



Cultural difference in motivations for using social network sites: A comparative study of American and Korean college students

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ABSTRACT

While the explosive growth of social network sites is a common phenomenon across many countries, the ways people use them and their reasons for doing so may differ depending on their social and cultural milieu, for fundamental values are divergent from culture to culture. This study is an attempt to examine how cultural contexts shape the use of communication technology by examining the motives for and patterns of using social network sites among college students in the US and Korea. The findings of this study suggest that the major motives for using social network sites – seeking friends, social support, entertainment, information, and convenience – are similar between the two countries, though the weights placed on these motives are different. Reflecting the unique social nature of the medium, Korean college students put more weight on obtaining social support from existing social relationships, while American students place relatively greater emphasis on seeking entertainment. Additionally, American college students' networks in an online social venue are far larger than their Korean counterparts, which may reflect the cultural difference between the two countries regarding developing and managing social relationships.

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1. Introduction

As a new venue for relationship formation and maintenance, SNSs have attracted numerous users around the globe. For example, Facebook and MySpace, which both originated in the US, served more than 117 million and 55 million US visitors, respectively, in 2009, and they continue to gain popularity throughout the world (Eldon, 2010). The rapid growth of SNSs on a global scale has been concurrent with the development of many SNSs that cater to their local audiences. For example, Cyworld, a Korea-based SNS, enjoys 23 million members in 2009 (Goh, 2009) – more than a third of the entire Korean population – while Japan's Mixi has 26.8 million members in 2010 (Advertising Age, 2010). Underlying this ever-increasing popularity of SNSs is the fact that this social medium enables its users to connect to others within their social and geographic proximity, as well as beyond it. SNSs provide a convenient way not only to manage existing social relationships, but also to build new relationships with many others, including even total strangers.

The unique social nature and mounting popularity of SNSs has led academic scholars to investigate why people use SNSs – the motivations underlying the use of social media (Brandtzæg & Heim, 2009; Jung, Youn, & McClung, 2007; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). One of the theoretical approaches to understanding motives for using new media is the uses-and-gratifications perspective, which explains the way people adopt and use communication media as a function of their psychological needs and the gratifications they seek (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Lin, 1999; Rubin, 1994). While several studies have explored the motives for using SNSs from the uses-and-gratifications perspective (Brandtzæg & Heim, 2009; Jung et al., 2007; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008), most of them have focused on a single country (e.g., the US, Korea, or Norway), which limits the validity and applicability of their findings in cross-cultural contexts.

The global expansion of SNSs seems to mirror the inherent desire people all have in common – the desire to relate to others, which transcends geographical, social, and cultural borders (Levitt, 1983; Park & Jun, 2003). This commonality, however, often overshadows the fact that computer-mediated communication does not occur in a cultural void, but depends on a social and cultural milieu wherein individuals acquire the fundamental values and norms that shape their social behaviors (de Mooij, 1998; Halavais, 2000; Recabarren, Nussbaum, & Leiva, 2008). Accordingly, the motivations underlying the use of SNSs and social interaction via

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SNSs may differ across cultures, for mediated communication in SNSs also reflects the dominant values and codes of the culture from which users originate (Boyd, 2008). For instance, Kim and Yun (2007), based on in-depth interviews with Cyworld users, suggested that the social relationships and parlance that Koreans maintain in a SNS mirror the governing interpersonal norms and communication styles specific to Korea's collectivistic and high-context culture. Similarly, other studies found cultural differences in the growing forms of computer-mediated communication on SNSs, namely deceptive behavior in SNSs between the US and Korea (Lewis & George, 2008) and SNS architectural structures between Facebook and Mixi (Fogg & Iizawa, 2008). Lewis and George (2008) identified the differences of Koreans and Americans in terms of propensity and topics of deception in both face-to-face and computer-mediated-communication on SNSs – Cyworld and MySpace. In general, Koreans were more apt to employ deception than Americans and Koreans tended to lie about their job, salary, and physical appearance, whereas Americans were apt to lie about where they lived, age, and interests (Lewis & George, 2008). In addition, Fogg and Iizawa (2008) compared the SNS architecture and interface between Facebook and Mixi. While both sites have the same goal of persuading users to create personal profiles, inviting friends, respond to others, and return to site often, their services are designed differently: Facebook interface is designed for users to take quick action by providing direct and assertive notifications to users, whereas Mixi's approach is subtle and indirect, which leads longer time to achieve similar results than those of Facebook (Fogg & Iizawa, 2008).

