Come for a Job, Stay for the Socializing: Gratifications Received from LinkedIn Usage

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ABSTRACT

LinkedIn is the leading social network site focusing on professional life, with over 500 million customers, but has received far less research attention than Facebook and other personal networks. This study is one of the first to examine gratifications received from using LinkedIn by U.S. adults and relationships between those gratifications and how the site is utilized. Uses and Gratifications Theory served as conceptual framework. The cross-sectional study surveyed 390 active LinkedIn customers 25 and older about gratifications received, intensity of attitudes, and site usage. Exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modeling were used to identify three gratification factors for using LinkedIn: jobs and job affairs, social aspects of employment, and finding old and new friends easily. The social aspects of employment factor had a significant relationship with both intensity of attitudes toward LinkedIn and site usage. This was a surprising finding, since LinkedIn is commonly associated only with utilitarian career-oriented motives, rather than hedonic gratifications like socializing.

Keywords: LinkedIn, social network sites, gratifications from social networks, uses and gratifications theory, why people use LinkedIn, differences between LinkedIn and Facebook

INTRODUCTION

Social network sites began as cooperative platforms for staying in touch with friends, and have evolved into global, profit-oriented enterprises. Their growth and near-ubiquity in modern life make these social network sites (SNSs) a consequential topic for site users, managers, and scholarly researchers.

The majority of SNS research has examined Facebook, which focuses on personal life, with numerous studies in multiple nations analyzing customer gratifications received from using the site (Kim, Shin, & Ahn, 2011; Park & Lee, 2014; Urista, Dong, & Day, 2008). There has been relatively little examination of gratifications from using LinkedIn, which is the leading SNS focused on professional life and has over 500 million customers worldwide ("Most famous social network sites," 2018). This study is one of the first to investigate gratifications received from using LinkedIn.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the gratifications provided by LinkedIn to active customers in the U.S. who are 25 and older, and whether those gratifications

were related to intensity of attitudes and to site usage. The research can assist marketing and recruiting managers in considering the site's strategic use, and can increase scholarly understanding of the professional use of SNSs.

After examining literature on five of the largest SNSs, Blank and Lutz (2017, pp. 13) concluded that surprisingly few studies have focused on LinkedIn, and stated that it deserves more scrutiny. Because the site focuses on professional life, gratifications from its use likely diverge from those found in earlier Facebook studies, but potential similarities and differences are not currently clear because of a lack of research. It is also uncertain at present how various gratifying factors are related to the ways in which the site is used and attitudes regarding it. This study proposed to partially address the gap in the research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) served as conceptual framework; it is an audience-centered approach to understanding mass communication. Other media effect theories question what media do to people, but UGT focuses on what people do with media (Florenthal, 2015, pp. 19). Researchers utilizing this theory strive to understand the gratifications that people receive from media, and how those gratifications drive behavior. Studies are concerned with the social and psychological needs that generate expectations of the mass media or other sources. These lead to differential patterns of media exposure, resulting in need gratification and other consequences, perhaps mostly unintentional (Katz & Blumler, 1974).

Audience gratifications can be derived from at least three sources: content of the media, exposure to the media per se, and social context that typifies the exposure to media (Katz & Blumler, 1974). This last source is particularly relevant to SNSs, which rely on customers consuming content created by fellow users and creating their own content.

Research on Social Network Sites

Studies on Other Aspects of LinkedIn. A number of studies have been conducted about various aspects of LinkedIn other than gratifications from its use. These include importance of profile photos (Edwards, Stoll, Faculak, & Karman, 2015), examinations of site geography (Papacharissi, 2009), use by salespeople (Inks, Schetzsle, & Ovila, 2012; Schultz, Schwepker, & Good, 2012), use by large and small organizations (Witzig, Spencer, & Galvin, 2012), use in job seeking (DeKay, 2009), relationship between gender and site usage (Peachy, 2013; Zide, Elman, & Shohani-Denning, 2014), and income levels of site users (Blank & Lutz, 2016).

Studies of Facebook Gratification. Dozens of studies have examined gratifications from using Facebook, which is the largest ("Most famous social network sites," 2018) and most-studied SNS (Zhang and Leung, 2015). This research has been conducted in the U.S. (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2010; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011), in multiple Asian countries (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011; Alhabash, Park, Kononova, et al., 2012), and elsewhere around the world (Dhaha & Igale, 2013; Fortier & Burkell, 2016). Some common Facebook gratifications emerge from an examination of these studies; these include keeping in touch, feeling connected to others, entertainment, passing time, following group norms, and social surveillance.

