

**Gaining Access to Social Capital: The Effects of Gratifications-sought,  
Personality, and Self-efficacy on LinkedIn Use and Social Capital**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study explored the gratifications-sought and patterns of LinkedIn use and how they are influenced by personalities. The relationship between LinkedIn use and the perceived social capital on LinkedIn was also examined. Data were gathered from a sample of 459 LinkedIn users in mainland China. The results show that users are usually motivated to use LinkedIn for the purposes of gathering information related to their jobs, seeking the feeling of belongingness, developing and enlarging their professional network, and expanding their career. Career expansion and information learning may lead them to use LinkedIn more intensively. Extraversion was found to be a significant predictor of all four factors of gratification; people who were more agreeable tended to seek the feeling of belongingness and expand their career; conscientiousness was found to be a significant predictor of those seeking belongingness; more neurotic people were found to use LinkedIn for information learning, the feeling of belongingness, and career expansion; openness to experience was negatively related to the gratification of information learning. Furthermore, self-efficacy was found to be positively related to information learning. As expected, LinkedIn use was found to be a good method to increase both the bonding and bridging aspects of social capital. The implications of the study are also discussed.

Word count: 207

Key words: Gratifications-sought; LinkedIn use; personality; self-efficacy; social capital

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### **INTRODUCTION**

With the development of the internet, online recruiting has become increasingly popular and reliable for both companies and applicants (Tapscott, 2008). Online recruiting, job-seeking, and professional network building have become an important part of people's career planning and development, especially for young professionals and students. In fact, the user-base of professional network sites (PNS) is growing exponentially the world over. As the most popular PNS, LinkedIn has more than 300 million users worldwide and almost 900 thousand users in Hong Kong as of 2014 (Invest HK, 2014). It focuses on helping people to build and engage with their professional network, gain access to knowledge, insights and opportunities related to their career, and manage their professional identities. Employees and potential employees use it to engage with their colleagues, team members, and the people they newly meet in business. They could also use LinkedIn in search of opportunities that may be helpful for their career and to update their knowledge about their industry. Some of them may even post advertisements on LinkedIn in search of new clients, collaborators, or suppliers. Just as Facebook occupies people's personal lives, LinkedIn is becoming the most important tool in helping people, especially office workers, to arrange their professional lives. According to a study conducted in the U.S. in 2011, 77% of employees have posted their profiles on LinkedIn; 15% of them used it daily or more frequently; and the number of people using LinkedIn on a daily basis exceeded that of Twitter, and this number has been increasing year by year (Archambault & Grudin, 2012).

Considering the important role that LinkedIn plays in people's professional lives and to

further understand people's gratifications-sought in using LinkedIn, how they use it, and the factors influencing their usage patterns have become increasingly necessary. However, though social network services (SNS), especially Facebook, have gained much attention from researchers, there are few studies focusing on PNS. This study sought to fill this gap and explored current users of LinkedIn from the perspective of uses and gratifications (U&G) theory – investigating how demographic and personality variables influence people's gratifications-sought and patterns of LinkedIn use, which may in turn affect their perceived social capital obtained.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

### Uses and gratifications

U&G theory has been a widely accepted approach to investigate and understand media consumption. One of the fundamental assumptions of the U&G approach is that an "active" audience member makes conscious decisions about the consumption of media content and that these decisions are driven by social and psychological origins of needs (Rayburn, 1996). Based on this assumption, there are a great number of studies exploring the motivations of certain media content (Leung, 2001; Leung & Wei, 2000; Papaparassi & Rubin, 2000), and many U&G studies have adopted notions from expectancy-value theory (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In a study about the consumption of TV news, Palmgreen and Rayburn (1982) combined U&G with expectancy-value theory and developed an expectancy-value model of gratifications-sought (GS) and gratifications-obtained (GO), maintaining that GS is influenced by people's beliefs of certain outcomes of the consumption of certain media content as well as their evaluations of the outcomes.

According to studies exploring the origins of gratifications, a variety of gratifications-sought and -obtained have been reported to have an empirical relationship with psychological factors, such as personalities, and other factors such as education, gender, income, membership in organizations, and so on (Rayburn, 1996). Therefore, inspired by the model produced by Rayburn and Palmgreen (1984) and past research guided by the U&G approach, this study examined how demographic variables and personality – predictors of users' gratifications-sought, may affect use intensity and patterns of use behaviors on LinkedIn, which influence individuals' perceived social capital obtained.

There are very few studies focusing on LinkedIn. According to the limited body of literature, unlike other SNS used mainly for personal or social purposes, LinkedIn is primarily used by young professionals for work-related needs (Skeels & Grudin, 2009). There are also other studies (e.g., DiMicco et al., 2008) on general SNS use at work, suggesting that the motivations for using SNS at work are to maintain awareness among colleagues, to build rapport and stronger working relationships to strengthen their weak ties, and to reach out to employees they do not know.

Using U&G theory as the theoretical framework, this study investigated gratifications-sought and use behaviors on LinkedIn. Thus, the following research question was posed:

RQ1: What gratifications do users seek that are uniquely associated with LinkedIn use?