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to showcase the role of culture in computer-mediated communication by exploring and comparing the motives for and ways of using SNSs among college students between two different cultural contexts: the United States and Korea. Both countries are technologically advanced, with the widespread adoption of the Internet and SNSs, but they exhibit a sharp contrast in cultural orientations. Over 74% of the US population (252 million) and 77% of the Korean population (36 million) use the Internet (Internet World Stats, 2009), and approximately one third of the respective populations are unique visitors to SNSs, which represents the number of unduplicated visitors to the site in a specified time frame (Joffe & Yeom, 2006; Ostrow, 2007). In addition, these two countries are diametrically different in key cultural dimensions such as individualism/collectivism and high/low context (Cho, Up, Gentry, Jun, & Kropp, 1999; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986; Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1984; Taylor, Miracle, & Wilson, 1997).

2. Theoretical background and research questions

2.1. Motives for using SNSs

In examining new media adoption and use, uses-and-gratifications perspective provides a useful conceptual framework (for a brief summary of the uses-and-gratification studies, see Roy, 2009). The key premise of use-and-gratifications perspective is that individuals' media use is motivated by a set of psychological needs. Based on its fundamental assumption that people are active and goal directed in their media uses, the uses-and-gratifications perspective explains that people purposefully select certain media and content for consumption in order to satisfy their psychological needs (Katz et al., 1974).

As the Internet has become integrated into the fabric of everyday life, many researchers have applied the uses-and-gratifications approach to the Internet context and how they differ from the motives for traditional media (Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999; Lin, 1999; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Rodgers & Sheldon, 2002; Roy, 2009; Ruggiero, 2000; Stafford, Stafford, &

Schkade, 2004). Although some differences are observed across specific Internet applications, the basic motivations underlying the use of the Internet are generally similar, including information, convenience, entertainment, and social interaction (Ko et al., 2005; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). That is, people use Internet technologies to access information, obtain leisure, and communicate with others in a convenient manner. In addition to the motives for using the Internet in general, research on virtual communities lends additional insight into the potential motives of SNS users, because the network of private blogs found in SNSs can be regarded as a form of virtual community (Sohn & Leckenby, 2007; Wellman, 2001).

Studies have indicated that people join a virtual community primarily for seeking information, social support, friendship, and recreation, and among these social support and friendship are the most central motives (Ridings and Gefen, 2004). Similarly, people may use SNSs to obtain information, social/emotional support, and a sense of belonging, encouragement and companionship not only from existing social relationships, but also from newly developed relationships based on similar interests, tastes and goals (Wellman & Gulia, 1999). In this sense, the motivations for using the Internet and virtual community identified by prior research are largely applicable to SNSs.

To understand how and why individuals use SNSs, several researchers have explored motives for using SNSs based on the uses-and-gratifications framework. For example, Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) examined individuals' uses-and-gratifications for popular SNSs in the US, and found that the main reasons for using Facebook and MySpace were to meet "friends" and to seek "information". Likewise, Jung et al. (2007) identified six reasons for using Cyworld in Korea: entertainment, self-expression, professional advancement, passing time, communication with family and friends, and trends. Recently, Brandtzæg and Heim (2009) suggested four primary motives for using the four most popular SNSs (i.e., Underskog, Nettby, HamarUngdom, and Biip) in Norway: information, entertainment, social interaction, and personal identity. Among these motives, social interaction was found to be the most important reason for using SNSs (Brandtzæg & Heim, 2009). Although the findings from these studies illuminate the key motives for using SNSs, most of them have focused on the context of a single country, and little is known about the applicability and generalizability of the findings to other cultural contexts.

2.2. Dimensions of cross-cultural differences

As individuals internalize the norms, rules, and values in a society, they come to share perceptions of their social environments, which results in an almost automatic processing of what behaviors are desirable or should be avoided (Hofstede, 1984). We often refer to this shared perception of social environment as *culture*, which shapes the way individuals behave, interact, and build relationships with others (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Hofstede, 2001). The role of culture in communication has been frequently studied through the comparison of two prototype cultures – *individualism* vs. *collectivism* (Aaker & Maheswaran, 1997; Hofstede, 1980; Moon & Franke, 2000; Srite & Karahanna, 2006). Collectivistic cultures, characterized by family integrity, in-group membership, and strong solidarity, place emphasis on interdependence among people. Conversely, individuals consider themselves to be independent (Triandis, 2001) in individualistic cultures where self-reliance, competition, distance from in-groups, and hedonism are valued (Mills & Clark, 1982). Asian cultures such as China and Korea, which have a Confucian background, exhibit higher levels of collectivism, while individualism is more commonly observed in Western cultures such as the US (Cho et al., 1999; Hofstede, 1984).

