Social Network Sites’ usage among Greek students in Western Macedonia

Antoniadis I.1,a, Koukoulis I.2, Serdaris P.1

1 Dept. of Business Administration (Kozani), TEI of Western Macedonia, Kozani, Greece
2 Dept. of Digital Media and Communication, MA graduate, TEI of Western Macedonia, Kastoria, Greece

a) Corresponding author: iantoniadis@teiwm.gr

Abstract: Social Networking Sites has been in the centre of attention of marketers and academics during the last 15 years as an important tool for communicating with consumers. SNSs are being used by people in all demographic categories, but it is commonly acceptable that millenials are the main users of those platforms. The reasons that motivate people use SNSs have been examined by relevant literature thoroughly but not sufficient attention was paid in the formation of segments of users. This paper aims to shed light in the ways that college students are using social media and social networking sites, and identify segments of users in this demographic group. Our research surveys the SNS usage of 535 students in the TEI of Western Macedonia, exploring the frequency of 18 actions users of SNSs usually perform. Principal Component Analysis designated 4 main categories of SNSs usage, that were used along with additional variables to segment college students according to their behaviour and usage patterns of SNSs. Our results indicated the existence of 4 segments of SNSs users, contributing to the discussion on SNSs usage and customer segmentation extending the relevant literature and providing useful insights for marketers in planning social media marketing innovative strategies.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing; Social networking sites; SNSs patterns of usage; Segments ; Greece.

1. Introduction

Social Media (SM) and Social Networking Sites (SNSs) have become the epicentre of attention during the last 15 years as their exponential spread have made them an indispensable part of everyday life for individuals, businesses and organisations, with applications ranging from seeking and providing information to business, to socialization and entertainment. Kwon and Wen [2] reflecting these uses have defined SNS as “a web-based service which is based on certain meaningful and valuable relationships including friendship, kinship, interests, and activities, and which allows individuals to network for a variety of purposes including sharing information, building and exploring relationships, and so on”.

The significance and the implications of SNSs and SM usage, for business communication with customers and for innovative marketing strategies are
described by [3], and [4]. With more than 1.5 billion users worldwide Facebook for example is considered to be an important media that influences significantly peoples’ way of living, attitudes and behaviour. Notwithstanding the immense growth and interest in Social Media and Social Networking Sites across the world, little research has been done concerning the ways users are using them. The majority of current research in this field regards US [5] and only recently there has been some empirical work on surveying and analysing consumer behaviour and segmentation in social networking sites for other countries around the world [6]. The importance of examining countries other than the US is also highlighted by the Comscore survey [7] for digital trends in Europe, as US is no longer the centre of the digital world, being surpassed by the Asia-Pacific region and Europe. For Greece despite the crisis, usage of SNSs and social media has risen during the last years, as a way for people to communicate, to express or entertain themselves, with no substantial cost. 

Despite the high levels of usage of SNSs in Greece only a few research has been done on exploring the profiles of users. In this paper we are using the the typology developed by [1] to explore the patterns of SNSs usage of students in the TEI of Western Macedonia and to identify specific segments of users. 535 students of 18-24 years old age, were asked to fill in a questionnaire with two modules. The one module included 18 questions concerning the ways they are using SNS. The results we obtained, showed 4 major patterns of using SNSs and social media, categorising college students of the institution in 4 main segments with distinct usage profiles.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 offers a review on the statistics of SNSs usage in Greece and also on the literature on the typologies and the motivations of using SNSs along with some empirical research on segmentation of SNSs usage in other countries. Section 3 presents the characteristics of the examined sample. In Section 4 the results of the principal component and cluster analysis are presented and the characteristics of the 4 segments are being discussed. Finally, Section 5 concludes the paper commenting on marketing implications for practitioners and suggestions for further research.

2. Typologies and motives of SNSs usage and segmentation.

Academic research and everyday practice has documented the importance of Social media and SNSs, during the last 10 years [8] [3], as their explosive development, along with increased internet access capabilities and the extended use of mobile devices (tablets, smartphones), influence more and more people of all socio-demographic groups in all countries around the world, changing our everyday life. Firms are investing heavily in social media to communicate and increase consumers’ engagement, through the creation of pages, accounts and channels in SNSs [9], and managers are investing heavily in their firms’ presence in social media and social media marketing [10], in a number of industries from products to services and tourism [11] [12].