Studies of LinkedIn Gratifications

A handful of studies on gratifications from using LinkedIn have been published. Basak and Calisir (2014, pp. 4) conducted quantitative exploratory research with college students in Turkey, finding seven gratifications Their published LinkedIn gratifications scale was used as part of the research instrument in this study. After conducting qualitative interviews with U.S. college students, Florenthal (2015, pp. 25) proposed four gratification categories. Shyron (2015, pp. 16) surveyed LinkedIn adult users in China to find that they were motivated by four factors. Vivekananthamoorthy, Naganathan, and Rajkumar (2016, pp. 8) studied the reasons that Indian college students engaged in electronic word-of-mouth behavior via LinkedIn and identified three gratification factors. The LinkedIn gratifications found in these earlier studies are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Gratification Factors from Using LinkedIn Found in Four Studies

Author(s)	LinkedIn Gratifications Found	Description
Basak and Calisir, 2014	Self-Promotion	Introducing oneself to others through communication
	Group Activities	Engaging in LinkedIn groups
	Jobs and Job Affairs	Searching for jobs and obtaining information about professional world
	Finding Old and New Friends Easily	Locating connections with ease
	Follow Up	Following career progression of connections, access employment information
	Profile Viewer Data	Seeing who has viewed your profile
	Professional Networking	Building a network, making new connections
Florenthal, 2015	Interpersonal communication	Connecting with other professionals and with businesses
	Online identity	Gaining visibility and be able to market oneself
	Information	Reading articles and creating posts. Following companies/organizations and checking others' profiles.
	Career advancement	Using for recruiting and posting jobs, access to jobs and internships
Shyron, 2015	Gathering job-related information	Collecting information about industry and new events relating to company or competitors
	Feeling of belongingness	Being accepted by and feeling belonging to industry
	Developing and enlarging professional network	Creating professional network within company
	Expanding career	Promoting oneself, to look for collaborators and to keep in touch with contacts outside company
Vivekananthamoorthy, Naganathan, and Rajkumar., 2015	Expert opinion seeking	Gaining information from professors and other authorities on academic and professional topics
	Notification of profile updates and skill endorsements	Following career progress and activities of connections
	Networking with others and view others' profiles	Finding connections and staying in touch with them

Comparing Gratifications from Personal and Professional SNSs

Gratifications found in these four LinkedIn studies show some similarities with those identified in Facebook research. Customers want to stay in touch with people they know offline, and they like to make new connections. They seek information, and they wish to present a certain image. The difference is that LinkedIn customers desire to learn about potential employers and jobs, are not seeking entertainment or to pass time, and are attempting to present a professional rather than a social image. However, it may be difficult to generalize these LinkedIn findings to working professionals because three of these studies examined college students, and other scholars have found that students primarily sign up for LinkedIn under pressure from others and use it infrequently (Ezumah, 2013, pp. 32; Florenthal, 2015, pp. 27).

Site Usage Definitions

The term "customer" is defined as an individual who has signed up for LinkedIn and created a profile that is available to other site users. The term "active customer" will denote LinkedIn customers who viewed their profile at least once in the last month. The term "friend" means essentially the same as "connection," but in personal SNSs such as Facebook. In this study, "connection" will refer to LinkedIn customers who are connected via the site, while "friend" will refer to connected Facebook customers.

HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH MODEL

Based on a literature review, a gap in knowledge was identified and research questions, hypotheses, and a model were formulated. This study sought to answer the question, "Is there a relationship between gratifications from using LinkedIn received by active customers in the U.S. ages 25 and older and the intensity of LinkedIn attitudes and site usage of those customers?"

To determine specific hypotheses and a model, a gratification scale developed by Basak and Calisir (2014) was used to investigate the gratifications received from active U.S. LinkedIn customers 25 and older. Exploratory factor analysis of responses from the sample members discussed in the Methodology section revealed three gratifications from using LinkedIn, which served as exogenous variables in the study:

- Jobs and Job Affairs - LinkedIn customers obtain information about the professional world and search for jobs, and are able to track these topics through the site,

- Social Aspects of Employment - LinkedIn customers are gratified by the social aspects of employment. They are sensitive to their online presence, they want to see how others are portraying themselves, and they are curious about how they may appear, and

- Finding Old and New Friends Easily – LinkedIn customers find connections in the site based on suggestions of people they know, by using the search feature, and by visiting alumni pages associated with an employer or college.