The difference in value orientation between the two prototype cultures (i.e., individualism vs. collectivism) influences individuals' communication styles (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). According to Hall (1976), communication styles can be classified into two types, based on how much knowledge individuals participating in interactions are presumed to share: *high-context* vs. *low-context* communication. High-context communication tends to be implicit, indirect, and abstract, as "most of the information is already either in the physical context or internalized in the person while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message," (Hall, 1976, p. 91). In contrast, low-context communication is dependent mostly on the information being expressed in an explicit and direct way. Previous research suggests that low-context communication is predominant in individualistic cultures, while high-context communication occurs in collectivistic cultures (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Gudykunst et al., 1996).

The contrast between these two prototypical cultures is manifested especially in the way individuals develop and manage social relationships. In a collectivistic culture, people tend to attach value to group identity, with a strong tendency to build lifetime relationships (de Mooij, 1998; Parks & Floyd, 1996), whereas an individualistic culture highlights independence, resulting in fragmented and short-term relationships among one another (Hall, 1976; Taylor et al., 1994). This cultural difference in building and managing social relationships may also differentiate how individuals perceive and use social media. A recent study of Internet users in the US and Hong Kong reported that respondents from Hong Kong, a collectivistic culture, tended to view the Internet as a means of social interaction, whereas Americans, from an individualistic culture, were more likely to use the Internet as a device for seeking and gaining information (Chau, Cole, Massey, Montoya-Weiss, & O'Keefe, 2002). Along this line, individuals in different cultural contexts may utilize SNSs with different motives, reflecting their prevalent cultural values.

It is also conceivable that the motives for using communication media, which are largely shaped by cultural contexts, influence the patterns of using the media (i.e., amount of use and duration of use) and attitudes toward the site (Garramone, Harris, & Anderson, 1986; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). Researchers in computer-mediated communications have found that patterns of media use (i.e., amount of use) are linked to more positive attitudes towards computers and higher levels of learning (Perse, Buron, Kovner, Lears, & Sen, 1992), as well as to personal identity satisfaction (Garramone et al., 1986). Papacharissi and Rubin (2000), for example, have found that those who used the Internet to fulfill the need for interpersonal relationships tended to use the Internet the most. Other studies have looked into the differences in usage patterns among heavy and light Internet users based on the set of gratifications obtained (Kargaonkar & Wolin, 1999; Roy, 2009). While past research into Internet uses-and-gratifications has found a relationship between motives and behavioral outcomes, little is known about this relationship in the context of SNSs across cultures. Given the notion that different motives based on different cultures may result in different patterns of using SNSs (i.e., amount of use and number of friends) and attitudes toward SNSs, the two main research questions of this study are as follows:

Research Question 1: Are there differences in the identified motives for using SNSs between American and Korean college students?

Research Question 2: Are there differences in the relationships of the identified motives for using SNSs to the usage patterns (i.e., amount of use and number of friends) and to attitudes toward SNSs between American and Korean college students?

3. Research method

3.1. Sample and procedure

Our study sample ($N = 589$) consisted of American and Korean undergraduate students who registered at large universities in their respective countries. A total of 349 undergraduate students enrolled in campus-wide elective classes and introductory advertising classes at a large southwestern university in the US, and 240 undergraduates enrolled in campus-wide electives or introductory communication classes at five different universities located in metropolitan areas in Korea participated in the study. American respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 24 years, with an average age of 20, and Korean participants were 23 years old on average, ranging from 18 to 28. Among the American respondents, 263 (75.1%) were female and 87 (24.9%) were male, whereas 131 (54.6%) males and 109 (45.4%) females comprised the Korean sample. Over 60% of the American participants were Caucasians (217), followed by Asian-Americans (46, 13%), Hispanic-Americans (45, 12.9%), African-Americans (13, 3.7%), international (12, 3.4%), multi-national (7, 2%), and other (9, 2.6%), whereas the Korean sample was ethnically homogeneous.

3.2. Measures

The self-administered survey was originally created in English. It was translated to Korean and then back-translated into English by two Korean bilingual individuals to assure comparability. The questionnaire consisted of four primary sections. In the first section, the use of SNSs was measured. First, respondents were asked to select a SNS that they visit most frequently from a top SNS list (Nielson/NetRatings, 2006). Next, two measures were used to examine the extent to which respondents used the SNS of their choice: (1) amount of use per day (i.e., how many hours per day on average they use the SNS) and (2) duration of use (i.e., how long they have used the SNS). Lastly, the numbers of contacts in the 'friends' list in various categories (i.e., family, close friends, acquaintances, and strangers) were obtained.