### **Personality: The Big Five and self-efficacy**

The Big Five dimensions of the Five Factor Model (FFM) – extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience – have been widely accepted as the most comprehensive and parsimonious model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992;

Devaraj, Easley, & Crant, 2008). Extraversion is related to sociability, energy, expressiveness, and the ability to generate positive emotions. Agreeableness reflects a person's tendency to be sympathetic and cooperative with others and includes characteristics such as tendermindedness and modesty. Conscientiousness mainly refers to characteristics such as being responsible, goal-oriented, organized, and with a high level of self-control. Neuroticism, however, is associated with sensitivity to threat, a low level of emotional stability, and a high level of anxiety. Last, openness to experience reflects a person's tendency to be curious, to think deeply and in a variety of ways, and to enjoy artistic pursuits. Previous studies have demonstrated that personality factors are related to the use of the internet or SNS, with some of them focusing on the general intensity of use and others on separate usage pattern or motivations.

*Extraversion.* Existing studies have offered two competing explanations for the relationship between extraversion and SNS use: the “rich-get-richer” and “social compensation” (Ong et al., 2010). Both of these explanations have received some empirical support. For example, Wehrli (2008) and Correa et al. (2010) found that extraversion was positively correlated with the time spent on SNS and that extraverted people tend to gain membership of more SNS groups. Similar conclusions have been drawn by other researchers (e.g., Ehrenberg et al., 2008; Gosling et al., 2011; Ryan & Xenos, 2011; Seidman, 2013; Wilson et al., 2010). However, there have also been contradictory findings stating that extraverted people spend significantly less time on SNS (Moore & McElroy, 2012), and tend to make less use of the communicative features on Facebook (Ross et al., 2009), and that extraversion was not related to the number of Facebook groups to which one belonged but

was positively related to the actual number of Facebook friends one had (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010). Similarly, some studies report that extroverted people tend to engage in more self-disclosure and generate more Facebook content. Conversely, it has also been reported that extraverted people put less personal information on their Facebook profiles (Bibby, 2008; Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010). Moore and McElroy (2012) suggest that this may indicate that extraversion is more closely related to personal disclosure of one's current activities and thoughts instead of established interests and relationship statuses, which are most likely already known to the friends of extraverts. They also suggest that this is consistent with the view of Amiel and Sargent (2004) and Carpenter et al. (2011) that extraverts see social networks as places to share information and opinions rather than as substitutes for real interaction. Following this literature, we tend to agree that extraverts use LinkedIn to constantly seek and follow information to keep abreast of the most current events in their profession rather than just to post information that other people already know. The more they use LinkedIn, the more they are satisfied with the benefits. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H1: Extraverts will (a) find LinkedIn use more gratifying, and consequently (b), they will use LinkedIn more often than introverts.

*Agreeableness.* There is not as much research focusing on agreeableness as there is on extraversion. Though Ross et al. (2009) found no relationship between agreeableness and Facebook use, there are also studies evidencing some links between them. Briefly, according to previous studies, agreeableness is a good predictor of belongingness-related behaviors (Seidman, 2013). Agreeable people tend to care more about support from others and the

appropriateness of the posted content (Moore & McElroy, 2012). They usually view the pages of others as well as of themselves more often and they comment on others' profiles (Gosling et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2012). It was also reported that people with lower levels of agreeableness showed less interest in learning about what happens to others and what is happening in the world (Amiel & Sargent, 2004). More interestingly, Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky (2010) found a U-shaped relationship between agreeableness and both pictures and contact information uploaded to Facebook, indicating that both those who are most agreeable and those who are most disagreeable tended to engage in higher levels of self-disclosure online to gain support or to protect self-esteem. Thus, we expect that:

H2: People with higher levels of agreeableness will (a) find LinkedIn use more gratifying, and consequently (b), they will use LinkedIn more often than people with lower levels of agreeableness.

*Conscientiousness.* Previous studies have found that conscientiousness is negatively correlated with time spent, as well as self-presentational behaviors, on Facebook (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Devaraj et al., 2008; Gosling et al., 2011; Ryan & Xenos, 2011; Seidman, 2013; Wilson et al., 2010). It has been reported that people with a high level of conscientiousness, i.e., tending to value efficiency and productiveness, are more likely to be cautious in their presentation of both themselves and others (Seidman, 2013; Devaraj et al., 2008), show less addictive tendencies in the use of SNS (Wilson et al., 2010), and spend more time online engaged in academic pursuits than in leisure activities (McElroy et al., 2007). However, considering that LinkedIn is highly business and job related, and that conscientious people tend to care more about their career and job performance, they may

still show some tendency to use the LinkedIn features that can improve their work efficiency and productivity. In light of these inconclusive findings, we ask the following research question:

RQ2: What is the relationship between conscientiousness and LinkedIn use?

*Neuroticism.* On the contrary, it has been reported that neuroticism is positively correlated with the time spent on Facebook and self-presentational behaviors (Correa et al., 2010; Moore & McElroy, 2012; Ryan & Xenos, 2011; Seidman, 2013). It has also been claimed that neurotic people use Facebook more frequently to keep up with others, to feel a sense of “belonging”, and to get informed (Amiel & Sargent, 2004; Moore & McElroy, 2012). It has been suggested that neurotic people are more likely to engage in computer-mediated communication (CMC) because CMC may allow them to spend more time reviewing messages, thus reducing the anxiety they face in interpersonal communication (Ehrenberg et al., 2008). Interestingly, a U-shaped relationship has also been found between neuroticism and the amount of basic information shared on Facebook, suggesting that “while the emotionally secure individual focuses on self-actualization and expresses it by sharing more information with others from a secure base, the neurotic person who also strives to share more information, is motivated to do so by the need for self-assurance” (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010). Following this logic, we propose that:

H3: Neurotic people will (a) find LinkedIn use more gratifying, and consequently (b), they will use LinkedIn more often than non-neurotic people.

