

User Behavior on Social Networking Sites: Voluntary vs. Mandated Entry

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Cite as:

Gore Ratika, Maity Moutusy (2021), User Behavior on Social Networking Sites: Voluntary vs. Mandated Entry. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 50th, (104529)

Paper from the EMAC Regional 2021 Conference, Warsaw, September 22-24, 2021



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Abstract

This research investigates user attitude and behavior across two types of social networking sites (SNSs): where user membership is either voluntary or mandated. Regulatory focus theory, self-determination theory and cognitive dissonance theory provide the theoretical underpinnings for the research. Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted with users of two similar SNSs, where the only difference was in the entry requirements (voluntary vs. mandated). Factors that affect user behavior (identified through content analysis), include: a) regulatory focus (eager/vigilant), b) autonomy (choice in entry, friends, content, agenda), and c) dissonance (name of SNSs). These insights are likely to help marketers manage brand engagement.

Keywords: *Social networking sites; Regulatory focus; Autonomy*