The intensity of LinkedIn attitudes and LinkedIn usage served as the two endogenous variables. Intensity of LinkedIn attitudes was a measure of attitudes regarding the site and feelings of connection to the community of users. LinkedIn usage was a measure of frequency of site visits, length of membership, and average length of time per site visit. **Figure 1** depicts the resulting research model.
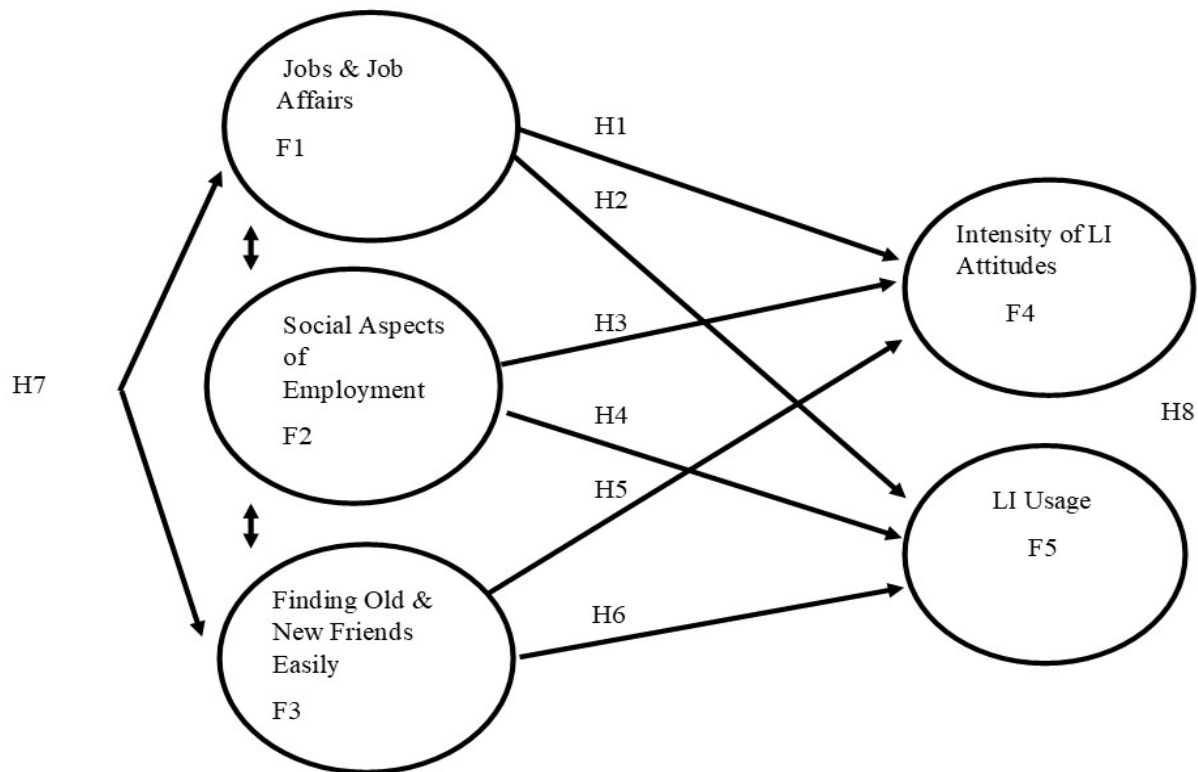
Figure 1. Research Model

Hypotheses

H₁ – Hypothesis 1 was that a relationship exists between the LinkedIn gratification of learning about Jobs and Job Affairs and intensity of attitudes toward LinkedIn, with relationship going from gratification to attitudes.

H₂ – Hypothesis 2 was that a relationship exists between the LinkedIn gratification of learning about Jobs and Job Affairs and usage of the LinkedIn site, with relationship going from gratification to usage.

H₃ – Hypothesis 3 was that a relationship exists between the LinkedIn gratification of the Social Aspects of Employment and intensity of attitudes toward LinkedIn, with relationship going from gratification to attitudes.

H₄ - Hypothesis 4 was that there is a relationship between the LinkedIn gratification of the Social Aspects of Employment and usage of the LinkedIn site, with relationship going from gratifications to usage.

H₅ – Hypothesis 5 was that a relationship exists between the LinkedIn gratification of Finding Old and New Friends Easily and attitudes toward LinkedIn, with relationship going from gratification to attitudes.

H₆ – Hypothesis 6 was that a relationship exists between the LinkedIn gratification of Finding Old and New Friends Easily and usage of the LinkedIn site, with relationship going from gratification to usage.

