

APPLYING MEANS-END CHAIN THEORY TO REVEAL USER'S INNERMOST THINKING TOWARD THE USAGE OF COMMUNITY WEBSITES

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research based on means-end chain (MEC) theory aims to reveal user's innermost thinking toward the usage of Facebook (FB) and Instagram (IG) and find out the most critical functions of FB and IG that cause users to switch/non-switch from FB to IG. In this study, individuals aged between 15 and 24 years old were eligible as our research subjects, since these are also the main group that is familiar with both FB and IG in Taiwan. Through by using the laddering technique of MECs, 36 in-depth interviews were used to collect young people's opinions with regard to FB/IG's attractiveness, advantages and the reasons why these functions can influence their switching/non-switching intentions. All the interviewing transcripts are content analyzed to construct a hierarchical value map, including 15 attributes (functions), 11 consequences (positive/negative feelings) and 9 values. Among the 15 attribute variables, the respondents stated that 'friending or blocking someone', 'following/unfollowing function', 'tag function', 'news feed', 'photo & video function' and 'privacy settings' are the most critical attributes that influence young people's switching/non-switching intention. Such attributes can yield young people's feelings of 'relationship maintenance', 'sharing life experiences', 'self-expression' and 'peace of mind' after experiencing these attributes, leading to the achievement of 'sense of belonging', 'fun and enjoyment of life' and 'security' values. Furthermore, 'friending or blocking someone' and 'privacy settings' are factors that induce young people to keep using FB, while 'tag function', and 'following/unfollowing function' are the factors that attract young people to switch from FB to IG. 'News feed' and 'photo & video function' are the stimuli that constrain young people to switch. Obviously, the findings of this study can not only provide the designers of community websites with insightful information to improve their functional attributes, but also inspire theory development of internet marketing.