Numerous studies and statistics also suggest that students and young persons in the age of 18-24, the ones usually called millennials are the ones who use SNSs the most [7]. This is also the case for SNSs and social media usage in Greece as the rate of internet access and usage has grown to 71.4%, for the total population and 98.5% of young people of 18-24 years old use internet. 93.5% of these young people use internet every day for an average of 187 minutes [13], that accounts for more than 3 hours a day. According to the latest survey conducted by [14] YouTube remains the most popular SNS in Greece with 93% of usage, while Facebook is second with 82% and LinkedIn third with 58%. As far as Facebook is concerned two patterns of usage
were identified: a) active where users play games, communicate and promote their opinions) and b) passive where users watch videos and advertisements and get informed about news and friends.

The reasons that make people use SNSs and social media has been examined thoroughly by a number of studies. Hoffman and Novac [15], have proposed a theoretical framework for the goals achieved by people while using social media and SNSs, based on the interaction users have. They have identified 2 dimensions namely interaction with content, that includes creation and consumption of content, and the focus of the interaction that includes connecting with people and controlling applications. Kietzman et al. [16] in their influential paper suggested seven functional reasons that define the usage of social media and SNSs namely: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups, in a framework that is widely known as the “honeycomb of social media”.

Literature reports a number of typologies on the reasons and the ways that people use SNSs. Kozinets [17] in his seminal work on segmentation in virtual communities, described usage patterns of early SNSs, and suggested an online user typology based on the degree of consumption activity by the members of the virtual community and the intensity of relationships with the other members of the community. Hughes et al. [18] researched the effect that personality has to to SNSs usage, and more specifically for Facebook and Twitter, for online socialising and information seeking/exchange, and found the existing relationship not to be as influential as some previous research suggested. Their results demonstrated that differences in preference and usage between Facebook and Twitter were associated with differences in personality, reflecting the different nature of the two SNSs. One of the most important factor for the continued use of SNSs is enjoyment and entertainment [19], followed by number of friends using SNSs, and usefulness in communicating with other people and the easiness in acquiring information.

As students are the main users of social networking websites [20] it is important to identify more specifically the reasons they are using SNSs. Especially for students Park et al. [21] conducted a factor analysis in order to specify the main motivations and reasons that drive students to use and participating in groups within Facebook and identified the following: socializing, entertainment, self status seeking and information retrieval. According to [22] students use SNSs and more particularly Facebook in order to communicate, entertain, and interact, reinforcing by this way their social presence. DeAndrea et al. [23] indicated that SNSs usage increased students' perceptions of having a diverse social support network during their first semester at college, helping them to adjust faster in the new environment. Giannakos et al. [24] examined 222 Facebook users in Greece, and designated four main reasons that drive people using Facebook: Social Connection, Social Network Surfing, Wasting Time and Using Applications.

Clustering, or segmentation, is used in order to explore patterns of similarity or dissimilarity in different types of consumers and is very important for marketers and marketing related decision making process [25]. Segmentation has been an important tool for marketing and can be achieved using various methods from the traditional statistical methods of factor and cluster analysis to more innovative methods like dynamic simulation models [26]. The identification of patterns of SNSs usage facilitates the recognition of segments of users, and can play a crucial role in formulating and implementing strategic marketing decisions [27].
Using the framework suggested by [17] users of virtual communities were classified into four categories of members: a) Tourists: users who simply drop by the community every now and then with only superficial interest and few social ties, b) Minglers: users who maintain strong social ties while being marginally interested in consumption activity, c) Devotees: users who maintain a strong interest in consumption but have few social attachments, e) Insiders: users who have strong social ties and a strong interest in consumption activity.

Constantinides et al. [28] suggested a segmentation typology based on the experience the users have in SNSs, the interaction patterns with other users and socio-demographic variables of 400 individuals in the Netherlands. They concluded in four segments namely: a) Beginners, b) Habitual Users, c) Outstanding Users and d) Experts. Lorenzo-Romero et al. [29] using the same methodology identified 3 major types of users: a) Introvert, b) Versatile and c) Expert Communicators.

