The Fine Line Of Acceptable Behavior

Face to Face vs. Mediated Interaction

What are the factors contributing to users' sense of acceptable behavior within social media?
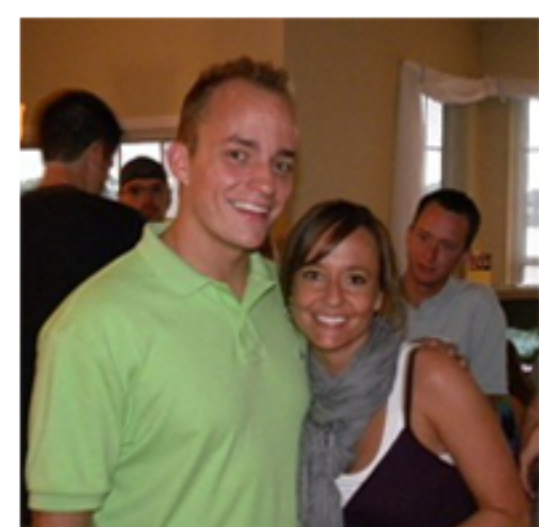
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Abstract

The goal of this study was to understand what factors contributed to users' sense of acceptable behavior within social media. We wanted to link common Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) practices and some of our common interests. For this study, we decided to conduct semi-structured interviews in which we would ask people to rate different scenarios in which they used the media. We presented several concepts that we thought had to do with people's sense of acceptable behavior such as forwardness, anonymity, and purpose. After conducting the interviews, we analyzed the data and discovered many interesting patterns that fell under the concepts above and some that we had not thought of at all. We found that the important factors to the participants of the study were response time, professionalism, and privacy. Under each factor, we have supporting reasons from the different users to support what we found, explaining why these factors are important to behavior in social media.

Methodology

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Findings

Through our research, we discovered several interesting things; some of which surprised us.

- We found that there are distinct differences in social acceptability between different forms of media.
    - "….serious conversation is less acceptable through text messaging or Facebook."
    - "It is not acceptable to stalk someone in person, but it is through Facebook."

- We also found that people still recognize face to face interaction as the most personal and private way to communicate, regardless of how they choose to communicate.
    - "…it would be more personal than writing it on Facebook for everyone to see"
    - "…it is more personal than a text message…"
    - "…they can't show a face to face converstation to someone else…"

- Lastly, we found that while face to face interaction is understood as a more personal way of communicating than through media, the different characteristics of each media is what draws users to use different media.
    - "…if someone doesn't respond right away, then you know they are avoiding you."
    - "Everyone can see what you post on someone's Facebook wall."
    - "…it is professional. I don't use email casually."

Some of these factors that were consistent through our research were response time, professionalism, and privacy. All of our participants expressed that these factors varied between each different media and were part of their reasoning in determining social acceptability.

Constraints

While conducting our research, we realized we were working within several constraints.   Time was our largest constraint.   We had a limited amount of time to complete all of the steps of our project including research, conducting the research, collecting our results, and analyzing our results. Because of this, we were also only able to interview 6 participants. If further research is to be conducted in the future in this area, a much larger sample of participants should be used and more time should be allotted for all of the stages of the research process.

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