The second part of the questionnaire assessed the participant's overall attitude toward the SNS and the motives for using the SNS that respondents reported visiting on a regular basis. Attitude toward the SNS was assessed through items developed by Yoon, Cropp, and Cameron (2002). This portion included three items using a seven-point, semantic differential scale ranging from "unfavorable" to "favorable", "bad" to "good", and "negative" to "positive". Motives for using the SNS were examined via a five-point, Likert-type scale, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree." All of the specific items were borrowed from prior literature, including Papacharissi and Rubin's (2000) and Ko et al. (2005) Internet use motives, Ridings and Gefen's (2004) virtual community use motives, and Yoon et al. (2002) Internet portal use motives. Based on the researchers' discretion, only items that were deemed applicable to SNSs were selected and modified to fit within the context of this study, resulting in a total of 20 items (see Table 1 for the specific measures). The last part of the questionnaire contained demographic questions about age, gender, race, and school classification.

4. Results

4.1. Preliminary results: use of SNSs

Prior to examining the research questions, descriptive information on SNS usage among survey respondents from the US and Korea was obtained. Consistent with other recent reports (see Eldon,

Table 1
Principal component analysis results of social network site use motivations.

“I use social network sites to...”	M	SD	U.S. Components					M	SD	Korea Components				
			1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3	4	5
Component 1: Seeking Friends														
Meet new people.	2.74	1.34	0.93	0.02	−0.10	0.06	0.05	2.93	1.2	−0.01	0.11	0.05	−0.78	0.03
Find others like me.	2.79	1.28	0.87	−0.10	−0.04	0.12	−0.01	2.80	1.1	0.04	−0.03	−0.13	−0.90	0.03
Talk with people with the same interests and	3.07	1.23	0.86	0.02	0.11	0.01	0.02	3.20	1.1	0.06	0.03	0.16	−0.73	−0.05
Hang out with people I enjoy.	3.32	1.2	0.70	0.11	0.13	−0.14	0.13	3.69	0.9					
Component 2: Seeking Convenience														
Use it anytime, anywhere.	4.05	0.96	0.00	0.84	0.04	−0.09	−0.12	3.84	1.0	0.06	0.09	0.08	−0.11	−0.72
Use it conveniently.	3.93	0.95	0.09	0.80	0.03	0.11	0.13	3.79	0.9	0.14	0.29	0.05	0.08	−0.66
Use it easily.	4.10	0.89	−0.03	0.80	−0.01	−0.11	−0.23	3.93	0.9	0.18	0.05	0.11	−0.00	−0.78
Get what I want for less effort.	3.24	1.23	−0.04	0.52	−0.01	0.44	0.03	3.33	1.0					
Component 3: Seeking Social Support														
Let out my emotions easily to others who will	2.45	1.25	−0.03	−0.00	0.95	0.03	0.04	3.15	1.1	0.00	−0.04	0.90	0.04	−0.05
Express my anger to others who will sympathize	2.30	1.21	−0.01	−0.06	0.93	0.03	0.04	2.99	1.1	−0.06	−0.02	0.90	−0.03	−0.10
Talk out my problems and get advice.	2.46	1.23	−0.03	−0.01	0.81	0.09	−0.04	2.72	1.0	0.15	0.35	0.54	−0.01	0.38
Let others know I care about their feelings.	3.07	1.24	0.10	0.10	0.72	−0.09	−0.09	3.39	1.1	0.05	−0.20	0.53	−0.30	−0.22
Component 4: Seeking Information														
Learn about unknown things.	3.37	1.12	−0.01	0.04	−0.04	0.74	−0.24	2.92	1.1	−0.01	0.88	−0.02	−0.10	−0.13
Do research.	2.34	1.17	0.00	−0.04	0.12	0.73	0.14	3.30	1.1	−0.14	0.65	−0.04	−0.12	−0.36
Learn about useful things.	2.88	1.10	0.16	0.07	0.09	0.71	−0.04	3.08	1.0	0.02	0.83	−0.09	−0.13	−0.09
Get new ideas.	2.76	1.06	0.12	0.00	0.05	0.67	−0.12	2.93	1.0	0.05	0.78	0.07	0.13	−0.03
Component 5: Seeking Entertainment														
Forget about work or other things.	4.02	1.05	−0.06	0.07	−0.02	0.05	−0.9	3.10	1.2	0.76	0.03	0.10	−0.13	0.14
Relax.	3.77	1.07	0.02	0.09	−0.00	0.02	−0.8	3.35	1.1	0.88	−0.05	−0.09	0.04	0.00
Feel excited.	3.29	1.19	0.15	−0.08	0.13	0.07	−0.7	3.53	1.0	0.79	0.07	−0.02	−0.08	−0.09
To pass the time.	4.52	0.86						3.87	1.0	0.65	−0.06	0.00	0.06	−0.28
<i>Eigen value</i>			6.8	2.6	1.7	1.6	1.0			5.3	2.5	2.0	1.3	1.3
<i>% of Variance</i>			35.8	13.5	8.8	8.4	5.3			29.4	13.9	11.0	7.4	7.1
<i>Cumulative %</i>			35.8	49.2	58.1	66.4	72			29.4	43.3	54.3	61.7	68.9

