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Is LinkedIn making you more successful? The informational benefits derived from public social media

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BUSINESS NETWORKS

About Us

Welcome to LinkedIn, the world's largest professional network with 300 million members in over 200 countries and territories around the globe.

Mission

Our mission is simple: connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful. When you join LinkedIn, you get access to people, jobs, news, updates, and insights that help you be great at what you do.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Social capital:

- "… the goodwill available to individuals or groups. Its source lies in the structure and content of the actor's social relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actor." (Adler & Kwon, 2002, p. 23)

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Informational benefits

- … occur in three forms: access, timing, and referrals (Burt, 1992, p. 13)

Social capital on social media:

- mainly studied on Facebook
- conceptual work on Enterprise Social Media

CENTRAL QUESTIONS

- Are there informational benefits from social media use?
- What are the underlying processes?

COMPARISON ACROSS PLATFORMS

LinkedIn

- strong professional focus in content + structure (Papacharissi, 2009)
- H1: LinkedIn users report higher professional informational benefits than non-users.

Twitter

- different forms of usage possible - friend-following network or as a news and event-following medium (Rogers, 2014)
- H2: Twitter users report higher professional informational benefits than non-users.

Facebook

- mostly used for private purposes
- RQ1: Do Facebook users report higher or lower professional informational benefits than non-users?

COMPARISON WITHIN PLATFORMS

Control variables: usage

- reading
    - serendipity (Zhao and Rosson, 2009)
    - locating expertise, transactive memory (Fulk and Yuan, 2013)
    - building trust/social lubricant (Leonardi & Meyer, 2014)
- posting

Content

- posting about work-related content

Structure

- weak ties <-> strong ties
- latent ties?
- strategic networking

SAMPLE

Wave 1, longitudinal study ERC project

- subsample of n = 1959 working people (56% male, 44% female)

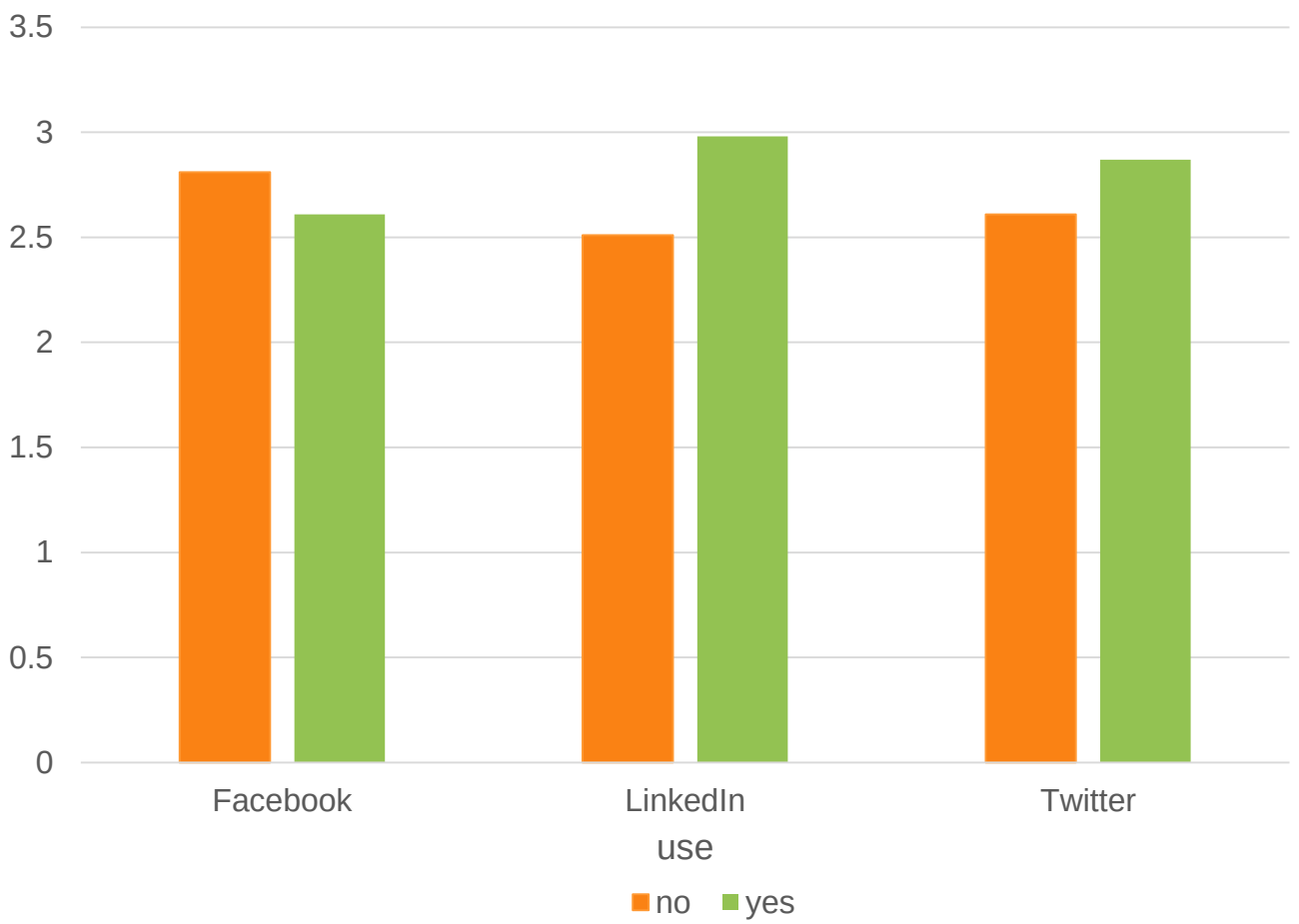
Social media use:

