SOCIAL MEDIA AND ADAPTING SOCIAL COHESIVENESS THROUGH 1MALAYSIA WIRELESS VILLAGE PROGRAMME: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

1Malaysia Wireless Village Programme is one of the efforts initiated by the Malaysian government to create an informative rural community. Such programme not only offers free internet access to create awareness to the use of the internet, but it also has a conceivable impact towards rural communities’ interpersonal relationship that is reflected through the adaptation of social cohesion. As suggested throughout this paper, a cohesive relationship is possible amid their social interactions via the functional building blocks of social media. The result of this paper will develop a tentative conceptual framework in which the relationship between functional building blocks of social media and adapting social cohesion through 1Malaysia Wireless Village Programme.

Field of Research: Social media, social cohesiveness, human communication, rural youth, rural advancement.

1. Introduction

After claiming independence in 1957, Malaysia, a multi-racial country with diverse ethnics, religions and cultures has been trying to disseminate ethnic tolerance among its population to overcome race barrier. Malaysia is unique in a way; the country has demonstrated the possibility to co-exist peacefully despite conflicting outlooks. For the civilians to fully embrace the existence of diversity and accept it wholly as a united Malaysian nation, integrity of the population is vital without assimilating altruism. As stated by the fourth prime minister in his legacy of “The way forward: Vision 2020” (YAB Dato’ Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, 1991), Malaysian will be able to overcome race-based mind and become a united nation if only social cohesion exists within.

In most of his challenges throughout Vision 2020, Dato’ Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad highlighted the most basic ground rule in which to build a united nation or one ‘Bangsa Malaysia’ is by establishing citizens with a sense of loyalty and collective purpose dedicated to the country. Yet the divergence in practices, beliefs and customs are acknowledged, unrestricted for innovation as each one of the ethnics are interdependent to fit as one nation. Currently the ambition to unite the nation irrespective of ethnic groups has been prolonged through 1Malaysia concept, enunciated by the current Malaysian Prime Minister, Dato’ Sri Mohammad Najib Tun Abdul Razak in 2010 (Razak, 2010).

Along with ‘The Way Forward’ and ‘1Malaysia Concept’ efforts to bring 1Malaysia together, the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia (MCMM) has been establishing a solid platform to ground the mind-sets of Malaysians into national unity. Through the dynamics of communication, information and culture diffusion to mould a sense of belonging, collaboration between Universal Service Provider (USP) and Malaysian Communications and Multimedia
Commission (MCMC) has established a new programme called 1Malaysia Wireless Village or ‘Free Wi-Fi’ for the rural areas, which was introduced in 2011 has the potential to connect Malaysians. Several studies have proven that other than face-to-face communication, computer-mediated communication can also lead towards social cohesion. Yet, several researches have been done on rural society use of internet but it was unclear the benefits of virtual communication for rural youth derived from social media.

1.1 Social media within rural communities in Malaysia

The definition of social media used in this paper is a form of electronic communication such as social networking sites and micro-blogging, through which users can create online virtual communities in order to share and exchange information with other online users (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). With the implementation of 1Malaysia Wireless Village Programme, the Malaysian government strive to bridge the gap between the urban and rural communities in Malaysia through the provision of internet. Within the local context, social media is a foremost communication mediocre in Malaysian youth’s social interactions (Norizan, 2009; Zulkefli & Sulaiman 2009; Norizan et al., 2010; Bolong, 2011 & Samah et al., 2013).

Samah et al. (2013), Bolong (2011) and Zulkefli & Sulaiman (2009) especially implied the importance of computer-mediated communication in community building among rural youth. In their studies, both researchers accentuate on the use of internet to widen social network and arouse community building through social media sharing and exchanging information online.

1.2 Social cohesion

The property of togetherness has been in human traits of interpersonal relationship. One aspect of cohesiveness relies on group members' liking for one another and on their desire to be in the group and share the same goal; thus, ensuing sense of belonging. Social cohesiveness as implemented by Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx in the twenty-first century is a basic element towards social integration (cited in Dillon, 2010). However, the concept do not incite individuals to share the same opinion but more to do with the mutual attraction among different background members; it is a measure of interdependence and the extent to which individuals work together as one (Devito, 2009; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Cartwright (1968) then stated in his theory that social cohesiveness is different as it is the sum of the positive forces of different individuals have in each member's life-space and this phenomenon is the consequence of different forces acting on all the members to remain within the group.