2010), Facebook ranked as the most popular SNS that American participants used most frequently (83.4%), followed by Myspace (9.7%), YouTube (4.3%), and others (2.6%). Consistent with the findings from previous research (Kim & Yun, 2007), the most frequently reported SNS among Korean participants was Cyworld (89.6%), followed by NateOn (3.8%), Daum Planet (3.3%), and others (3.3%). While the mentioned SNSs differ in their architecture and interface, all share the “structural similarities” of “profiles, friends, and comments” (Boyd, 2008, p. 123), and the two most reported platforms, Facebook and Cyworld, are considered fairly comparable (see Kim and Yun (2007) for more information on Cyworld’s architecture).

American and Korean respondents showed a similar pattern of daily use of the SNS of their choice: on average, American respondents reported using their favorite SNS for 1.5 h, and Korean respondents used their SNS for 1 h and 40 min per day. As for the duration of SNS usage, Korean respondents have used their SNS over 3 years, whereas their American counterparts reported having used their site for about 2 years on average. While there was an 1-year difference of duration of SNSs usage between Korean and American respondents, this usage pattern seems to be similar, reflecting on the earlier launch dates of Cyworld in 2001 than those of Facebook in 2004 (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Kim & Yun, 2007). A notable difference between American and Korean respondents, however, was found in the number of connections included in their “friends” list: American respondents reported having an average number of 412 social connections ($SD = 364$), whereas their Korean counterparts had an average of 81 contacts ($SD = 69$).

To examine this pattern further, the proportion of socially close others (e.g., family and close friends) in respondents’ networks in the SNSs (i.e., the number of socially close others in a network/total number of members in a network) were calculated and compared between the two countries. While families and close friends accounted for less than a quarter of American respondents’ social networks (23.7%), the proportion of socially close others in Korean respondents’ online social networks reached 70.4%, and this difference was statistically significant ($F(1584) = 5.14$, $p < .05$). This implies that Americans may be more inclusive in their network building, because individualistic and low-context cultures highlight more casual, instrumental relationships among one another (Hall, 1976), whereas their Korean counterparts may be more exclusive in their network building, for collectivistic and high-context cultures lead to force people being deeply involved with each other with high levels of social bonds and commitment (Parks & Floyd, 1996).

4.2. Motives for using SNSs

In examining the first research question, a factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation ($\delta = 0$), the most popular among non-orthogonal rotation methods, was performed to determine what underlying structure exists for the motives for using SNSs and how they differ across the two cultures. The reason why we used the non-orthogonal rotation is because orthogonal rotation methods, such as varimax rotation, produce factors with an assumption of no correlation among them, which is quite unrealistic in that the psychological motives underlying the use of communication media are correlated in most cases (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999).

With the US sample, the factor analysis produced a five-factor solution, which was evaluated using the following criteria: eigenvalue (greater than 1.0) and the number of items (at least three items meeting a 60/40 loading criterion). The five factors explained 71.71% of the variance. As shown in Table 1, the first factor, labeled “seeking friends,” accounted for 35.77% of variance after rotation, and its four items formed a reliable scale as assessed by Cronbach’s

alpha ($\alpha = .92$). The second factor, “seeking convenience,” consisted of four items and accounted for 13.46% of variance ($\alpha = .81$). The third factor, labeled “seeking social support,” explained 8.83% of variance, and the scale with four items was found to be reliable ($\alpha = .89$). The fourth factor, “seeking information,” included four items ($\alpha = .79$) and explained 8.40% of variance. Finally, the fifth factor, “seeking entertainment,” with three items accounted for 5.27% of variance ($\alpha = .81$).