*Openness to experience.* Though some previous studies have reported that there is no relationship between openness and the use of Facebook (Moore & McElroy, 2012), there are

also others indicating that open people tend to have more friends, engage in more activities, express more about themselves on their profiles, and are more likely to blog (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Correa et al., 2010; Gosling et al., 2011; Guadagno et al., 2008).

Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H4: Open people will (a) find LinkedIn use more gratifying, and consequently (b), they will use LinkedIn more often than less open people.

*Self-efficacy.* Aside from the Big Five, this study also considers self-efficacy as another personality trait influencing LinkedIn use. As mentioned above, generalized self-efficacy plays a central role in anxiety arousal and may positively influence people's job performance. There are not many studies exploring the relationship between self-efficacy and SNS use; however, considering the close correlation between self-efficacy and self-esteem (Judge et al., 2002), we can also point to some basic ideas about the relationship between self-efficacy and SNS use based on studies about self-esteem and SNS use.

The results of previous studies have indicated that people with lower self-esteem tend to engage more in CMC and regard it as an easier, safer, and more relaxed way of communicating with others and expressing themselves (Ehrenberg et al., 2008; Harman et al., 2005; Forest & Wood, 2012; Joinson, 2004). However, there are also studies reporting that collective self-esteem is positively related to attitudes toward SNS (Gangadharbatla, 2007), that people with high self-esteem tend to use Facebook to achieve a higher social status, and that low self-esteem users would use it to fix deficiencies to gain social acceptance (Zywica & Danowski, 2008). In sum, the relationship between self-esteem and SNS use remains unclear. Following this literature, we pose the following two research

questions:

RQ3: How can demographics and personality traits predict the gratifications-sought from LinkedIn use?

RQ4: How can demographics, personality traits, and gratifications-sought predict the (a) patterns and (b) intensity of LinkedIn use?

### **SNS use and social capital**

Social capital is a relatively complex multi-dimensional concept, and researchers have defined the construct from a variety of approaches, including social networks, trust, civic engagement, life satisfaction, etc. (Bourdieu, 1983; Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Coleman, 1988; Dekker & Uslaner, 2001; Lin, 2001; Newton, 2006; Putnam, 2000). This study focuses on the individual level of social capital. Broadly speaking, the concept of social capital used in this study refers to the collection of resources owned by the members of an individual's personal social network, which may become available to the individual as a result of the history of these relationships (Van Der Gaag & Snijders, 2004). Lin (2001) made a distinction between access to and use of social capital: "access" to social capital refers to an individual's collection of potentially mobilizable social resources; the "use" of social capital refers to actions and the mobilization of resources aimed at creating returns. Considering the purpose of this study, it is more straightforward and relevant to focus on measuring individuals' potential "access" to social capital.

There are different forms of social capital; however, one widely accepted distinction is the two-dimensional conceptualization: "bridging social capital" and "bonding social capital." Bonding social capital is usually defined as the social capital derived from

relationships between similar persons, or from one's close circle, while bridging social capital is derived from dissimilar persons at the same level of hierarchy or from weak tie relationships (Kim, Subramanian, & Kawachi, 2006). According to Putnam (2000), bonding social capital means bonding between people who already know each other while bridging social capital brings together people or groups who previously did not know each other (Gittell & Vidal, 1998).

As for the relationship between SNS or internet use and social capital, previous research results are mixed. According to a study by Nie (2001), internet use detracts from face-to-face time with others. However, this conclusion has been challenged by many studies. Wellman et al. (2001) claim that online interactions may replace in-person interactions, mitigating the loss from time spent online. It has also been reported that CMC or SNS use is positively correlated with the size of one's social network or social capital, especially bridging social capital (Hampton & Wellman, 2003; Resnick, 2001), although Valenzuela, Park, and Kee (2009) found that the positive and significant associations between Facebook variables and social capital were small.

Though there are contradictory research results, there is some level of congruency. There is a consensus that the relationship between SNS use and social capital depends not only on the use intensity but also on how people use it. It has been assumed that patterns of new media use in relation to information acquisition and community building are positively associated with the individual-level production of social capital. In contrast, patterns of use in relation to entertainment and diversion are negatively associated with social capital (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009).

Therefore, the following hypothesis and research question have been developed:

H5: The more time people spend on LinkedIn, the more social capital they will perceive they have.

RQ5: How can demographics, personality traits, intensity of LinkedIn use, and patterns of LinkedIn use behaviors predict the perceived (a) bridging and (b) bonding social capital that people perceive that they have on LinkedIn?