H₇ – Hypothesis 7 was that the three gratifications from using LinkedIn are interrelated. These are not discrete benefits.

H₈ – Hypothesis 8 was that there is no relationship between intensity of attitudes toward LinkedIn and usage of the LinkedIn site.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a longitudinal survey of U.S. LinkedIn active customers 25 and older; this was appropriate because UGT assumes that media users are active, that mass media use is goal-directed, and that users are sufficiently self-aware to be able to report their motives and interests in using media (Katz & Blumler, 1974). Anyone in the 18-24 age range was excluded from the study in order to focus on professional usage rather than on college students.

Instrument Development

LinkedIn Gratifications. The research instrument used two previously published scales. Gratifications from using LinkedIn were operationally defined by responses to Basak and Calisir's (2014, pp. 3) LinkedIn Gratifications Scale, which included 33 measures related to the significance of various site usage outcomes. This scale is depicted in **Table 2**.

Table 2. LinkedIn Gratification Scale (Basak & Calisir, 2014)

Item Number	Description of Item
1	Building a network
2	Seeing who's viewed my profile
3	Searching for jobs
4	Following the career progression of my contacts
5	Getting information about professional world
6	Being informed about current business affairs
7	Viewing job ads posted by companies
8	Skill endorsements
9	Making new connections
10	Joining and participating in groups
11	Finding out job opportunities
12	Online presence
13	Marketing myself
14	Getting into contact with others
15	Accessing employment information
16	Jobs you may be interested in
17	Discussions in groups
18	Viewing resume of others
19	Using LinkedIn as a Curriculum Vitae
20	Reaching out to recruiters, company executives etc.
21	Making a direct contact with the business world
22	Knowledge sharing
23	Keeping in touch with my contacts
24	Following companies
25	Profile updates
26	Meeting with like-minded professionals through groups
27	User-friendly search engine
28	Suggestion of people you may know
29	Seeing the number of profile views
30	Personal development opportunities
31	Helpful in career planning
32	Finding friends, alumni, etc.
33	Ease of use

LinkedIn Intensity. Intensity of LinkedIn attitudes was measured using Ellison, Steinfeld, and Lampe's (2007, pp. 1150) Facebook Intensity Scale, modified for LinkedIn. This 6-item scale asks about attitudes regarding the site and feelings of connection to the community of users. The Facebook Intensity Scale has been used by several other researchers, including Steinfield, Ellison, and Lampe (2008, pp. 440) and Lampe, Wohn, Vitak, et al. (2011, pp. 334). There does not appear to be a published scale regarding

LinkedIn intensity, so Ellison et al.'s scale (2007, pp. 1150) was adapted. It addresses aspects common to all SNSs and does not refer to any features unique to Facebook, so is modifiable simply by replacing the word "Facebook" with "LinkedIn." However, the modified scale was tested in person and online before final use.

Site Usage. Several measures regarding LinkedIn usage were incorporated. These asked about number of times viewing LinkedIn home page in the last month, length of LinkedIn membership, version of LinkedIn used (free or paid), number of LinkedIn connections, and average length of time per site visit. Few previous scholarly studies have asked specific questions about how LinkedIn was used, so these measures were adapted from annual surveys of LinkedIn customers conducted by Breitbarth (2015).

Demographics. The instrument also contained six measures on demographic factors. These asked about age range, gender, education, current employment status, employment intent in the next year, and household income.

Testing the Research Instrument. The research instrument was first tested in person with graduate college students 25 and older who were active LinkedIn customers. After modifications were made, the instrument was then tested online with 104 U.S. LinkedIn customers who met the same inclusion standards and were members of online panels administered by Qualtrics. Changes were made after these rounds of in-person and online testing, the final research instrument was prepared in Qualtrics online survey software, and a link was delivered to Qualtrics for distribution to members of its online panels. The company collected responses from 408 qualified respondents in November 2016. As the result of data screening procedures, the final sample was reduced to 390 respondents.

After responses were collected, exploratory factor analysis was performed on the 33 gratification measures using Principal Component Analysis, the same technique used by Basak and Calisir (2014), in order to identify gratification factors from using LinkedIn. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was then used to estimate goodness-of-fit for the measurement model of constructs regarding gratifications, intensity of attitudes, and site usage. Finally, the structural model was tested using SEM to evaluate significant relationships between the variables.