We analyzed the Korean data using the same procedure as described in the US analysis. A similar five-factor solution was obtained, which explained approximately 68.86% of the total variance. The first factor, labeled “seeking entertainment,” accounted for 29.41% of variance after rotation, and its four items formed a reliable scale as assessed by Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = .77$). The second factor, “seeking information,” consisted of four items and accounted for 13.89% of variance ($\alpha = .84$). The third factor, “seeking social support,” explained 11.00% of variance ($\alpha = .79$), and the fourth factor, “seeking friends,” explained 7.44% of variance ($\alpha = .80$). Finally, the fifth factor, “seeking convenience,” with three items accounted for 7.12% of variance ($\alpha = .79$). Results of the factor analysis for the US and Korean results are reported in Table 1. Given the acceptable reliabilities, the five motivation indices were created by averaging the corresponding items for subsequent analyses.

In examining how motives for using SNSs differ between the two cultures, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) procedure with the five motives for using SNSs as the dependent variables was conducted. Since the US respondents’ gender distribution was severely skewed (three quarters of the respondents were female), gender was employed as a covariate in this analysis. As shown in Table 2, the MANCOVA results indicate that cultural contexts significantly differentiate the use motivations for social networks (Wilks’ $\Lambda = .85$, $F(5, 582) = 20.55$, $p < .001$), with the effects of gender (Wilks’ $\Lambda = .96$, $F(5, 582) = 5.33$, $p < .001$) being controlled. Specifically, Korean participants rated significantly higher motivations for using SNSs to seek social support ($M_{\text{Korean}} = 3.01$ vs. $M_{\text{American}} = 2.55$, $F(1, 586) = 40.32$, $p < .000$) and information ($M_{\text{Korean}} = 3.08$ vs. $M_{\text{American}} = 2.82$, $F(1, 586) = 10.81$, $p < .001$), while American respondents had greater motivation for seeking entertainment ($M_{\text{American}} = 3.88$ vs. $M_{\text{Korean}} = 3.50$, $F(1, 586) = 27.09$, $p < .000$). For the motivation for convenience ($M_{\text{American}} = 3.80$; $M_{\text{Korean}} = 3.76$, $F(1, 586) = .36$, $p = \text{ns}$) and friendship ($M_{\text{American}} = 3.00$; $M_{\text{Korean}} = 3.13$, $F(1, 586) = 2.49$, $p = \text{ns}$), however, no significant differences between the two countries were found, suggesting that American and Korean respondents showed similar levels of motivation to seek convenience and friendship through SNSs. The results of the MANCOVA analysis for the US and Korea are reported in Table 3.

In examining the second research question, as shown in Table 4, multiple regressions were conducted to see if there were any differences in the relationships between the identified motives for using SNSs and the behavioral and attitudinal outcomes in the US and Korea. For the behavioral outcome of using SNSs, the amount of SNS use per day and the number of friends in subjects’ social networks were examined. In predicting the amount of daily SNS use, seeking social support ($\beta = .13$, $p < .05$), and seeking information ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$) motivations were significant predictors in

Table 2
MANCOVA results: multivariate tests.

	Wilks’ Λ	F
Gender	.96	5.33***
Nationality	.85	20.55***

*** Significant at $p < .001$.

Table 3
MANCOVA results: adjusted means and standard errors.

Motivations	US (N = 349)		Korea (N = 240)		F
	M	SE	M	SE	
Seeking friends	3.00	.05	3.13	.06	2.49
Seeking social support	2.55	.05	3.01	.07	40.32***
Seeking information	2.82	.05	3.08	.06	10.81**
Seeking entertainment	3.88	.05	3.50	.06	27.09***
Seeking convenience	3.80	.04	3.76	.05	.36

** Significant at $p < .01$.

*** Significant at $p < .001$.

the US. However, no significant predictors for the amount of SNS use per day were found for Korean participants. Therefore, American SNS users who sought to fulfill the needs of social support and information tended to use SNSs the most, while there was no significant difference in the amount of time spent using SNSs based on the needs of Korean SNS users.

In addition, the motivations for seeking social support ($\beta = -.12$, $p < .05$), seeking information ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$), and seeking entertainment ($\beta = .17$, $p < .05$) were significant predictors of the number of friends in SNSs in the US, whereas the motivation for seeking friends ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$) was the only significant predictor in Korea. This means that American SNS users with a need for social support tend to have smaller number of friends, while those who have needs for information and entertainment from using SNSs have more friends in their networks. However, in Korea, those who have a need to seek new friends in using SNSs have the largest friend networks.