Brandtzæg and Heim [1] developed a typology that is based on a two axis diagram namely, participation and frequency of use (low-high), and purpose (informational or recreational). The application of this typology for 2,000 users of 4 Norwegian SNSs, identified 5 segments of users: a) Sporadics that visit the site only from time to time, but not a frequent basis, and have a low level of participation high levels of informational-communication purpose, b) Lurkers that is the the largest category and score low in participation (passive) and high in recreation – kill time, c) Socialisers that are characterized by recreational in terms of ‘small talk’ with others and finding new friends, and high levels of participation, d) Debaters that are as high as socialisers in terms of participation level, and that are characterized by being highly involved in discussions, reading, and writing contributions in general and finally e) Actives that are engaged in almost all kinds of participation activities within the site.

### 3. Sample characteristics

In our research the framework proposed by [1], is used in order to identify patterns of usage and segments of SNSs users in Greece and more specifically in College students aged 18-24. Data were collected with the usage of a questionnaire over a two-week period in March 2015. Respondents of the current study were all college students of TEI of Western Macedonia. College students are an easy segment of consumers to survey [30], especially for research concerning internet and SNSs as they have easy access to internet and they are more exposed to social media and SNSs, especially in Greece [13]. Also Saxena & Khanna [31] highlight two more reasons for using college students as a population for research. First, a sample consisted only of students is more homogeneous in terms of socio-demographic and economic background, and second a number of studies and recent statistics have reported that students are the main users of social networking websites as was also referred in Section 2 of this paper.

Questionnaires were distributed among a random sample of 535 undergraduate students including students from all 4 Schools of the Institution during a two week period in March 2015 and only 23 (4.29%) did not answer or were excluded for the analysis as outliers. The respondents had to answer a number of questions related to SNSs as in which SNSs the have accounts, how much time they are engaged with them, how many friends they have and with what kind of device are they mostly connected to them (e.g. smartphone, laptop computer, tablet, desktop computer) and 18 questions concerning respondents’ activities in SNSs with a 7-point Likert scale, describing the frequency these activities are performed from 1= “Never” to 7= “Always”.

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The sample consists of 274 (53.5%) male respondents, and 238 (46.5%) female respondents, and the majority of them, 345 (67.6%), are in the group age 18-21 years old. The field of study of the respondents of the sample is representative of the general population of the students of the Institution with the School for Applied Sciences to account for the 45.9% of the sample, followed by the School of Business and Finance (42.5%), the School of Agriculture Technology, Food Technology and Nutrition (6.8%) and finally the School of Health and Welfare (4.8%). The breakdown of the sample on the Departments of the institution is depicted in Figure 1.

In Figure 2 the most popular and the most frequently used SNS across the sample is illustrated. The vast majority of the respondents (94.7%) has a Facebook account, and in the second place, YouTube appears with 52%. Google+ follows with 48%, and in the fourth place, Instagram with 37.3%. Instagram usage however is expected to rise in the future as it is now inter connected with Facebook.

LinkedIn and Twitter are not preferred by college students of our sample. A LinkedIn account is owned by only 12.1%, and 34.40% has Twitter account. This is
surprising as young people, notwithstanding the crisis and the high levels of unemployment do not seem to use SNSs that would help them find a job, or promote their CVs and skills to potential employers [32]. Finally, only 10.4% of the respondents has a Pinterest account, while other SNSs as Flickr, Tumblr have negligible presence in our sample.

Facebook is also the first choice of usage for the 82% of the respondents followed by YouTube with 6.8% and “Instagram” with 3.9%. It worth noting that Twitter is not popular at all among the respondents of our research, and that YouTube does not seem to be considered as a SNS, hence the low percentage of popularity in the frequency of usage in contradiction of the results of [14]. Instagram is also very low in the preferences of the respondents but that should change in the following years as Facebook and Instagram are now closely linked and Instagram is gaining ground, posing challenges for social media marketers in the years to come.

An important finding concerning our sample is the time spent on SNSs. 38.7% spends 1-3 hours in SNSs, 25.2% 3-5 hours, and 18.0% more than 5 hours. Another characteristic that should draw the attention and the efforts of marketers and practitioners concerning social media marketing, content creation and advertising, is that 82.4% of the students that participated in our research used mobile devices (smartphones 40.4%, Laptop computer 35.5% and Tablet 6.4%) to connect to SNSs.

