

Social Media and Senior Citizen's Quality of Life: A New Lifestyle for Ageing Society

Peter Ractham
Thammasat Business School

Laddawan Kaewkitipong
Thammasat Business School

INTRODUCTION:

The notion of Ageing Society has gained its importance amongst several countries around the world. In the last century, human life expectancy has drastically increased in various parts of the globe. Today, people live longer, have less children, delay their retirement, and rely more on themselves on the personal health level (<http://www.oecd.org/berlin/41250023.pdf>). One of the factors that contribute to this phenomenon is how people use ICT to improve their quality of life (QoL). In general, various types of ICT have been used by senior citizens to browse the web for healthcare information, make payment on their mobile phones, and connect with friends and family members, or even playing online games during their leisure. More importantly, some of the ICT artifacts are cater to senior citizens to improve their physical well-being, emotion, cognition, and economic conditions. Although, there are several studies on senior citizens and their use of ICT to improve their lifestyle, there is no study on how a popular ICT such as social media is used by senior citizen in terms of QoL. Social media has played prominent roles in changing the way people communicate, interact, and meet with one another. People of all ages use social media to improve their quality of life by exchanging useful information, improve healthcare, gain customer loyalty, build and nurture personal connections with friends and family members. Thus, social media can also be a great ICT artifact that senior citizens can gain benefit from an individual, group or community level. Although, there are numerous studies on how people utilize social media in their lives, there are few studies that focus on how social media affected its users' QoL at a holistic level. To our knowledge, there is no study that focuses on how senior citizens use social media to improve their quality of life. Because the conceptualization of how social media and senior citizens' QoL is a relatively new domain, we elected to take the exploratory research approach where we focus on both discovery and theory findings that will be supported with empirical evidences as the research progress.

Our research questions are:

- What is the nature of Social Media use by senior citizens in their daily life?
- What is the contribution of Social Media usage to senior citizens' QoL?
- How social media can be used to improve senior citizens' QoL?

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Although the concept of QoL has been researched in various fields of social science such as Economic, Psychology, Marketing and Education (Armould, Price and Zinkhan, 2002, Danna and Griffin, 1999 and Heisel and Flett, 2004) it is still largely overlooked by IS researchers (Taechatassanasoontorn & Tanvisuth, 2008). As most IS researches in past decades have focused on the issues of QoL of personnel within the work-related domain (Taechatassanasoontorn & Tanvisuth, 2008). There is still a large research gap for IS research on QoL outside of the work related domain. Recently, there are increases in IS research that study how people use IT artifact in their life outside their workplace. This upward trend in IS and QoL research which focus on how users utilize and benefit from IT artifacts such as personal computers, tablet, smartphone and social media. This trend has encouraged IS researchers to seriously look into how these artifacts affect their users outside of workplace and focus more on how they use IT to enhance their QoL in their everyday life. For this study, we aim to investigate how social media are used by senior citizens to improve their QoL. To our knowledge, there is no study that focuses on this specific topic. Although, there are several studies that focus on social media and various usage as well as study on senior and ICT usage in general.

2.1 Quality of Life (QoL)

Although there were several studies of how people use IT artifacts that impact their QoL within the organization, there has been few researches that focus on how IT can affect its users in various life domains in terms of QoL (Choi, Lee, Im and Kim, 2007). One of the few distinguished studies was conducted by Taechatassanasoontorn and Tanvisuth (2008) where the researchers focused on IS Use and QoL of the underprivileged citizens. The study covered how people use IS to improve their QoL in three life domains; 1) Work, 2) Family and 3) Social. They also encouraged other IS researchers to add other domains that are fit to future IS research. Table 1 shows different life domains and their descriptions from past researches.

Life Domain	Domain activities, circumstance, Events	References
Cultural	Activities and relationships that represent what the culture of various groups.	Johnson (1986) Sirgy and Cornwell (2002)
Leisure	Cultural entertaining, Productive personal growth, outdoor physical, recreation expressive, friendship and formal group	Silverstien and Parker (2002)
Work	Activities that required people to exchange labor and their expertise for payment.	Sirgy et al. (2001)
Educational	Learning process or activities that people used to gain knowledge.	Staines and Pleck (1984)
Consumer	Consumer activities are related to the purchase, preparation, consumption, possession, maintenance, and disposition of goods and services.	Sirgy et al. (2001)
Community	Activities to build social capital, sense-of-community and how people interact	Kavanaugh and Patterson (2001)

	and related to one another.	
Financial	Activities for pay and revenues	Campbell (1976)
Health and Safety	Activities pertaining to the wellness of physical and mental health and safety.	Yost et al. (2005)
Family	Activities with parents, relative and children at home	Staines and Pleck (1984)
Friend	Activities with friends and acquaintant	Andrew and Whitney (1976)
Social	Activities with other people who are not family members, colleagues or friends	Greenley et al (1997)
Self	Activities for self-representation and self-efficacy	Sirgy (2002)
Neighborhood	Activities that build relationship with one's neighborhood	Bruin and Cook (1997)
Spirituals	Religious and spiritual activities	Kelly (1995)