For the attitudinal outcome of using SNSs, the motivations of convenience ($\beta = .14$, $p < .01$), entertainment ($\beta = .26$, $p < .01$), and friendship ($\beta = .09$, $p < .05$) were significant predictors in the US. In Korea, seeking convenience ($\beta = .30$, $p < .01$) and social support ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$) were significant predictors for attitude toward SNSs. In other words, American SNS users who seek convenience, entertainment, and new friendship seem to have a more positive attitude toward SNSs, while Korean SNS users who seek convenience and social support appear to have a more positive attitude toward SNSs.

Table 4
Multiple regression analyses for predicting usage pattern.

	U. S.				Korea			
	β	t	R ²	F	β	t	R ²	F
Amount of Use			0.11	8.78***			0.01	0.55
Seeking Friends	-0.01	-0.12			-0.06	-0.73		
Seeking Social Support	0.13	2.18*			0.05	0.70		
Seeking Information	0.15	2.37*			-0.12	-0.22		
Seeking Entertainment	0.12	1.87			-0.02	-0.20		
Seeking Convenience	0.06	0.95			0.11	1.33		
Number of Friends			0.04	3.72**			0.07	3.50**
Seeking Friends	-0.06	-0.92			0.16	2.14*		
Seeking Social Support	-0.12	-2.00*			0.08	1.01		
Seeking Information	0.14	2.04*			0.05	0.65		
Seeking Entertainment	0.17	2.54*			-0.00	-0.04		
Seeking Convenience	0.04	0.52			0.07	0.84		
Attitude toward the SNS			0.26	23.51***			0.24	14.95***
Seeking Friends	0.09	2.55*			0.00	0.01		
Seeking Social Support	0.04	1.24			0.14	2.46*		
Seeking Information	-0.07	-1.50			0.03	0.60		
Seeking Entertainment	0.26	5.55***			0.10	1.82		
Seeking Convenience	0.14	2.92**			0.30	4.50**		

* Significant at $p < .05$

** Significant at $p < .01$.

*** Significant at $p < .001$.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the motives behind using SNSs among college students in the US and Korea and investigate the differences in SNS use motives and usage behavior between the two countries. In this study, five motivations – seeking friends, social support, information, entertainment, and convenience – were identified as primary reasons for using SNSs among college students in both countries. Although the explained variances by the individual motivations differed slightly between the two countries, the overall pattern appeared to be very similar, with five identical motivations. One of the primary reasons for using SNSs was “seeking friends,” which suggests that college students in both countries actively seek to make new friends and connect with others with common interests in the cyber milieu. Obtaining “social support” from close connections was another important motive for networking via such sites. Another notable motivation, “information,” suggests that SNS users rely on social relationships as useful resources for information. Next, the “entertainment” motivation indicates that college students utilize SNSs for pleasure that might come from exchanging information, experience, or music or video clips with their social ties. Lastly, the “convenience” motivation suggests another important aspect of SNSs in understanding what makes an online social venue attractive. Perhaps due to the convenient access to a variety of communicative capabilities facilitating social connections as well as other Internet activities, college students turn to such sites as a personal hub on the Internet.

Although the motives identified across the two countries were identical, the patterns of SNS usage were found to be remarkably different. More specifically, American students' online social networks were found to be almost five times larger on average than Korean counterparts, but American and Korean students spent almost the same amount of time on average (1.5 h for American students vs. 1 h and 40 min for Korean students) on their respective SNSs. Developing and managing social networks involves the investment of resources like time and efforts, which is proportional to the size of the networks: the more people in a network, the more resources are required to maintain the network as a whole. Since the resources individuals can spend are not limitless, the increase

of network size naturally reduces the amount of resources one can spend to manage a relationship with each person in the network. The huge difference in the size of networks between American and Korean students might, therefore, result from the different ways they value relationships: American students may tend to use SNSs primarily for casual relationships (e.g., finding new friends with similar interests) with less efforts to maintain (at least in the online environment), while Korean students may tend to use SNSs for obtaining social support from existing social relationships (e.g., families and close friends), requiring deeper involvement and commitment.

This notion seems supported by additional findings of this study: socially close others (e.g., families and close friends) were only a minor part of American respondents' online social networks, while they reached 70% of Korean respondents' networks. Also, the MANCOVA results indicate that the entertainment motivation was rated significantly higher for American students compared to Korean students, while seeking information and social support were rated higher among Korean students than their American counterparts. No statistically significant differences between the two groups were found with regard to the motives for seeking friends and convenience.

