Human Factors

for Ergonomic ITs:

Cultural Comparissons on the Adoption

of Social Media and Entertainment

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1. Renren and Facebook: Comparing Cultural Usability and Success

Cultural differences affect business heavily. They determine markets, resources, interactions with environments, with any stakeholder and impact on "culturally-determined user characteristics (…) [that] store and express culturally-determined knowledge" (Rau, Gao & Liang, 2008, p. 287). The risk is high for any institution that overlooks those differences.

Cultural differences also determine what sells and where. The differences between Renren and Facebook are intimately tied to the cultural characteristics of the market they reach. Chinese speakers can create accounts on Renren easily, but for people who don't speak the language, it is hard to do so. On the other hand, for some time, Facebook was not allowed to operate directly in China. This also determines the market scenery.

All this said, the user experience on Renren is much more familiar for the users of China. Unlike Facebook, it revolves around customization and games. Renren users can even select the cursor they display on their front page, and they have at their disposal a desktop App, something that plays an important role in the popularity of Renren in China.

On the other hand, Facebook may not seem so familiar for users from China. It does not allow such customizations; has lower branding and advertising rates inside the page; monetizes more uniformed publicitations directed towards straightforward sale, and trading its user statistics with large companies. Besides, users inside the network tend to focus on popularity over expression.

All this makes Facebook popular in the US: its users are not very tolerant to the amount of direct advertisement you may see in Renren and for what we know, it looks like it seemed to make more sense for

Facebook to monetize selling their user's information, instead of allowing more advertisement within the network (giving rise to a separate ethical issue). On the contrary, Renren has focused on empowering brands within the social network creating a flexible space for creativity and different ways of reaching their public as in-game integration.

Another point is that Renren is not so universally oriented. It focuses on College and University relations, incorporating a degree of customizable personal and aesthetical expression that we may identify more with other social media like Instagram, Myspace or even blogs. Aesthetical, because the user "encodes in the medium of his special talent, presumably expressing his own meanings or intentions by his selection among alternatives" (Osgood, Suci & Tanenbaum, 1967, p. 273). On the contrary, Facebook's is more inflexible and shifts its focus on universality; reaching huge amounts of users; allowing them to exhibit their social statuses and personal achievements; gathering and displaying popularity statistics. People still on Facebook might as well express themselves more freely using specific social networks like Youtube, Instagram or Pinterest.

2. Other Experiences on Cultural Adoption of Entertainment and New ITs

Entertainment requirements differ in populations depending on many different factors. Culture and usage play a very important role. Some groups may use entertainment more heavily or more sporadically, others may consider it a way to communicate and express themselves, yet other groups may seek status using it, and even other groups may have a bad image of mobile entertainment. Content of interest, of course, also varies accordingly.

Though I feel it is very hard to make a very ample generalization of how this factors all affect the adoption of mobile entertainment, because of the huge diversity of cultures we could analyze, and the loss of detail when we examining so broadly, it is yet very clear to me that culture totally determines how mobile entertainment requirements vary. If the a group of users is accustomed to changes, to adopt new technologies

and to value being able to access the latest global information, for example in capital cities; then it is a very different scenario than what people will require from mobile entertainment if the instead the value traditions, stability or family relations.

For example, a more traditional culture may not so easily adopt mobile entertainment, unless it somehow it contributes to maintaining preexisting systems and traditions or ways of doing things. In the research conducted by Liu et. al. (2010), the city of Dezhou had a "typical traditional extended family society and agriculture-related economic structure" (p. 2206) and social influence was a critical factor to predict acceptance of mobile entertainment. Culture is always making a big difference in the elements valued when adopting mobile entertainment: a more progressivist culture, on the other hand, such as those in some large metropolises, could even adopt mobile entertainment quickly just because of the novelty it presents or due to the mediatic effect; because it embodies a new way of doing things and communicating which, even if unknown, could just by itself make the person feel some gain in status or perceived wellbeing.

3. Bibliography

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