In 1978, Kelley & Thibaut formulated a theory of interdependence ‘\( I = f(S, A, B) \)’ to understand social interaction in human traits; in which Interaction (I) correspond to the function of two individuals in it (A and B) and the context of the specific interdependence situation (S). Social interdependence exists when the accomplishment of each individual’s goal is influenced by the actions of others (cited in Lange & Rusbult, 2012). As positive interdependence exists when individuals perceive that they can reach their goals, social cohesion will only be adapted if and only if the other individuals with whom they are supportively linked with, also reach their goals; therefore, promote each other’s efforts to achieve the goals. This theory can be analysed through the degree of dependence or sense of belonging.

1.3 The importance of development on conceptual framework

A cohesive society is hard to achieve, therefore social cohesion is ideal to unite a heterogeneous community. With the existence of 1Malaysia Wireless Village Programme, it offers free internet connection to bring different people together and a spot where an array of people can come...
together virtually to discuss problems or share concerns regarding their surroundings. Social cohesion can foster social trust among its neighbourhood, create stronger social ties and bring about positive quality of life (Bolong, 2011; Bajunid et al., 2012; Gailliot & Baumeister, 2007). As social cohesion requires adaptation, the young generation has to find a manageable equilibrium of forces to adjust to the changes in their social environment and in ICT (Norizan, 2009; Zulkefli & Sulaiman, 2009; Norizan et al., 2010; & Samah et al., 2013); therefore social media as an option to combat social exclusion and create solidarity within the population.

The new generations consider social media as a social tool for youth community to communicate with their friends and families, therefore there are debates on its functionality in bridging connectedness. Bolong’s previous study in 2006 (2011) has proven that the level of social cohesiveness between virtual communities is on the moderate level (86.7%) when using computer-mediated communication such as Internet Relay Chat (IRC). Bolong also provide several tactics of togetherness, especially the frequency to communicate online can affect deep ties between members and develop social cohesion within the virtual community. However, logging in and logging out factors may hinder the development of social cohesion due to impatience to talk online and preference to communicate face-to-face.

This overview is not comprehensive due to lack of studies on social cohesion through social media. Therefore, this study aims to build a tentative conceptual framework to study how the functional building blocks of social media can generate ‘sense of belongingness’ among youth community using the 1Malaysia Wireless Village internet.

1.4 Social media functionalities

The social media phenomenon has been widely discussed topic among fellow sociologists as a platform for modern-day social networking. Social media functionalities (refer to Figure 1) involve seven building blocks; identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

![Honeycomb framework of Social Media Functionalities](#)

**Figure 1: Honeycomb framework of Social Media Functionalities *Kietzmann et al., 2011**
As there are varieties of social media, some of them only apply some or all these blocks. For instance, in Malaysia the top social media sites retrieved from Google Trend (2014) displayed Facebook as the number one most Google web searched for the past 12 months, following by Youtube and Twitter (refer to Figure 2).

For the purpose of assembling this conceptual framework, we will focus on the form of social media such as social networking sites (SNS) or micro-blogging. SNS refers to a website that allows online users to interact and collaborate with people who are already a part of their already established network or strangers in a social media dialogue (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Therefore, this paper will look forward into studying three different social media (e.g. Facebook, YouTube and Twitter) to acquire which of the functional building blocks of these three will have the biggest possibility to cause adaptation of social cohesion.

![Average Percentage of Google Web Searches Interest April 2014](image)

**Figure 2:** Average percentage of Google Web Searches Interest over Time in Malaysia
1.4.1 Differentiating functionalities of the three sites

![Honeycomb Framework for Facebook, YouTube and Twitter](image)

Figure 3: Honeycomb Framework for Facebook, YouTube and Twitter; the darker the colour, the greater the functionality of that site

2. Adapting Social Cohesion through the functional building blocks of social media

Several researchers have been debating whether social media have the contributing factors that can or may influence a person’s preference in staying in their social networking sites. What these three have in common is conversations, which is one of the key elements for generating social cohesion. A reason for studying these three social media is due to the fact that in order to adapt social cohesion; sense of togetherness, sense of belonging, social trust and social interaction through a dynamic 2-
way communication has to be incorporated in the individual’s interpersonal relationship to possess personal identity (Bolong, 2011; Bajunid et al., 2012; Gailliot & Baumeister, 2007).