## METHOD

### **Sample and sampling procedure**

The data were collected from a sample of 459 LinkedIn users in mainland China. The respondents were sent invitation e-mails via LinkedIn InMail to participate in an online survey administered from March 25 to April 20, 2015. An active hypertext link to the questionnaire, which was posted on Sojump.com, was embedded in the e-mail. Users registered as students on LinkedIn, and respondents who did not have a full- or part-time job at the time of the survey were excluded. In this way, the effects of gratifications, personality, and self-efficacy were better assessed rather than including those who used LinkedIn primarily for job searches. As a result, only 301 respondents were valid cases for analysis. The sample consisted of 107 female (35.5%) and 194 male (64.5%) LinkedIn users. The average age was 33 years; 43.2% had more than 11 years' work experience; and 62.8% of them had completed postgraduate studies.

### **Measurement**

*Gratifications-sought.* To begin the study, several focus groups on the gratifications-sought from LinkedIn were held. Based on these discussions, as well as the previous studies

mentioned above, 17 gratifications-sought items were generated and subsequently measured using a 5-point Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. The participants were asked to respond to the statements with items such as “I use LinkedIn to gain more knowledge about my industry.”

*LinkedIn use intensity.* LinkedIn use intensity was measured with three questions: “In a typical week, how many times do you log in or open LinkedIn?”, “How much time do you typically spend on LinkedIn when you log on?” and “About how many LinkedIn contacts do you have in total?”

*LinkedIn usage patterns.* To measure the usage patterns, the participants were invited to evaluate how often they use each of the features on LinkedIn using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “never” (1) to “very often” (5). There were 16 items in total about the features. Sample items included “follow companies” and “view the pages of companies.” A principal components factor analysis with Varimax rotation was conducted to determine the potential grouping of 16 items in relation to the patterns of use behaviors on LinkedIn. Three items were removed because of low communalities or for failing to load on any factor. As a result, the analysis yielded four factors and explained 71.62% of the variance (See Table 1).

(\* Insert Table 1 about here \*)

The first factor was “presenting insights” ( $\alpha = .88$ ), which included four items referring to presenting one’s ideas or comments by forwarding or leaving likes and comments on articles published on LinkedIn. The second factor was “following information” ( $\alpha = .82$ ), i.e., the behavior of following companies, channels, or influencers in learning about the latest information. The third factor was “self-promotion” ( $\alpha = .74$ ), i.e., behaviors relating to

updating one's profile or current status and seeking recommendations. The last factor was "networking" ( $\alpha = .78$ ), i.e., behaviors relating to viewing others' profiles and adding new contacts.

*The Big Five.* A 20-item short form of the 50-item International Personality Item Pool developed by Donnellan et al. (2006) was used in this study. It consisted of five factors: extraversion ( $\alpha = .73$ ), agreeableness ( $\alpha = .64$ ), conscientiousness ( $\alpha = .66$ ), neuroticism ( $\alpha = .76$ ), and openness ( $\alpha = .66$ ). The sample items included "I am the life of the party," "I sympathize with others' feelings," "I get chores done right away," and so on. The participants were asked to evaluate each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5).

*Generalized Self-efficacy.* To measure generalized self-efficacy, four items were selected from the New General Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Chen, Gully, and Eden (2001). The participants were asked to evaluate the items. Sample items included "I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself," "When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them," etc., on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). The reliability of the scale was good ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

*Perceived social capital.* Perceived social capital was measured with a 5-point Likert scale—revised from the ISCS (Internet Social Capital Scale) developed by Dmitri Williams (2006)—with five items about bonding social capital ( $\alpha = .85$ ). Sample items included "There are several people on LinkedIn I trust to help solve my problems" and "There is someone on LinkedIn I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions." Similarly, five items were used to assess bridging social capital ( $\alpha = .91$ ), such as "Interacting with people on

LinkedIn makes me interested in things that happen outside of my small circle” and

“Interacting with people on LinkedIn makes me want to try new things.”

*Demographics.* The study also recorded the demographic information of the participants, including gender, age, education level, and work experience.

## RESULTS

### Gratifications-sought from using LinkedIn

To explore the gratifications that current workers seek when using LinkedIn, a principal components factor analysis with Varimax rotation was conducted to determine the potential grouping of the 17 items. Three items were deleted because of low communalities or for failing to load on any factor. As shown in Table 2, the analysis yielded four factors and explained 75.19% of the variance.

(\* Insert Table 2 about here \*)

The first factor, information learning ( $\alpha = .89$ ), included four items indicating the needs to gather information about the industry and new events relating to the worker’s company or its competitors. The second factor, belonging needs ( $\alpha = .93$ ), included three items referring to the need to be accepted by and feel belongingness to the industry and the need to not feel alone. The third factor, networking needs ( $\alpha = .85$ ), refers to the need to develop and maintain one’s professional network within the company. The last factor, career expansion ( $\alpha = .76$ ), included the need to promote oneself, to look for collaborators, and to keep in touch with contacts outside one’s company.

### *Hypotheses testing*

H1 hypothesized that extraverts will (a) find LinkedIn use more gratifying, and consequently

(b), they will use LinkedIn more often than introverts. The results in Table 3 show that extraversion was significantly correlated with all four gratifications-sought ( $r$  ranged from .25 to .28,  $p < .001$ ) and intensity of LinkedIn use ( $r = .16$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The regression analyses in Table 4 confirm the relationships ( $\beta$  ranged from .14 to .29, at  $p < .05$  or less) between extraversion and all four gratifications-sought. However, the multiple regression results in Table 5 show that extraversion was not a significant predictor of intensity of LinkedIn use ( $\beta = .01$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Thus, H1a was fully supported, and H1b was supported only at the bivariate level.

