2011; Hurt et al., 2012), no previous studies have examined how Facebook can be used to support student learning in a multi-national, multi-course collaborative environment. Thus, this study is unique in that it examines students' perceived importance of the benefits derived from an international multi-course collaborative project (hereafter called the IMCC project), and how these perceptions impact their extrinsic and intrinsic motivations for using the project Facebook, attitude toward the project, and intent to participate in future IMCC projects. Although testing the validity of the theories is not the main goal of this study, we utilized motivation theory (Deci, 1975) and the Fishbein model (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) to understand the mechanism behind motivations, attitude, and behavioral intention in the context of an IMCC project.

II. Review of Literature

Motivation theory (Deci, 1975) suggests two distinct types of motivations to perform an activity: extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Extrinsic motivation (e.g., perceived usefulness) comes from the belief that performing an activity will help achieve valued outcomes such as improved performance, whereas intrinsic motivation (e.g., perceived enjoyment) comes from the belief that performing an activity is interesting and enjoyable in itself (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1992). According to motivation theory, the orientation of motivation is related to a person's underlying attitudes and goals, which are the impetus for the person's behavior (Deci, 1975). The Fishbein model (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) postulates that an individual's behavioral intentions are determined by attitude, which is a function of individual's beliefs with the behavior. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a/b: Students' perceived usefulness (H1a) and enjoyment (H1b) of the project Facebook positively influence their attitude toward the IMCC project.

H2a/b: Students' perceived usefulness (H2a) and enjoyment (H2b) of the project Facebook positively influence their intent to participate in future IMCC projects.

H3: Attitude toward the IMCC project positively influences students' intent to participate in future IMCC projects.

Nambisan and Baron (2007) identified four types of benefits (cognitive, social integrative, personal integrative, and hedonic benefits) that consumers can derive from media usage in customer virtual communities and found that those benefits influenced consumers' future participation in the environment. In their study, cognitive benefits are defined as enhancing knowledge and understanding of the environment and obtaining solutions to problems. Adopting this definition, this study identifies four types of cognitive benefits that can be acquired from participating in an IMCC project: benefits associated with (1) technology use in learning, (2) cultural understanding in learning, (3) networking through the IMCC project, and (4) feedback exchange among international group members. Further, this study proposes that students' perceived importance of each of the project-related benefit predicts their extrinsic (perceived usefulness) and intrinsic (enjoyment) motivations for using the project Facebook, their attitude, and intent to participate in future IMCC projects.

Importance of technology use in learning. Ma and Pendergast (2010) suggested that technology is a tool that enhances teaching and learning, empowers learners, and equips students with necessary skills for future professionals. The researchers found that a computer-supported learning community improved students' interaction and communication and encouraged peers' timely and constructive feedback. Other benefits derived from technology use included convenience in terms of time and geographic distance, ease of information management, and ease of monitoring activities for the instructor.

Importance of cultural understanding in learning. Cultural understanding helps industry professionals more effectively accommodate local consumers by fine-tuning their products and marketing and promotional efforts (Keegan & Green, 2011). Cultural awareness also helps students amend the effect of bias in educational materials (Tapanes, Smith, & White, 2009). Therefore, cultural understanding is crucial for students' future success in the professional world. Karpova, Jacobs, Lee, and Andrew (2011) found that participation in a multi-cultural collaborative project in a computer-mediated environment increased students' awareness of culture and global industry.

Importance of networking through the IMCC project. A collaborative learning environment creates social capital for participants. Social capital refers to the mechanisms that generate relationships or the outcomes (Portes, 1998). One of the most important social capital outcomes from using SNSs is networking as people manage relationships with a large and heterogeneous group of individuals who provide social support and useful information (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Karpova et al. (2011) identified several benefits of a virtual multi-cultural collaborative project, including gaining virtual teamwork and communication skills; discovering knowledge by learning about values, beliefs, and worldviews of students from other cultures; and understanding the industry from a global perspective by collaboratively working with those students. Thus, IMCC projects using Facebook may provide students benefits derived from networking and building relationships with international group members.

Importance of feedback exchange among international group members. Collaborative learning provides students with opportunities to discuss, negotiate, and criticize solutions to problems (Johnson & Johnson, 1986). In collaborative projects, peer feedback offers a different perspective and allows students to assimilate their thinking (Moon, 1999). Researchers have found that online peer assessment can improve students' performance, outcomes, and learning satisfaction (e.g., Van Gennip, Segers, & Tillema, 2010) and promote active learning, constructive criticism, knowledge sharing, and learning communities (Barak & Rafaeli, 2004).

Many researchers (e.g., Lin & Lu, 2011) have found that external factors directly influence an individual's extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. In turn, these motivations can affect his/her behavioral intention for a particular action, such as using Facebook. The Fishbein model (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) suggests that a consumer's overall attitude toward an object is the function of the consumer's belief regarding the attributes and benefits that the object possesses and the importance weight of the attributes and benefits. In this study, external factors refer to students' perceived importance of the benefits that can be derived from participating in the IMCC project, perceptions which may in turn affect their attitude towards the project and intent to participate in further IMCC projects. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4a~d: Perceived importance of technology use in learning (TecUse) (H4a), cultural understanding in learning (CulUnd) (H4b), networking through the IMCC project (NetPro) (H4c), and feedback exchange among international group members (FeedGM) (H4d) positively influence students' perceived usefulness of the project Facebook.