4. SNSs users’ segments

As it has been mentioned in the previous chapter, a series of questions have also been asked in order to investigate the respondents’ activities in Social Media, in order to determine different types of them. 18 main usages were identified following the relevant literature [28] [1] [19] [24] [33].

The questions about the usage of SNSs and the main statistics for the responses are given in Table 1. The reliability of the scales used to evaluate the internal consistency of the constructs was evaluated with the use of the Cronbach’s alpha which value must be higher than 0.70 [34]. The result showed that Cronbach’s alpha in our subset of questions examined is 0.785> 0.70, which is characterized as good and acceptable value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participate in website polls.</td>
<td>2.381</td>
<td>1.381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add labels and tags in photos (e.g. Facebook, Instagram etc)</td>
<td>3.853</td>
<td>1.863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in online forums and discussion groups.</td>
<td>2.609</td>
<td>1.596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use RSS Feeds.</td>
<td>1.867</td>
<td>1.377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I participate and contribute in wiki-sites.</td>
<td>2.123</td>
<td>1.520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I write comments and review for products or services</td>
<td>2.627</td>
<td>1.649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read Blog posts.</td>
<td>4.564</td>
<td>1.617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I comment Blog posts.</td>
<td>2.580</td>
<td>1.707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I write posts in my personal blog.</td>
<td>2.508</td>
<td>1.826</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I upload videos in YouTube, Vimeo etc. & 2.148 & 1.798
I watch videos in YouTube, Vimeo, Daylimotion etc. & 5.848 & 1.248
I am searching for work positions (e.g. in LinkedIn etc). & 2.318 & 1.737
I write comments on my friends’ profiles. & 4.598 & 1.845
I update my personal profile on Facebook. & 4.373 & 1.952
I am searching for new friends & 3.017 & 1.672
I update my status on Twitter. & 1.887 & 1.712
I check if somebody has tried to contact me. & 4.047 & 1.941
I play online games. & 3.732 & 1.975

The answers for these 18 questions were processed in order to identify underlying factors that explain the correlations and communalities among a set of variables [35]. Principal Components Analysis was used and the factors were rotated to ease interpretation with the Varimax rotation method, that is the most frequently used with survey data, as it results in more interpretable and relevant factors [36].

In order to assess homogeneity of variables, and the appropriateness of factor analysis the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) was calculated. High values (between 0.6 and 1.0) indicate that the factor is relevant and the indicators of the construct belong together [35]. For the respondents of our survey the KMO=0.829>0.800, a value that is considered to be ‘meritorious’. Also the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity is highly significant (p=0.000< 0.050), and therefore our factor analysis finding are appropriate.