Sample

The sample was comprised of LinkedIn customers in the U.S. who were 25 or older and had viewed their LinkedIn profile page within the last 30 days. When the number of SNS users is reported, it is typically for active accounts, which means accounts that have been accessed in the past 30 days ("Global social networks by number," 2015). Descriptive statistics regarding sample members can be seen in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Sample Members

Category	% of Total
Gender	
Female	58%
Male	42%
Total	100%
Age Category	
Under 25	0%
25-34	49%
35-49	38%
50-64	12%
65 or older	0.25%
Total	100%
Highest Education Level Achieved	
High school graduate or GED	14%
Some college	30%
Bachelor's degree	33%
Some graduate school	6%
Advanced degree	16%
Other (please specify)	1%
Total	100%
Annual Household Income Category	
Less than $29,999	14%
$30,000-$49,999	23%
$50,000 to $74,999	22%
$75,000-$99,999	15%
$100,000-$ 129,999	13%
More than $130,000	14%
Total	100%
Current Employment Status	
Working full time (includes self-employment)	69%
Working part time (includes self-employment)	12%
Unemployed	7%
Stay-at-home parent	9%
Retired	2%
Other (please specify)	1%
Total	100%

RESULTS

Measuring Gratifications from Using LinkedIn

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for the 33 items in the LinkedIn gratification scale found three gratification factors from using the site. These three factors with eigenvalues of 1.0 or greater accounted for 67% of total variance. Communalities for all variables were greater than .50, indicating that the variables met acceptable levels of explanation (Hair, Black, Babin, et al., 2010, pp. 105). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .975, meeting acceptable levels (Hair et al., 2010, pp. 661).

Factor 1: Jobs and Job Affairs. Factor 1 contained four measures and an eigenvalue of 19.23, accounting for 58% of variance. Chronbach's alpha was .929. LinkedIn customers obtain information about the professional world and search for jobs and are able to track these topics through the site; most of LinkedIn's features are designed to provide these benefits.

Factor 2: Social Aspects of Employment. Factor 2 included four measures, had an eigenvalue of 1.83, and accounted for 6% of variance. Chronbach's alpha was .824. LinkedIn customers are gratified by the social aspects of employment. They want to see how others are portraying themselves, and they are curious about how they may appear. While they are searching for jobs, they are sensitive to their online presence.

Factor 3: Finding Old and New Friends Easily. Factor 3 included four measures, had an eigenvalue of 1.1, and accounted for 3% of variance. Chronbach's alpha was .833. Customers may find these current and past connections based on suggestions of people they know, by using the search feature, and by visiting an alumni page associated with an employer or college. A listing of the items in each factor and factor loadings can be seen in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Items in Gratification Factors

Factor Title	Item	Factor Loading
Jobs and Job Affairs	Finding out job opportunities	.861
	Jobs you may be interested in	.855
	Following the career progression of my contacts	.815
	Viewing job ads posted by companies	.710
Social Aspects of Employment	Searching for jobs	.706
	Online presence	.698
	Seeing who's viewed my profile	.662
	Viewing resumes of others	.592
Finding Old and New Friends Easily	User-friendly search engine	.730
	Finding friends, alumni, etc.	.691
	Ease of use	.667
	Suggestion of people you know	.664

Measurement Model

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was then used to test these constructs in a full measurement model, utilizing confirmatory factor analysis. Results for every item were found to be non-normal, so the robust method was used because it has been shown to correct for non-normality in large samples and perform better than uncorrected statistics where the assumption of normality fails to hold (Byrne, 2006). The key robust statistic for use with this non-normal data was the Satorra-Bentler scaled chi square (S-B scaled χ^2).

Goodness of fit was acceptable: S-B scaled χ^2 (176, N = 390) = 313.8983, $p < 0.01$; BBNFI = 0.921; CFI = 0.963; RMSEA = 0.045 (0.037, 0.053). Values of 0.95 or higher are recommended for BBNFI and CFI, although values greater than 0.90 may be acceptable (Byrne, 2006). The CFI value of .963 meets the recommended standard, while the BBNFI value of .921 falls into the acceptable range. The RMSEA value of .045 indicates good fit. All Z-statistics were also greater than ± 1.96 at the .05 level, suggesting that the estimate was statistically different from zero (Hair et al., 2010). Parameter estimates for the final measurement model are depicted in **Table 5**.