H5a~d: TecUse (H5a), CulUnd (H5b), NetPro (H5c), and FeedGM (H5d) positively influence students' perceived enjoyment of the project Facebook.

H6a~d: TecUse (H6a), CulUnd (H6b), NetPro (H6c), and FeedGM (H6d) positively influence students' attitude toward the project.

H7a~d: TecUse (H7a), CulUnd (H7b), NetPro (H7c), and FeedGM (H7d) positively influence students' intent to participate in future IMCC projects.

III. Methods

The project scenario involved a U.S. fashion retailer expanding its business into South Korea or a South Korean retailer expanding its business into the U.S. Four U.S. and four Korean fashion retailers in various retail formats were chosen. The different groups of U.S. and Korean students within courses conducted market research for an assigned retailer and then based on the information provided by international group members, the U.S. or Korean students created entry strategies for the assigned retailer to expand its business into the other country. The U.S. and Korean students' projects were first created as a PowerPoint presentation format in English and then converted into a video to be uploaded to the project Facebook. Students shared their projects through Facebook and posted their feedback or comments. Students also exchanged written feedback as an assignment in addition to the Facebook comments. English was used to create the written feedback and comments in both countries.

The data were collected using students who participated in the IMCC project from two courses in a major university in the southeast of the U.S. (Visual Merchandising [n=23] and Global Retailing [n=10]) and two courses from two large universities in South Korea (Fashion Retailing [n=26] and Fashion Buying and Merchandising [n=37]). A survey was distributed in class right after the final presentation of the project. The questionnaire was developed in English and translated into Korean by two bilingual Korean faculty members. The English and Korean versions of the questionnaire were reviewed and revised by four bilingual Korean faculty members who participated in the project. Some instruments used in this study were borrowed and modified from existing literature, and others were created for this study (see Table 1).

Table 1. Instruments

Measure and source	α	Items
Perceived importance of technology use in learning (Kim, LaFleur, & Schaeffer, 2008)	.74	1. The use of technology is important in learning the subject matter taught in a classroom. 2. The use of technology is important in enhancing my understanding of the concepts covered in a classroom.
Perceived importance of cultural understanding in learning (Kim et al., 2008)	.84	1. It is important that I learn about other cultures in my classes. 2. Projects involving practical application using different culture perspectives are important. 3. Understanding different cultures is an important component to my major and is important for success in my future career.
Perceived importance of networking through the IMCC project (Chia, Poe, & Parikshat, 2008)	.84	1. It is important to get to know persons of other cultures in international collaborative projects. 2. International collaborative projects help me feel comfortable to work with persons of other cultures. 3. In international collaborative projects, understanding the differences between different cultures is important to develop friendship with persons from other cultures. 4. International collaborative projects allow me to develop networks with future fashion professionals.

Perceived importance of feedback exchange among international group members (Thompson & Ku, 2006)	.90	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I felt comfortable receiving feedback from international group members. 2. I believe receiving feedback from international group members helped me improve my work. 3. I believe providing feedback to international group members helped me learn more.
Perceived usefulness of the project Facebook (Davis, 1989)	.95	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The use of Facebook in this project helped me to accomplish my task more effectively. 2. In this project, Facebook was useful. 3. In this project, Facebook was valuable for my communication effectiveness. 4. In this project, Facebook enabled me to fulfill the purpose of the project. 5. In this project, Facebook was useful to facilitate my interaction with other students involved in this project.* 6. The use of Facebook helped me to communicate with other students in solving a problem or completing a task.*
Perceived enjoyment of the project Facebook (Lin & Bhattacharjee, 2008; Lin & Lu, 2011)	.96	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I enjoyed using Facebook in this project. 2. I liked to use Facebook in this project. 3. I had fun when using Facebook in this project. 4. I am satisfied with using Facebook in this project.
Attitude toward the project (Byun, Kim, & Duffey, 2012)	.94	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bad --- Good 2. Useless --- Beneficial 3. Worthless --- Worthwhile 4. Not valuable --- Valuable 5. Negative --- Positive 6. Not favorable --- Favorable 7. Dislike --- Like
Intent to participate in future IMCC projects (Byun et al., 2012)	.90	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I would register for future courses that include international collaborative projects. 2. I would not mind meeting an extra hour during the week because of the international collaborative project. 3. I would enjoy the opportunity to learn with students from other cultures. 4. International collaborative projects should be implemented in other courses.

Note. α = Cronbach's *alpha*; * items developed for this study

IV. Results

A total of 96 students participated in the survey. The average age of the respondents was 22 years old. About 73% of students were female. About 94% of them had used Facebook before participating in this project and 62% (U.S. 73.5% vs. Korea 55.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that they had actively participated in the project Facebook.