In Table 2 the Initial eigenvalue and the total variance explained are presented. After undergoing the Factor Analysis, using the Principal Component Analysis and the Varimax Rotation Method with Kaiser Normalization, four factors appeared with eigenvalues bigger than 1.000, explaining a total variance of 53.070%. These four components identified will be used in order to identify the four factors that represent the main categories (factors) of usage of SNSs for college students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Initial Eigenvalues</th>
<th>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
<th>Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% of Variance</td>
<td>Cumulative %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.754</td>
<td>15.302</td>
<td>38.787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.328</td>
<td>7.380</td>
<td>46.167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.962</td>
<td>5.346</td>
<td>58.415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.853</td>
<td>4.738</td>
<td>63.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.813</td>
<td>4.516</td>
<td>67.669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.787</td>
<td>4.370</td>
<td>72.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.712</td>
<td>3.954</td>
<td>75.993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.689</td>
<td>3.827</td>
<td>79.820</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Table 3, the Rotated Component Matrix reports the factor loadings for each variable. Variable scores that were high and significant are highlighted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Debating</th>
<th>Socializing</th>
<th>Expression</th>
<th>Entertainment seeking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participate in website polls.</td>
<td>0.701</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add labels and tags in photos (e.g. Facebook, Instagram etc)</td>
<td>-0.054</td>
<td>0.763</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>-0.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in online forums and discussion groups.</td>
<td>0.712</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td>0.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use RSS Feeds.</td>
<td>0.649</td>
<td>-0.056</td>
<td>0.151</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I participate and contribute in wikisites.</td>
<td>0.719</td>
<td>-0.082</td>
<td>0.154</td>
<td>-0.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I write comments and review for products or services</td>
<td>0.691</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.253</td>
<td>-0.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read Blog posts.</td>
<td>0.515</td>
<td>0.277</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>0.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I comment Blog posts.</td>
<td>0.677</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>0.279</td>
<td>-0.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I write posts in my personal blog.</td>
<td>0.278</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.672</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I upload videos in YouTube, Vimeo etc.</td>
<td>0.117</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>0.675</td>
<td>0.148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I watch videos in YouTube, Vimeo, Daylimotion etc.</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.195</td>
<td>-0.066</td>
<td>0.705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am searching for work positions (e.g. in LinkedIn etc).</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>0.635</td>
<td>-0.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I write comments on my friends’ profiles.</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>0.818</td>
<td>0.125</td>
<td>0.124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I update my personal profile on Facebook.</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>0.838</td>
<td>0.098</td>
<td>0.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am searching for new friends</td>
<td>0.176</td>
<td>0.702</td>
<td>-0.070</td>
<td>-0.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I update my status on Twitter.</td>
<td>0.450</td>
<td>0.352</td>
<td>-0.159</td>
<td>-0.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I check if somebody has tried to contact me.</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>0.605</td>
<td>-0.071</td>
<td>0.240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I play online games.</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.777</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four components of SNSs usage (patterns) that has been identified are the following:

- **Debating**: participate in website polls - online forums and discussions groups, participate and contribute in Wikis (crowdsourcing), use RSS feed, write reviews on products and services, reading blogs and posting comments, and finally tweeting.
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- **Socializing**: add labels and tag photos in Facebook and Instagram, comment friends’ profiles, update personal profile on Facebook, search for new friends, and finally contact and communicate with friends.

- **Expression**: write blog posts, upload videos in YouTube, Vimeo, DailyMotion etc., and searching for a job in LinkedIn.

- **Entertainment seeking**: video watching activities and playing online games.

In order to identify the segments and the profiles of the students, apart from the 4 main components produced by the principal component analysis, that are given in Table 3, 6 more variables were introduced in the segmentation procedure. These variables examine among else, the device students use mostly to connect to SNSs and the existence of an account in the main 5 SNSs (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google + and Instagram) etc. The *Two Step Clustering* method has been chosen, since the variables used to perform the segmentation are measured on different scales [37].

The Silhouette measure of cohesion and separation have shown that our Cluster Quality can be described as fair, and four clusters were identified. Cluster 1 contains the 18.94% of the respondents, cluster 2 the 31.84%, cluster 3 the 24.61%, and finally cluster 4 the 24.61%. Also the ratio of sizes between the largest cluster (Cluster 2) and the smallest Cluster (Cluster1) is 1.68. This is a good sign for the newly created clusters, as it is preferred that this cluster ration to be less than 3.00.

These segments are named as a) Actives, b) Recreationalists, c) Socializers-Debaters, d) Sporadics. In Figure 3 the mean value for the four components on each segment is presented.

![Mean Values of Components for each segment](image)

Figure 3. Mean Values of Components for each segment

The first identified segment accounts for the 18.9% of the total respondents. Those students prefer to connect to SNSs from their laptop computer, since they are
actively participating in all activities available on SNSs. They have accounts to all the major social networks (such as: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+ and Instagram) and they are mostly Debating or Entertainment seekers. They also use SNSs for communication with friends and secondarily for socialization. Trend setters and innovators can be found in this cluster since they are engaged in all activities of social media. For these reasons they can be labeled as “Actives”, because these users are engaged in almost all kinds of participation activities within the community.

The second segment includes the 31.8% of the total respondents, making it the largest one of the four. Students belonging in this segment mostly access social media and SNSs through their mobile device (smartphones), and they mostly have Facebook, YouTube and Google + accounts. Instagram is not very popular in this segment, and no member of this group has a Twitter account. Their activities show they mostly prefer to seek for entertainment through SNSs. Those users are characterized as “Recreationalists” since they mainly participate in activities that are mostly related to recreation, and enjoy to follow an online discussion without participating. For that reason, Brandtzæg & Heim [1] characterized them as “lurkers”. These users are also somehow involved in other activities as well, but only passively or to a very small degree.