Table 5. Measurement Model: Parameter Estimates

| Variable Number	Factor	Estimate	Standard Error (Robust)	Z-Statistic (Robust)	Standardized Estimate
V1	1	1.000	-	-	.874
V2	1	.948	.053	17.95	.739
V3	1	.869	.059	14.62	.676
V4	1	1.022	.042	24.16	.883
V5	2	1.000	-	-	.804
V6	2	.941	.053	17.68	.792
V7	2	.844	.054	15.61	.682
V8	2	.881	.059	14.85	.663
V9	3	1.00	-	-	.795
V10	3	.853	.060	14.27	.704
V11	3	.772	.055	14.02	.719
V12	3	.913	.053	17.14	.763
V13	4	1.000	-	-	.767
V14	4	.710	.052	13.74	.721
V15	4	1.110	.045	24.45	.815
V16	4	.985	.060	16.42	.708
V17	4	.944	.056	16.73	.811
V18	4	.877	.062	14.09	.747
V19	5	1.000	-	-	.919
V20	5	.676	.099	6.84	.490
V21	5	.694	.090	7.71	.541

Structural Model

The structural model was then estimated using SEM. Three rounds of testing suggested that F1 (Jobs and Job Affairs) was influencing F2 (Social Aspects of Employment), and that F2 was influencing F3 (Finding Old and New Friends Easily), with χ2 reductions resulting from adding these parameters to the model. Jobs and Job Affairs (F1) was the strongest of the three gratifications, accounting for 58% of variance, and may drive the other gratifications.

In addition, LinkedIn usage (F5) was influencing intensity of attitudes (F4), with a χ2 reduction resulting when this parameter was added to the model. No relationship was originally hypothesized between attitudes and usage, but results indicated that usage may influence attitudes toward the site. Customers who use the site more often and for greater periods of time may develop stronger attitudes because of those longer hours of exposure.

Goodness of fit. Goodness-of-fit measures met acceptable standards (Byrne, 2006): S-B scaled χ2 (177, N = 390) = 319.3575, $p < .01$; BBNFI = 0.92; CFI = 0.962; RMSEA = 0.045 (0.037, 0.053). Parameter estimates for this structural model are depicted in **Table 6**.

Table 6. Structural Model: Parameter Estimates

| Independent Factor	Dependent Factor	Estimate	Standard Error (Robust)	Z-Statistic (Robust)	Standardized Estimate
Jobs and Job Affairs	Social Aspects of Employment	.847	.048	17.53	.861
Social Aspects of Employment	Finding Old and New Friends Easily	.834	.064	12.94	.838
Jobs and Job Affairs	Intensity of LinkedIn Attitudes	.051	.072	.710	.076
Social Aspects of Employment	Intensity of LinkedIn Attitudes	.260	.111	2.34	.381
Finding Old and New Friends Easily	Intensity of LinkedIn Attitudes	.109	.066	1.66	.159
LinkedIn Usage	Intensity of LinkedIn Attitudes	.354	.068	5.21	.413
Jobs and Job Affairs	LinkedIn Usage	-.028	.113	-.247	-.036
Social Aspects of Employment	LinkedIn Usage	.493	.183	2.70	.619
Finding Old and New Friends Easily	LinkedIn Usage	-.118	.130	-.904	-.147
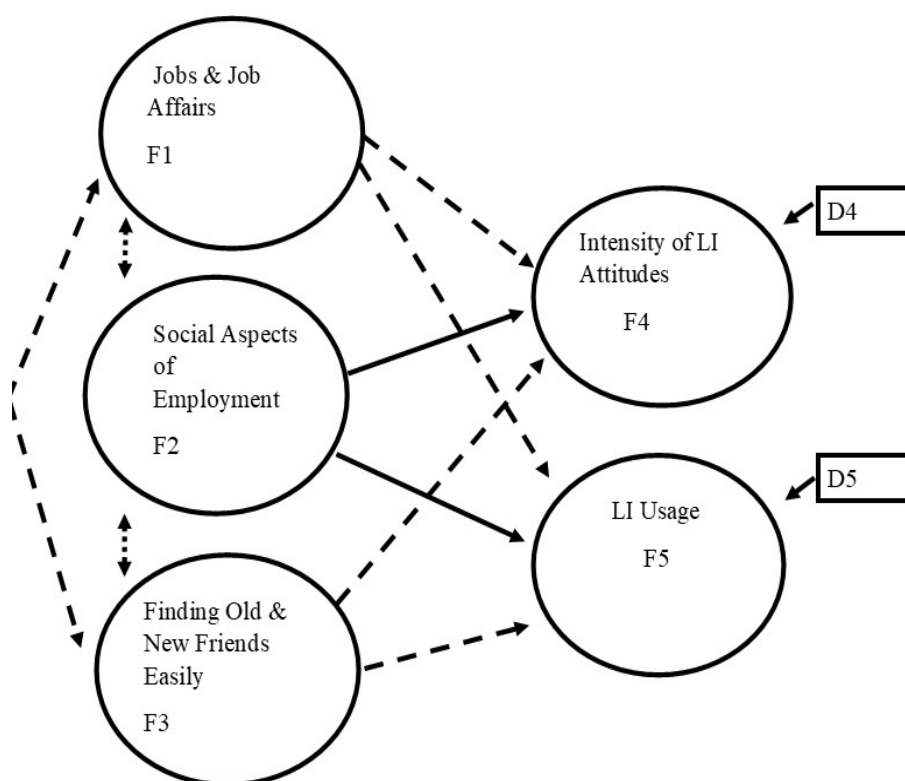
Figure 2. Final Structural Model