(\* Insert Table 3, 4, and 5 about here \*)

H2 hypothesized that people with higher levels of agreeableness will (a) find LinkedIn use more gratifying, and consequently (b), they will use LinkedIn more often than people with lower levels of agreeableness. The results in Table 3 show that agreeableness was significantly related to intensity of LinkedIn use ( $r = .15$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and all gratifications-sought in LinkedIn use ( $r$  ranged from .17 to .32 at  $p < .01$  or less) except networking needs. Similarly, the regression analyses in Table 4 show that agreeableness was a significant predictor only of belonging ( $\beta = .20$ ,  $p > .01$ ) and career expansion ( $\beta = .33$ ,  $p > .001$ ) and was insignificant in relation to information learning and networking needs. As shown in Table 5, agreeableness did not significantly predict LinkedIn use intensity. Therefore, H2a was only partially supported, and H2b was rejected.

H3 proposed that neurotic people will (a) find LinkedIn use more gratifying, and consequently (b), they will use LinkedIn more often than non-neurotic people. The correlation results in Table 3 show that neuroticism was significantly related to all gratifications-sought in LinkedIn use ( $r$  ranged from .12 to .14, at  $p < .05$ ) except networking

needs. Similarly, the regression analyses in Table 4 show neuroticism as a significant predictor only of information learning ( $\beta=.16, p<.01$ ), belongingness ( $\beta=.20, p<.01$ ), and career expansion ( $\beta=.20, p<.01$ ); it was insignificant to networking needs. Also, as shown in Tables 3 and 5, neither the bivariate nor the multivariate relationships between neuroticism and intensity of LinkedIn were significant. Therefore, H3a was largely supported, and H3b was rejected.

H4 posited that open people will (a) find LinkedIn use more gratifying, and consequently (b), they will use LinkedIn more often than less open people. The correlation results in Table 3 show that openness was not significant in relation to any of the gratifications-sought in LinkedIn use. Likewise, the regression analyses in Table 4 show similar results, with openness as a significant but negative predictor of information learning ( $\beta=-.21, p<.01$ ). As for the relationship between openness and LinkedIn use intensity, both the correlation and regression found no significant results. Therefore, both H4a and H4b were rejected.

H5 hypothesized that the more people spend time using LinkedIn, the more social capital they will perceive they have. The correlation results in Table 3 show LinkedIn use intensity as significantly and positively related to both bonding ( $r=.33, p<.001$ ) and bridging ( $r=.33, p<.001$ ) social capital. The regression results in Table 6 also support this relationship, with beta ranging from .13 to .15,  $p<.05$  or less.

With respect to RQ2 and the relationship between conscientiousness and LinkedIn use intensity, no significant relationship in the correlation analyses in Table 3 and in the regression analyses in Table 4 was found.

### Predicting gratifications-sought

To investigate the factors influencing users' gratifications-sought in using LinkedIn, four hierarchical multiple regressions were run, with the four factors of gratifications-sought as dependent variables and demographics and personalities, including the big five and generalized self-efficacy, as independent variables. The results indicate that more extraverted people tended to use LinkedIn to seek information ( $\beta = .29, p < .001$ ), seek the feeling of belongingness ( $\beta = .20, p < .01$ ), to network ( $\beta = .28, p < .001$ ), and to expand their career ( $\beta = .14, p < .05$ ). Those who were more agreeable were more likely to seek the feeling of belongingness ( $\beta = .20, p < .01$ ) and to expand their career using LinkedIn ( $\beta = .33, p < .001$ ). Surprisingly, those who were more conscientious were more likely to seek the feeling of belongingness ( $\beta = .13, p < .05$ ). According to the results, individuals who were more neurotic tended to use LinkedIn more for information learning ( $\beta = .16, p < .01$ ), seeking the feeling of belongingness, and expanding their career (both with  $\beta = .20, p < .01$ ). It was also found that people who were more open tended to seek information ( $\beta = -.21, p < .01$ ) less frequently. Moreover, individuals with higher level of self-efficacy were found to be more likely to use LinkedIn for information learning ( $\beta = .18, p < .05$ ). The amount of variance explained ranged from 8% to 30%.

### Predicting patterns and intensity of use behaviors

To investigate the factors influencing the intensity and patterns of LinkedIn use, five hierarchical multiple regressions were run with LinkedIn use intensity and four usage patterns as dependent variables. As shown in Table 5, only the seeking of gratifications of information learning ( $\beta = .17, p < .05$ ) and career expansion ( $\beta = .31, p < .001$ ) significantly

predicted the intensity of LinkedIn use.