The third segment comprises of the 24.6% of the respondents who have in common the extended use of mobile devices and especially mobile phones. They mostly have Facebook accounts and they usually have Twitter and Instagram accounts, but not YouTube. Their main activity involves socializing and getting in touch with their friends, as well as meeting new friends, hence they can be characterized as “Socializers”. However, they also display high mean values in the debating component as well, and can also be characterized as “Debaters”, as they actively participate in discussions, reading, and writing contributions in general. In this segment it is very possible to find opinion leaders that can influence the opinions and the perceptions of other members of the community and friends, concerning brands or purchasing decisions. The name that will be given to this segment is “Socializers and Debaters”. Our findings are in contradiction with [1], who categorized them as two separate segments, as in our research seems to be a single cluster, probably due to the different sociological definitions and perceptions of socializing and debating in different countries and societies [38].

The last segment accounts for the 24.6% of the respondents, and consists of users that do not have accounts in other social media apart from Facebook, except YouTube. They prefer to connect via their laptop computer and use SNSs sporadically, and for this reason we name this segment as “Sporadics” because they visit the communities only from time to time, and not in a frequent basis. This pattern of SNSs’ usage makes these users hard to reach for social media marketers.

An interesting finding also arises from the investigation of the demographics and other characteristics of the respondents for each. There is no relationship between age, gender, field of study or the time students spend in SNSs, and the segment they belong to. All Chi-square tests conducted showed that there has not been a statistically important differentiation as to whether for example students in the field of business and economics belong primarily to the “actives” segment. Students seem to behave and use SNSs as students of 18-24 years old, and that should be taken under consideration by marketers.
5. Conclusions

The rapid development of SNSs, easiness of access through mobile devices, and their high level of penetration in young users (18-24 years old), makes them a valuable and necessary part of modern marketing mix, that no marketer can ignore them. Despite their importance there are still only few quantitative and qualitative studies that investigate the usage of SNSs, and classify users into segments based on their behavior and patterns of usage.

As Social media and SNSs keep affecting every aspect of our everyday life, new opportunities are created for marketers, especially during periods of crisis, where marketing budgets will be lower, and higher levels of ROI will be required, like the ones achieved by social media marketing programs will be required [39] [40] [41]. The findings of this paper build on and expand previous work on segmentation of SNSs usage in Greece [24] [42] contributing in the understanding of the usage of SNSs by Greek college students, by providing evidence for the behavior of young consumers in an environment of extreme financial and economic crisis, extending the relevant literature, by testing an already proven and examined typology in a different social and cultural environment.

The identification of four segments of users is in accordance with relevant literature, [1] and provides useful insights for marketers to tailor more efficient social media marketing campaigns, targeting specific consumers, in order to increase brand awareness and their engagement. For example, “Recreationalists” can be attracted with entertaining and creative content, such as funny or original images and videos, or with online games, through advergaming and gamification [43]. Another important finding is the penetration of SNSs in mobile devices and mostly smartphones, as 2 out of the 4 segments primarily use smartphones to connect in SNSs, and therefore marketers should step up their efforts on providing content tailored for mobile devices. Finally, it is important to note that 1 out of 4 consumers of this socio-demographic group use sporadically SNSs so marketers should spend more in social media marketing campaigns in order to communicate their message to them, or to carefully manage their integrated marketing communication mix by also using more traditional media.

As social media and SNSs environment is changing rapidly so would the identified segments of this research. Therefore, research in this field of study should be expanded to include other socio-demographic groups apart from students, since more people are using SNSs every day. It would also be beneficial to conduct this research for longer periods of time, in order to provide a dynamic view on the effect that changes in technology, economy, and consumer behavior have in SNSs usage and the segments formed. Further research should focus on the interactions between segments and their members, and the way they affect their behavior and their patterns of usage of SNSs and the social capital accumulated for both users and brands within segments. Additionally, more variables can be included in our analysis, such as attitudes towards advertising in social media and social media marketing, the effect social media have on purchase decisions etc., extending thus the scope of our present research, and providing marketers with useful information to formulate and implement innovative marketing strategies.
References