Further insight was provided by the regression results. Some of the identified motives for using SNSs appeared to be significant predictors of behavioral and attitudinal outcomes of SNSs, and different patterns were found between the US and Korea. The multiple regression analysis identified two significant predictors – seeking social support and information motives – of the amount of SNS use only in the US. This means that American college students who want to fulfill social support and information needs tended to use SNSs the most, while they were not intrigued by seeking friends, entertainment, and convenience in terms of amount of SNS use. In addition, seeking social support, information, and entertainment motivations predicted the total number of friends in SNSs in the US, while the motivation of seeking friends was the only significant predictor of the number of friends in Korea. This suggests that American students often have more friends in their SNSs to get social support, information, and entertainment, while Korean students have more friends in their networks to fulfill the need of seeking new friends. Finally, the motivations of convenience, entertainment, and seeking friends in the US and convenience and social support in Korea predicted the overall positive attitude toward the SNSs. These findings highlight the cultural differences in attitude toward SNSs based on the motives of social relationship. While SNS users in individualistic, low-context cultures (i.e., the US) have more of a positive attitude toward SNSs when they seek new friends in a fun and convenient way, users in collectivistic, high-context cultures (i.e., Korea) have a favorable attitude toward the SNSs in seeking social support via a convenient tool.

In sum, the results imply that American students tend to focus more on entertaining themselves by making new friends through SNSs, while Korean students tend to focus more on existing relationships with socially close others from whom they can acquire useful information and social support. To illuminate this difference further, future research should examine explicitly the strategies individuals adopt to develop and manage their online social networks, and whether they differ across cultural contexts.

6. Implications and limitations

The findings of this study shed light on how culture plays a role in shaping college students' motives for using SNSs, which in turn influence their patterns of using them. Theoretically, this study expands uses-and-gratification perspectives to the new media – SNSs,

in a cross-cultural context – the United States and Korea. The results confirmed the influence of culture on American and Korean college students' different use motivations of SNSs and usage behavior patterns. Practically, the findings of this research suggest that SNS marketers should apply culture-specific strategies to attract more users. Specifically, marketers of SNSs are required to develop more entertainment features to attract consumers in individualistic cultures, while in collectivistic cultures, they may need to incorporate features that facilitate the exchange of social support via existing social relationships.

The results from this study also create new directions for future research. Future research should be directed to look at other cultures with diverse samples (e.g., teens, young adults not enrolled in college, or older adults), leading to new insights on the cultural impact of uses-and-gratification in SNSs on other age groups. Additional research should explore motivations and behavior for using other emerging types of social media, such as microblogging sites (e.g., Twitter) and video sharing sites (e.g., YouTube). While they are all considered to be social media, there would be some similarities and differences among Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Thus, investigating different types of social media motives and usage behavior would provide a better understanding of the uses-and-gratification in new forms of media. In addition, investigating potential antecedents of SNS motives might be important future research topics. With the interconnectivity of individual's motives to use media and their demographic, social, and psychological characteristics (Palmgreen, 1984; Rosengren, 1974), uses-and-gratification research has sought to understand how certain social and psychological factors influence new media use motives (Papa-charissi & Rubin, 2000). Therefore, including demographic information (e.g., sex, ethnicity, age, education, and income), social context (e.g., group membership and social position), and psychological variables (e.g., personality traits) in the uses-and-gratification framework would extend current study by advancing our knowledge on the motives of SNS use.

While the present study contributes to the emerging body of literature on SNS uses-and-gratifications and cross-cultural research, this study is not without limitations. While a recent industry report indicates that far more females use SNSs (Anderson Analytics, 2008; quantcast, 2009), and the gender differences were controlled in the statistical analyses of this study, the unbalanced gender ratio of the US sample, with a heavy proportion of females, might limit the generalizability of the findings in this study. Thus, a more balanced sample should be employed in future studies. Another concern that merits future research is that little practical importance found in the relationships between the motives for using SNSs and usage patterns of the sites due to the coefficients with small effect size. A plausible explanation might be lack of accuracy in measuring the self-reported, memory-based measures of network size (i.e., number of friends) and amount of time to use SNSs. Thus, additional content analysis of 'friends' lists and usage patterns of the sites may offer more accurate information that supplements the survey data. A related issue is measurement of cultural orientation. This study did not measure the level of cultural orientation of participants, but assumed the existence of cultural differences between the samples of the two countries. Thus, in a future study, it would be valuable to actually measure the respondents' level of cultural orientations, comparing the two countries to verify the real differences. Lastly, identifying additional motivations to use SNSs may yield valuable insight into the uses-and-gratification research. For example, along with social connectivity, user's self-presentation and impression management are unique characteristics of SNSs by creating and providing user-generated contents (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Thus, it may be worthwhile to investigate opinion/content-giving types of motivations of using SNSs in the future research.

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