The results also show that individuals who presented insights more frequently on LinkedIn tended to be extraverted ( $\beta = .19, p < .01$ ) and used LinkedIn to gratify their information learning needs ( $\beta = .33, p < .001$ ). Those who followed information more often tended to be more extraverted ( $\beta = .14, p < .05$ ), neurotic ( $\beta = .11, p < .05$ ), and tended to use LinkedIn to gratify their informational needs ( $\beta = .56, p < .001$ ). It was also found that extraverted ( $\beta = .19, p < .05$ ) male ( $\beta = .14, p < .05$ ) users with less work experience ( $\beta = -.11, p < .01$ ) tended to self-promote more on LinkedIn, and they tended to use LinkedIn to gather information ( $\beta = .20, p < .01$ ) and to expand their career ( $\beta = .38, p < .001$ ). Those who often networked on LinkedIn tended to be male users ( $\beta = .11, p < .05$ ) who sought to develop and maintain their professional networks ( $\beta = .13, p < .05$ ) and expand their career ( $\beta = .42, p < .001$ ). The amount of variance explained ranged from 18% to 41%.

(\* Insert Table 5 about here \*)

### **Predicting social capital**

Two parallel hierarchical multiple regression analyses were also conducted to examine the factors influencing bridging and bonding social capital. According to the results shown in Table 6, individuals who used LinkedIn more intensively tended to perceive that they had more of both bridging ( $\beta = .13, p < .05$ ) and bonding social capital ( $\beta = .15, p < .01$ ) on LinkedIn. In addition, individuals who more frequently presented insights ( $\beta = .19, p < .01$ ) and followed information ( $\beta = .15, p < .05$ ) on LinkedIn tended to perceive that they had more bridging social capital. In terms of personality, they tended to be more agreeable ( $\beta = .15, p < .05$ ) and conscientious ( $\beta = .12, p < .05$ ); they had a higher level of self-efficacy ( $\beta = .24, p < .01$ ), but a

lower level of openness ( $\beta = -.14, p < .01$ ). Those who presented insights ( $\beta = .24, p < .001$ ) and followed information ( $\beta = .19, p < .01$ ) more often also tended to perceive greater enjoyment from bonding social capital on LinkedIn. These people tended to be more extraverted ( $\beta = .13, p < .05$ ), had higher levels of self-efficacy ( $\beta = .18, p < .01$ ), but were less open ( $\beta = -.14, p < .05$ ). The amount of variance explained ranged from 29% to 31%.

(\* Insert Table 6 about here \*)

## **CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION**

One of the purposes of this study was to identify the motivations uniquely behind the use of LinkedIn. The factor analysis successfully yielded four factors relating to the gratifications-sought on LinkedIn, including information learning, belonging needs, networking needs, and career expansion. By comparing the means of these factors, it was also found that the mean score for career expansion (mean=3.61) was significantly higher than that of any other factor. This result indicates that presenting and building a positive image of oneself, making themselves visible, reaching out, looking for collaborators, and building stronger working relationships were the most important gratifications-sought on LinkedIn, thus reinforcing the exploratory study conducted by DiMicco et al. (2008) on the motivations of using SNS in the work place.

Upon examining the relationship between gratifications-sought and use intensity as well as the patterns of use behaviors on LinkedIn, it was also found that career expansion and information learning were significant predictors of higher use intensity, which further indicates that people who want to expand their career are more highly motivated to use LinkedIn. Moreover, those who were motivated to expand their career on LinkedIn also

tended to do more self-promotion and networking, which means that LinkedIn users tend to regard these two kinds of use behaviors as the most helpful methods to expand their career.

Another important purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of personalities on gratifications-sought when using LinkedIn. As the results indicate, extraversion was found to be a significant predictor of all the four factors of gratifications-sought, which is consistent with studies on SNS applying the rich-get-richer approach (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Bibby, 2008; Correa et al., 2010; Ehrenberg et al., 2008; Gosling et al., 2011; Ryan & Xenos, 2011; Seidman, 2013; Wehrli, 2008; Wilson et al., 2010), claiming that extraverted people tend to be more active on SNS and do more self-disclosure about their current activities. According to the results, people who are more agreeable tend to seek the feeling of belongingness and expand their career. This is also consistent with previous studies reporting that agreeableness is a good predictor of belongingness-related behaviors (Seidman, 2013) and that agreeable people tend to more often stay connected to others (Gosling et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2012). Despite the inconclusive findings in the literature, conscientiousness was found to be a significant predictor of seeking belongingness. This may be because conscientious people are more concerned about the sense of professional identity. Meanwhile, people who are more neurotic were found to use LinkedIn for information learning, the feeling of belongingness, and career expansion. These reinforce previous studies indicating that neuroticism is a significant predictor of the need for belongingness (Amiel & Sargent, 2004; Moore & McElroy, 2012). Therefore, since neurotic people may be more prone to anxiety, it is understandable that they would gather more information about the company, industry, and

competitors and would tend to put greater effort in getting additional opportunities to expand their career. It is surprising that openness to experience was negatively related to the gratification of information learning, which may indicate that for those who believe that they are curious and have a good sense of art and abstract ideas but for whom information on LinkedIn is not rich or attractive enough may not regard LinkedIn as a good place to explore the outside world. Furthermore, self-efficacy was found to be positively related to information learning, which may be because individuals with a higher level of self-efficacy tended to have higher expectations for their career and therefore spent more time learning about related information and knowledge.