- 76% on Facebook
- 32% on LinkedIn
- 18% on Twitter

SURVEY

- social media use: frequency reading, posting, groups
- professional content: posting about professional successes, general information about work, asking for advice on work
- network composition: strong, weak, latent ties
- strategic networking (e.g., „I accept invitations from important people")
- informational benefits (5 items, e.g., "I can get access to knowledge that is helpful in mastering job tasks from my network members" or "I receive information about job opportunities from my network members"; α = .90; Wickramasinghe & Weliwitigoda, 2011)

COMPARISON ACROSS PLATFORMS



COMPARISON WITHIN PLATFORMS

	LinkedIn			Twitter			Facebook		
	ΔR^2	β respective step	β final model	ΔR^2	β respective step	β final model	ΔR^2	β respective step	β final model
Step 1	.02*			.05**			.07***		
Age		-.09*			-.15**			-.19***	
Gender		.03			.03			.05	
Education level		.11**			.17**			.18***	
Income		.01			.05			.02	
Step 2									
Reading									
Posting									
Groups									
Step 3									
Professional content									
Step 4									
# strong ties									
# weak ties									
# latent ties									
Strategic networking									
Total R^2_{adj}									

Note: * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001; gender (1 = female, 2 = male)

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Age		-.09*	-.05		-.15**	-.13**		-.19***	-.11***
Gender		.03	-.04		.03	.01		.05	-.01
Education level		.11**	.05		.17**	.16**		.18***	.20***
Income		.01	-.02		.05	.06		.02	.02
Step 2	.09***			.02*			.03***		
Reading		.11*	.03*		.02	.05		-.04	-.05
Posting		.03	-.01		.13**	.08		.09**	-.04
Groups		.22***	.13**		n.a.	n.a.		.13***	.04
Step 3	.02**			.07***			.07***		
Professional content		.16**	.13**		.32***	.21**		.30***	.24***
Step 4	.04***			.04**			.03***		
# strong ties			.10*			.07			.13***
# weak ties			.15**			.05			-.03
# latent ties			-.09			-.04			-.01
Strategic networking			.11*			.21**			.15***
Total R^2_{adj}	.15***			.15***			.19***		

Note: * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001; gender (1 = female, 2 = male)

DISCUSSION

LinkedIn can indeed make you more successful!

- strong effect of platform
- but: specific use of platform matters:
  - content + network

Interesting findings:

- reading matters only on LinkedIn
  - content matters
- effects of tie strength
  - LinkedIn: strong & weak ties matter
  - Facebook: only strong ties - algorithm?
  - Twitter: no effect – due to ephemeral character?

First step: social capital framework useful

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

Questions?

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