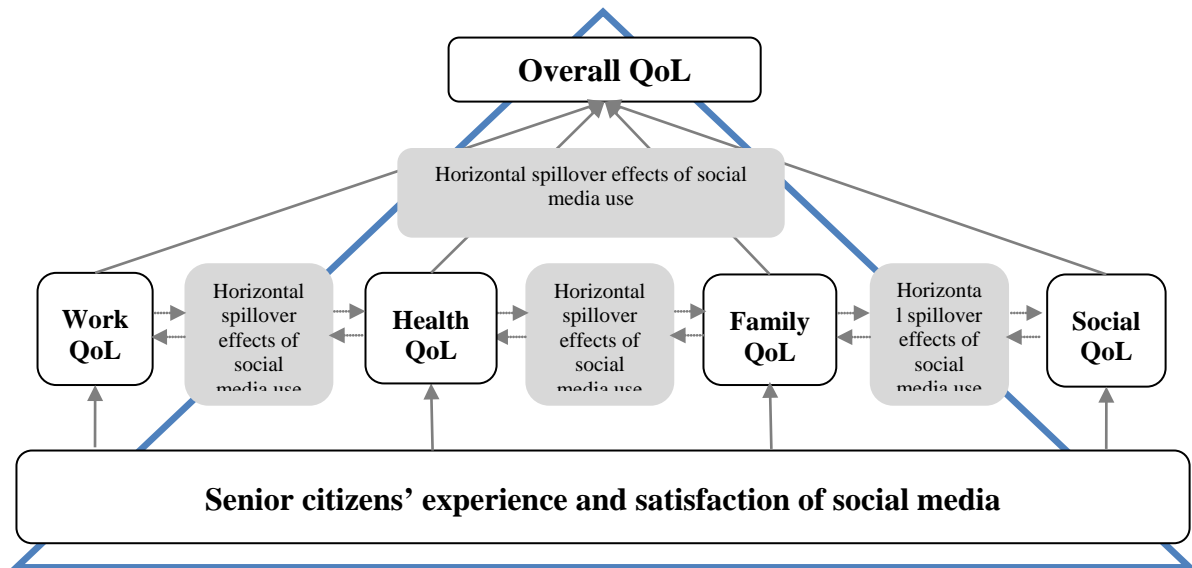
2.2 Social Media and Quality of Life

Social media is considered one of the most popular IT artifacts that can be used to enhance people's life. In addition, social media has played prominent roles in improving people's lifestyle in various domains. People of all ages use social media to connect and converse with one another. Increasingly more important, wearable computing, mobile phone, app are ubiquitous in everyday life and have great potential to improve the life of senior citizen. Prior research suggested that affectionate, positive social interaction, and emotional and informational social support, received from either online or offline sources, are the strongest determinants of quality of life (Leung and Lee, 2005). However, there are very limited on how IT can enhance senior citizen QoL. More importantly, there is no study that focuses on how social media can improve senior citizen's QoL. In our proposed study, we are adapting the earlier research model proposed by Taechatassanasoontorn & Tanvisuth (2008) by adding a Health QoL domain to our study. Health QoL domain was added to the existing model as it deems to be very important factors in senior citizen's QoL.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Alderfer (1972) suggested that IS can fulfill people lifestyle in three broad areas; 1) Work 2) Family and 3) Social. However, another domain that should be investigated in the context of how senior citizens use IT artifact is Health, since healthcare and safety is one of the top priorities of the senior citizens QoL. Hence we proposed the following model.

1. **Work QoL** – how senior citizens use social media to improve their work related activities.
2. **Health QoL** –how senior citizens use social media to improve their health and safety activities.
3. **Family QoL** – how senior citizens use social media to improve the activities that enhance their relationship within their family.
4. **Social QoL** – how senior citizens use social media to improve the social activities



RESEARCH METHOD:

We are planning to use two-step analysis to first develop context of social media usage and its contribution to the senior citizens' quality of life. Then, we will examine the contributions of social media usage to senior citizens' quality of life. The two-step analysis includes:

Step 1: Developing contextualized social media usage measurement for senior citizens' quality of life.

1. **Focus groups** – we plan to conduct focus group interviews with senior citizens who have taken the 'ICT for senior citizen course' which are special course that is sponsored by Thailand Ministry of ICT (MICT). The course has been offered since 2011 (until present) and has more than 300 participants
2. **Delphi-Technique questionnaire** – Once we obtain contextualized data from the focus group, we will create the questionnaire by conducting two rounds of Delphi-technique interviews from the three groups of experts, including:
 - i. Senior housing officers
 - ii. MICT officers who oversee the ICT and senior projects
 - iii. NGOs who are involves with senior.

Step 2: Examining the contributions of social media usage to quality of life

1. **Field Survey** – using questionnaire developed in the Step 1, we will develop our hypotheses and distribute our surveys to the different outlets that will allow us to reach diverse subjects
 - a. Senior citizens who are member of online communities

- b. Senior citizens living in senior housings
 - c. Seniors citizens who often visit various temples on religious Sunday meetings.
2. **Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparison Analysis**- our goal is to examine the relationship between social media use and their horizontal spill over effect between each domain (Work QoL, Health QoL, Family QoL and Social QoL).

EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION:

- **Contribution to Theory** – this study will contribute to the body of IS theory as follow:
 1. This study will help further an understanding in IS and QoL in a non-work related domain.
 2. This study will also further add to an understanding of the concepts and theory of the roles of social media and their influence on senior citizens.
- **Contribution to Practice** –
 1. This study will advance an understanding on how social media can be used to improve senior citizens' QoL in an ageing society.
 2. Businesses and government agents can use initial findings for their policy or strategy to deal with their stakeholders in an ageing society.

CURRENT PROGRESS:

The research team has acquired partial funding from Business Research Center (Thammasat Business School). Also we have gained permissions to access the following subject groups:

- Research agreement for data access:
 - MICT Thailand (Minister of ICT Thailand) – ICT training centers for senior citizens.
 - Nursing homes – 3 nursing homes in Bangkok
 - Mailing list from the Minister of Internal Affair from previous research that is related to Thai senior citizens.
- Ongoing negotiation for access.
 - Various NGOs and their leaders.
 - Temples in Bangkok and its vicinity.

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