The influence of LinkedIn use on social capital was also examined in this study. The results show that greater LinkedIn use does have a positive influence on perceived social capital, indicating that LinkedIn is a helpful tool for current workers to enlarge their network and to increase their social capital. This is consistent with previous studies claiming that online interaction may have a positive influence on people's social capital (Hampton & Wellman, 2003; Resnick, 2001; Wellman et al., 2001). It was also found that presenting insights and following information were more significantly related to perceived social capital instead of self-promotion and networking, indicating that being knowledgeable as a result of following companies and offering useful information may work more efficiently in terms of increasing social capital than direct networking behaviors.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

In sum, current workers usually use LinkedIn to gather information about their jobs, to seek feelings of belongingness, to develop and enlarge their professional network, and to expand

their career. Their LinkedIn usage is mainly motivated by career expansion and information learning; therefore, helping employees reach out and seek new opportunities and learning about their industry and the professional world more conveniently might be a potential opportunity for the further development of PNS. Considering the significant correlation between the use intensity of LinkedIn and both bridging and bonding social capital, helping young professionals build their social capital may also be part of the attraction of PNS.

Furthermore, both neurotic and extraverted people are more likely to use LinkedIn to gratify their needs of career expansion and information learning. This may imply that these people may be regarded as potential active PNS users and worthy of more attention from PNS operators. Interestingly, it was also found that conscientious people tend to use LinkedIn to seek feelings of belongingness, which is inconsistent with previous studies focusing on the relationship between personalities and SNS usage. This result suggests that unlike other SNS, LinkedIn is treated more as a useful instrument for the development of one's career rather than for entertainment, and a LinkedIn link may be regarded as more professional and formal compared with "friendship" on other SNS, which is more personal, social, and relaxed. This reminds us that previous research results regarding SNS may not be applicable to PNS. The unique features of PNS should thus be further examined.

### **LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES**

Although this study explored the gratifications-sought and patterns of use behaviors on LinkedIn, the current items may not have covered all the dimensions of motivation and use patterns on LinkedIn. Future studies may further expand the item pool and revise the dimensions of these two variables.

Second, since the questionnaire was distributed via InMail and the response rate was low, it was likely that those with a higher intensity of using LinkedIn were over-sampled. Since current workers in certain fields, such as human resource managers and sales staff looking for clients, are more likely to have a higher use intensity of LinkedIn, it is possible that people working in these fields were also over-sampled. Further studies may consider paper-based or telephone surveys to increase the response rate and the representativeness of the sample and use job occupation as a control variable.

Moreover, in the current study, the highest age was 33 or above, and the highest level of work experience was 11 years or more, which cannot accurately reflect the age and work experience of all the respondents. Further studies should more accurately measure individuals' demographic background.

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**Table 1. Factor analysis of the usage patterns of LinkedIn**

I use the functions in LinkedIn to:	Factors				Mean	S.D.
	1	2	3	4		
<b>Presenting insights</b>						
1. Forward articles or insights published by contacts or other users	.83				2.21	.99
2. Leave likes or comments on articles published by companies, influencers or channels	.81				2.16	1.17
3. Forward articles published by companies, influencers or channels	.81				2.09	1.18
4. Leave likes or comments on articles or insights published by contacts or other users	.80				2.42	1.10
<b>Following information</b>						
5. Follow companies	.84				2.58	.97
6. View the page of companies	.79				2.86	1.25
7. Follow channels	.70				2.68	1.22
8. Follow influencers	.67				2.21	1.07
					1.57	1.25
<b>Self-promotion</b>						
9. Update my current status or activities on my homepage	.76				2.72	.93
10. Update or refine my profile	.76				2.68	1.23
11. Seek recommendations	.75				3.35	1.07
					2.11	1.13
<b>Networking</b>						
12. View the profiles of others	.90				4.06	.93
13. Add new contacts	.83				4.15	1.02
					3.97	1.04
Eigenvalues	5.31	1.70	1.29	1.00		
Variance explained (%)	23.47	19.69	15.23	13.22		
Cronbach's alpha	.88	.82	.74	.78		

Scale used: 1=Never, and 5=Very often; N=301

**Table 2. Factor analysis of gratification sought on LinkedIn**

I use LinkedIn to...	Factors				Mean	S.D.
	1	2	3	4		
<b>Information learning</b>						
1. Learn about other industries related to my job	.86				3.25	1.22
2. Get more knowledge about my industry	.83				3.29	1.25
3. Gather information about competitors	.76				2.98	1.33
4. Keep up with new events related to the company	.75				2.78	1.30
<b>Belonging needs</b>						
5. Make myself feel that I am accepted by the industry	.88				3.05	1.33
6. Make myself feel that I belong to the industry	.85				3.09	1.31
7. Make myself feel that I am not alone in the professional world	.83				2.86	1.33
<b>Networking needs</b>						
8. Develop network within company	.87				2.92	1.38
9. Maintain network within company	.83				2.86	1.38
10. Learn about colleagues	.71				3.21	1.20
<b>Career expansion</b>						
11. Make myself visible	.80				4.08	.98
12. Recruit people or look for collaborators	.72				3.30	1.31
13. Present the best side of myself	.66				3.71	1.12
14. Keep up with new event about contacts outside	.63				3.36	1.17
Eigenvalues	6.59	1.56	1.24	1.13		
Variance explained (%)	22.04	19.75	16.71	16.69		
Cronbach's alpha	.89	.93	.85	.76		