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory (Davis 1989) is used to explain the Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease-of-Use when applying social media as a social medium. This theory help clear out the purpose of using technology, thus it is essential to identify whether they find information technology useful as a medium and whether it is easy to use. The functionalities of social media, which is to facilitate long distance interpersonal relationship or current dialogue exchanges without barrier, it is likely that users may perceive it as useful and frequently use it to retain their interpersonal relationship.

H1: High perceived of usefulness of utilizing social media to communicate will result in recurring use of social media.

H2: High perceived ease of use of utilizing social media to communicate will result in recurring use of social media.

2.1 Sense of togetherness

Togetherness is one of the key elements when adapting social cohesion. It refers to an individual feeling honored and full of pride when the other members of that community relish working with each other. The members within the virtual community would always be willing to share, work and include each other and take pleasure by benefiting in community involvement (Bolong, 2011). This sense of togetherness can be achieved through ‘Sharing’, which is included in the social media functionality. As stated by Kietzmann et al. (2011), ‘Sharing’ functional block signifies the degree of engagement where online users exchange, distribute and receive content.

H3: There is a relationship between function of ‘Sharing’ and developing a ‘sense of togetherness’ among virtual communities.

2.2 Sense of belonging

The rise of belongingness occurs when an individual feel they are a part of that community and otherwise the community belongs to them (Bolong, 2011). In this element, it depends whether new users actually wants to stay due to feeling responsible and refuse to leave the group due to the attachment towards that virtual community. Then can social cohesion be developed. The sense of belonging can be conveyed through the depth of interpersonal ‘Relationships’ between virtual communities and through associations, where users can be related to other users (Kietzmann et al., 2011)

H4: There is a relationship between the function of ‘Relationship’ and developing a ‘sense of belonging’ among virtual communities.

2.3 Social Trust

Social trust only occurs when each individuals of the group believes that integration and unity exists within the virtual community. The factor of trust brings people together to work and socially unify each members of the community to perform their individual’s duties (Bolong, 2011). As mentioned by Kietzmann et al (2011), ‘Reputation’ is the extent to which users can identify the standing of others. Within the social media platform, ‘Reputation’ and ‘Identity’ is a matter of trust between the people they relate with generate trustworthiness.
H5: There is a relationship between the function of ‘Reputation’ and developing a ‘Social trust’ among virtual communities.

H6: There is a relationship between the function of ‘Identity’ and developing a ‘Social trust’ among virtual communities.

2.4 Social interaction

Social cohesion within communities is based on the active form of social interaction between the members. Each individual will dynamically exchange information with each other and meet each other’s expectations without asking anything in return to maintain their relationship. Therefore interactions among members within virtual community are encouraged to form these ties (Bolong, 2011). Functional blocks such as ‘Conversation’ and how ‘Groups’ in social media like to group users to manage their friends, thus be more cohesive.

H7: There is a relationship between the function of ‘Conversation’ and developing a ‘Social interaction’ among virtual communities.

H8: High recurring ‘Conversation’ between virtual communities will result in high ‘Presence’ among virtual communities.

H9: There is a relationship between the function of ‘Groups’ and developing a ‘Social interaction’ among virtual communities.
3. Findings: A provisional research conceptual framework

![Proposed framework for adapting social cohesion through social media.](image)

4. Conclusion and future directions

As this framework suggested a possible future study on the use of internet in rural areas in Malaysia, in which a virtual human relationship build within social media can trigger or generate social cohesion. As this view merely based on review how social cohesion can be developed through computer-mediated communication (Bolong, 2011), it needs further inquiry for examining the relationship between the functional building blocks of social media and the elements of adapting social cohesiveness. Since several studies have shown rural youths’ interest in using ICT, it is congruent to employ youth as potential target groups for future study.

References