Results of Hypothesized Relationships

This research found support for H3 and H4, with significant positive relationships emerging between Social Aspects of Employment (F2) and both Intensity of LinkedIn Attitudes (F4) and LinkedIn Usage (F5). Support was not found for the other six hypotheses. The final structural model is depicted in **Figure 2**.

H3: Social Aspects of Employment -> Intensity of LinkedIn Attitudes. The relationship between the Social Aspects of Employment gratification (F2) and Intensity of LinkedIn Attitudes (F4) was hypothesized to be positive. Customers who are concerned with how they appear to their connections are using the site in part for image building or
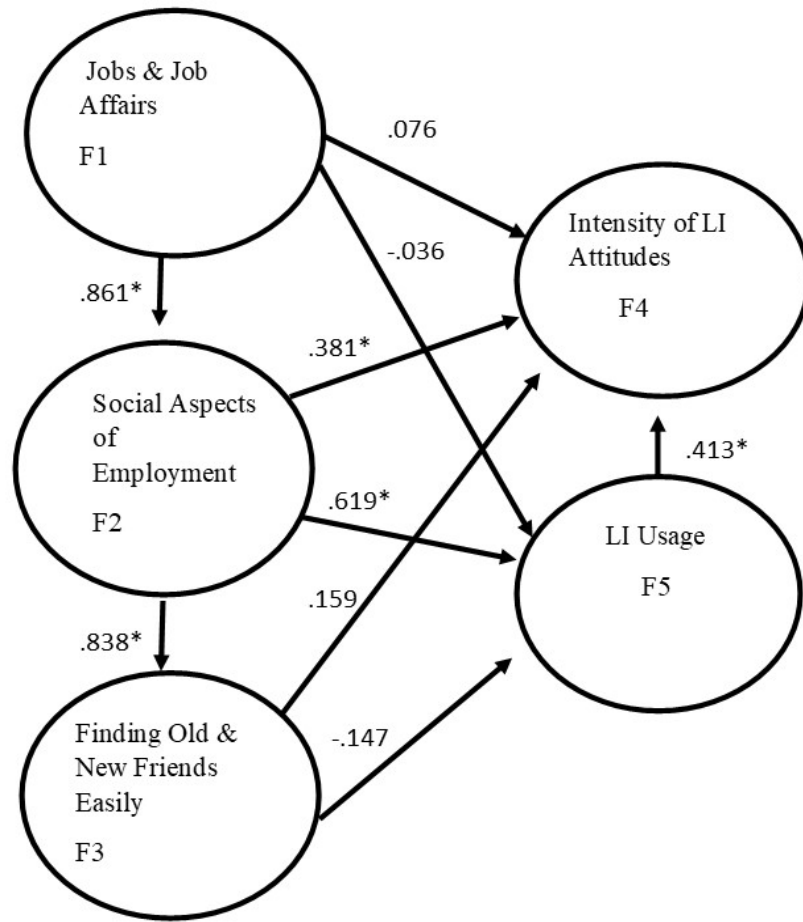
Figure 3. Structural Paths Between Factors

maintenance purposes and can be expected to have stronger attitudes about the site than those using it for other benefits. This positive relationship was found, with a Z-statistic of 2.34 and standardized estimate of .381.

H4: Social Aspects of Employment -> LinkedIn Usage. The relationship between Social Aspects of Employment (F2) and LinkedIn Usage (F5) was hypothesized to be positive, because those using the site for social reasons will use the site more often. This was confirmed with a Z-statistic of 2.70 and standardized estimate of .619.

Post-Hoc Analysis

While only two of the original eight hypotheses were supported, several significant results were found that were not part of the hypothesized research model. Variable 21 (Length of time for average site visit) was found to contribute to the Intensity of LinkedIn Attitudes factor (F4), while it was initially hypothesized to contribute only to LinkedIn Usage (F5).