Scale used: 1=Strongly disagree, and 5=Strongly agree; N=301

**Table 3. Zero order correlations of key variables**

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
<b>Personalities</b>																
1. Extraversion	.41***	.04	-.17**	.26***	.43***	.28***	.26***	.25**	.25***	.24***	.25***	.35***	.20***	.16**	.29***	.20***
2. Agreeableness		.23***	-.16**	.33***	.47***	.17**	.25***	.10	.32***	.15*	.11	.25***	.24***	.15*	.18**	.28***
3. Conscientiousness			-.22***	.19**	.27**	.04	.05	.05	-.05	-.03	-.06	.04	-.02	-.04	.05	.10
4. Neuroticism				-.26***	-.26***	.14*	.12*	.09	.12*	.15**	.21***	.10	.07	.06	.06	.12*
5. Openness					.51***	-.05	.00	.01	.05	-.08	-.11	.02	.07	.00	-.06	-.03
6. Self-efficacy						.18**	.18**	.16**	.25***	.03	.06	.14*	.19***	.14*	.20***	.25***
<b>Gratifications-sought</b>																
7. Information learning							.54***	.54***	.46***	.40***	.62***	.43***	.33***	.31***	.48***	.50***
8. Belonging								.49***	.55***	.32***	.41***	.43***	.27***	.24***	.46***	.58***
9. Networking needs									.48***	.32***	.31***	.38***	.35***	.33***	.48***	.45***
10. Career expansion										.29***	.37***	.55***	.54***	.43***	.37***	.48***
<b>Patterns of using behaviors</b>																
11. Presenting insights											.54***	.44***	.25***	.29***	.47***	.40***
12. Following information												.44***	.28***	.24***	.45***	.39***
13. Self-promotion													.43***	.34***	.36***	.39***
14. Networking														.46***	.24***	.33***
<b>15. Using intensity</b>															.33**	.33***
<b>Social capital</b>																
16. Bonding capital																.64**
17. Bridging capital																

Notes: \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ ; N=301

**Table 4. Regressing gratifications-sought on demographics and personalities**

Predictors	Gratification-sought			
	Information learning	Belonging	Networking needs	Career expansion
	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$
<b>Demographics</b>				
Gender (M=1)	-.01	.10	-.04	.07
Age	-.08	-.04	-.12	-.00
Education level	-.12	.03	-.05	-.01
Work experience	-.09	-.08	-.10	-.07
<b>Personalities</b>				
Extraversion	.29***	.20**	.28***	.14*
Agreeableness	.09	.20**	-.01	.33***
Conscientiousness	.12	.13*	.11	-.06
Neuroticism	.16**	.20**	.11	.20**
Openness	-.21**	-.08	-.05	-.05
Generalized self-efficacy	.18*	.06	.07	.12
$R^2$	.17	.15	.08	.32
Adjusted $R^2$	.15	.14	.08	.30
F	9.61***	10.63***	20.93***	22.51***

Notes: \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ ; N=301

**Table 5. Regressing patterns and intensity of LinkedIn use on demographics, personalities and gratifications-sought**

Predictors	Patterns of LinkedIn use				Intensity of LinkedIn use
	Presenting insights β	Following information β	Self-promotion β	Networking β	
<b>Demographics</b>					
Gender	.08	.06	.14*	.11*	.06
Age	.00	.02	-.03	-.12	.15
Education level	.00	-.04	.01	.07	-.10
Work experience	.00	.02	-.11*	-.10	.10
<b>Personalities</b>					
Extraversion	.19**	.14*	.19**	.02	.01
Agreeableness	.09	.03	-.02	.10	-.03
Conscientiousness	.04	-.03	.03	-.01	-.07
Neuroticism	.10	.11*	.04	.03	.02
Openness	-.07	-.10	-.01	.01	-.04
Generalized self-efficacy	-.09	-.01	-.11	.02	.00
<b>Gratifications-sought</b>					
Information learning	.33***	.56***	.20**	.06	.17*
Belonging	.13	.08	.03	-.11	.01
Networking needs	.10	-.07	.08	.13*	.11
Career expansion	.06	.08	.38***	.42***	.31***
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.19	.42	.38	.32	.19
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.18	.41	.36	.30	.18
<i>F</i>	19.12***	43.25***	20.78***	22.51***	14.37***

Notes: \**p* ≤ .05; \*\**p* ≤ .01; \*\*\**p* ≤ .001; N=301

**Table 6. Regressing social capital on demographics, personalities, intensity and patterns of LinkedIn use**

Predictors	Social capital	
	Bridging	Bonding
	$\beta$	$\beta$
<b>Demographics</b>		
Gender (M=1)	-.01	-.03
Age	-.01	.02
Education level	-.04	-.06
Work experience	.01	.04
<b>Personalities</b>		
Extraversion	-.03	.13*
Agreeableness	.15*	-.02
Conscientiousness	.12*	.05
Neuroticism	.11	-.01
Openness	-.14**	-.14*
Generalized self-efficacy	.24**	.18**
<b>Intensity of LinkedIn use</b>	.13*	.15**
<b>Patterns of LinkedIn use</b>		
Presenting insights	.19**	.24***
Following information	.15*	.19**
Self-promotion	.07	.04
Networking	.10	-.00
$R^2$	.31	.33
Adjusted $R^2$	.29	.31
$F$	13.33***	16.84***

Notes: \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ ; N=301