Through factor analysis using a varimax rotation, uni-dimensionality was confirmed for each measure. Cronbach's alphas ranged from .74 to .95 (see Table 1). Multicollinearity among independent variables was tested and VIF estimates ranged from 1.169 to 1.991. To test the hypotheses, stepwise multiple regression and simple regression were used. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Result of the hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	<i>F</i>	β^*	<i>p</i>	adj <i>R</i> ²	Result
H1a Usefulness→Attitude	<i>F</i> (1, 95) = 25.91	.076	.621	.206	Not supported
H1b Enjoyment→Attitude		.463	.000		Supported
H2a Usefulness→Intent	<i>F</i> (1, 95) = 33.22	.052	.729	.251	Not supported
H2b Enjoyment→Intent		.509	.000		Supported
H3 Attitude → Intent	<i>F</i> (1, 95) = 73.19	.660	.000	.429	Supported
H4a TecUse → Usefulness	<i>F</i> (2, 94) = 40.43	.106	.206	.451	Not supported
H4b CulUnd → Usefulness		.387	.000		Supported
H4c NetPro → Usefulness		.014	.899		Not supported
H4d FeedGM → Usefulness		.414	.000		Supported
H5a TecUse → Enjoyment	<i>F</i> (2, 94) = 20.05	.064	.070	.284	Not supported
H5b CulUnd → Enjoyment		.331	.000		Supported
H5c NetPro → Enjoyment		.149	.126		Not supported
H5d FeedGM → Enjoyment		.313	.000		Supported
H6a TecUse → Attitude	<i>F</i> (1, 95) = 13.89	.109	.285	.118	Not supported
H6b CulUnd → Attitude		.083	.525		Not supported
H6c NetPro → Attitude		.357	.000		Supported
H6d FeedGM → Attitude		.476	.635		Not supported
H7a TecUse → Intent	<i>F</i> (2, 94) = 18.01	.161	.092	.262	Not supported
H7b CulUnd → Intent		.250	.038		Supported
H7c NetPro → Intent		.324	.008		Supported
H7d FeedGM → Intent		.085	.407		Not supported

TecUse (technology use in learning); CulUnd (cultural understanding in learning); NetPro (networking through the IMCC project); FeedGM (feedback exchange among international group members)

V. Discussion and Conclusions

This study found that students' perceived enjoyment of the project Facebook positively influenced their attitude toward the IMCC project and intent to participate in future IMCC projects, while perceived usefulness of the project Facebook did not affect the variables. Students were more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the project and were more willing to participate in future IMCC projects when they perceived that the project Facebook provided them with fun, enjoyable, and satisfying experiences, rather than with extrinsic benefits (i.e., usefulness). These findings highlight the importance of the intrinsic (hedonic) components of tasks or processes in designing IMCC

projects using an SNS-mediated learning environment. As the Fishbein model suggested, attitude positively affected students' intention for future behavior.

The perceived importance of cultural understanding and feedback exchange among international group members significantly influenced perceived usefulness and enjoyment of the project Facebook. Based on the beta coefficients, perceived importance of the feedback exchange among international group members was a stronger predictor of perceived usefulness, while perceived importance of cultural understanding was a stronger predictor of perceived enjoyment. Students tended to perceive the project Facebook to be useful and enjoyable when the project allowed them to learn about other cultures and different cultural perspectives through a practical application and when they realized that understanding different cultures is an important component of their major and their success in the future. In addition, students tended to perceive a higher degree of usefulness and enjoyment in using the project Facebook when they felt comfortable receiving feedback from international group members and believed that the feedback helped them improve their work and learn more from the project.

Among the benefit factors, the only predictor of attitude toward the project was the perceived importance of networking through the IMCC project. Students tended to have a more positive attitude toward the project when the project was believed to help them get to know future fashion professionals in other cultures and to develop friendships with students from other cultures. Finally, the perceived importance of cultural understanding in learning and networking with international group members through the IMCC project were significant predictors of students' intent to participate in future IMCC projects.

This study contributes the literature and academia in that it is the first to examine the role of Facebook use in students' motivations, attitude, and behavioral intention toward a multi-national, multi-course collaborative project in Fashion and Merchandising disciplines. The findings of this study provide educators in the related disciplines with opportunities to understand students' motivations to use SNSs in IMCC projects and with insights about how to incorporate SNSs into course curricula to motivate student learning. Because students' intrinsic motivations significantly predict their attitude and future behavior, future IMCC projects may utilize other types of SNSs, such as Instagram, a more visual-driven SNS format, to satisfy students' intrinsic or hedonic needs and wants. A limitation of this study was that the IMCC project in this study used English as the language of communication while involving students who did not speak English as a primary language. Language might have been a barrier for some students in participating in the project Facebook. Thus, instructors designing future IMCC projects should consider how to minimize the language barriers for non-native speakers in developing the tasks and processes in the IMCC projects.

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