Jobs and Job Affairs (F1) was found to contribute to Social Aspects of Employment (F2), and Social Aspects of Employment (F2) was found to contribute to Finding Old and New Friends Easily (F3). A positive dependence relationship was found between F4 and F5, with LinkedIn Usage (F5) contributing to Intensity of LinkedIn Attitudes (F4). **Figure 3** depicts structural paths between factors, with asterisks indicating significant paths.

DISCUSSION

Gratifications from Using LinkedIn

This study identified three gratifications from using LinkedIn: Jobs and Job Affairs, Social Aspects of Employment, and Finding Old and New Friends Easily. The first and third gratifications were also found in Basak and Calisir's 2014 study and are the benefits most associated with LinkedIn. The second gratification of Social Aspects of Employment represented a surprising finding. Respondents may be concerned with how they appear to others because this could affect career prospects, but a hedonic motivation may also be present; customers may find it interesting and even entertaining to monitor the career progression of their connections.

Dependence Relationships between Gratifications

The theme of H_7 was that the gratifications from using LinkedIn would be interrelated, with no dependence relationships. However, significant dependence relationships were found between the three gratifications. F1 (Jobs and Job Affairs) contributed to F2 (Social Aspects of Employment), while F2 contributed to F3 (Finding Old and New Friends Easily). F1 was the strongest gratification emerging from factor analysis, accounting for a majority of variance, and may be driving the other two factors. A desire to learn about jobs could contribute to a concern for projecting the right image, which may then contribute to the desire to find other people.

Role of Social Aspects of Employment

Significant positive relationships were found between the Social Aspects of Employment factor and both intensity of attitudes regarding LinkedIn and LinkedIn site usage, showing that customers may be motivated by hedonic gratifications that are related to customer feelings about the site and its community of users, with those concerned about the social aspects reporting stronger attitudes toward LinkedIn and greater site usage.

Relationship between Usage and Attitudes

A significant positive relationship was found between the two endogenous variables, with F5 (LinkedIn Usage) contributing to F4 (Intensity of LinkedIn Attitudes), indicating that more time spent at the site is driving stronger attitudes. Customers may use LinkedIn to search for a job or because they derive pleasure from staying in touch, and the longer time spent in those pursuits leads to more intense attitudes toward the site and its community of users.

Relevance to Earlier Research

Similarities exist with earlier LinkedIn research; gratifications of learning information and monitoring others can be seen across studies, while the Social Aspects of Employment gratification does not have an equivalent in the other research. Common themes from Facebook studies have included keeping in touch, feeling connected to others, entertainment, passing time, following group norms, and social surveillance. Some of these gratifications are also received from LinkedIn, such as keeping in touch and feeling connected, while others are likely unique to personal SNSs, such as entertainment and passing time.

Limitations

Translation Issues. The measures in the LinkedIn Gratification scale were originally written in Turkish, and then translated into English by the authors (Basak & Calisir, 2014). Some translation issues may have occurred during this process, which could have impacted the outcome of factor analysis.

Self-Reporting. Sample members may have over- or under-represented their LinkedIn usage or mis-remembered their behavior. Respondents were asked to sign into their account and look at the number of connections and length of membership before starting the questionnaire, but there is no guarantee that they did so.

Limited to Members of Online Panels. The sample included only respondents who had expressed a willingness to complete web surveys by joining an online panel. There were benefits to this approach, but it also eliminated anyone who was not a member of an online panel, limiting the generalizability of findings to the broader audience of all LinkedIn customers.

Suggestions for Additional Research

Social Aspects of Employment. The Social Aspects of Employment gratification may be considered surprising, since LinkedIn is typically associated only with utilitarian career considerations. More research on this topic could provide greater insight into whether there is a social, enjoyable aspect of professional networking.

Finding Jobs through LinkedIn. The first gratification from using LinkedIn was Jobs and Job Affairs, and the site is commonly associated with seeking work. However, few studies seem to have been published about the efficacy of LinkedIn as a job-finding tool. A new examination could compare LinkedIn to other sources of employment information, such as online job listings, employment recruiters, and word-of-mouth communication.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the body of knowledge on an important topic. Three gratifications were found from using LinkedIn, and the importance of the Social Aspects of Employment gratification in attitudes and usage was reported. This is one of the first studies of LinkedIn gratification to focus on adult U.S. customers 25 and older and can help scholars to build a better understanding of professional social networking. It can also assist marketing and employment managers to make better decisions about the best usage of this popular and potentially powerful tool.

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