The Study of Users' Conflict and Issues in the History of Social Networking Site: Myspace

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Abstract—Myspace has been one of the most famous social networking sites in the past, and currently there are some signals telling that it may come back to rule the social networking site industry again. The history of Myspace is necessary to explore to see what elements could make it alive and what could bring it to fall down. This study is based on the documentary analysis of qualitative research mixing with the researcher's experiences through the social networking site, Myspace. These two sources would conduct a collaborative narrative research. The results of this exploratory study would provide the ideas about how the online functions in social network affect on the emotion and the action of its users, which they might work the same way on the other social networking sites or applications.

Keywords—Myspace, Social Network, social networking site, Website, Users, Friends, Connections, Qualitative

I. INTRODUCTION

SOCIAL networking sites were defined as virtual communities offering their members the possibility to make use of their inherent Web 2.0 features, namely networking and sharing media content (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). Since the members and the owners were humans, the evolution of social networking sites became complex as the human being (Master, 2008). To understand this complexity, the best method of the study is qualitative method (Key, 1997). The qualitative research could help the researcher to understand the small scales of online communities to solve the macro problems of the whole social networking site. Likewise, the scientific problems should be analyzed sequentially, starting with the simplest elements and progressively proceeding to the more complex (Morçöl, 2012).

The qualitative research offers flexible tools for the researcher to understand the online users' perceptions, emotions, behaviors and phenomenons among the social networking sites. The researcher him/herself is also considered as a tool to study. The human should be the best tool to explore about the other humans' thought. This is the reason that this study is based on the documentary analysis of qualitative research papers and the experiences of the researcher.

Since the achievement of social networking sites is indicated by the number of unique visitors. The job of social networking sites is to earn the high number of users. Myspace had the highest number of its unique visitors during 2007-2008 with over 70 millions monthly unique visitors. In 2011, the time that it was sold for 35 million US dollars, its monthly unique visitors are 30 millions and trended to be lower in the near future (Silicon Alley Insider). The period that Myspace was owned by New Corp could be a part of social network history with three versions of default profile layouts, 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0. These three versions contained different technical functions which were influential in users' emotions and behaviors. And how the history was divided into multiple periods, the past period could give a static data which is easier to study comparing with the current running social networking sites.

Today is the age of competition of social networking sites and applications, as we could see in the advertising of social networks such Google Plus and Google Hangout, and also the high use of social networking applications on mobile device. The problem of this business is when its social networking site or application starts to decline. If the organization knows the problem and solved it in time, its social network site would exist.

All the selected papers for the phase of documentary analysis are qualitative research. The important issues about this social networking site, Myspace, could be presented in the qualitative research in the area. Two research papers per each year were required for the documentary analysis to understand things happened in each year. The results could be used to describe the evolution of the social networking site itself, the changing of users' attitudes, relationship between users, and users' emotion based on different functions of Myspace. These findings could also show the relationship between the issues and the number of monthly unique visitors.

A. Background

The researcher began the daily use of Myspace in 2006, the same year that Myspace had 66,401 million total unique

visitors (Torpey, 2011). The period of the using Myspace was 2006 to 2010 continuously. The number of friends was around 10 thousands, which showed the reputation in some music related communities. The outstanding element that the researcher had on the Myspace profile was the unique graphic design profile layout, and written with HTML and CSS code.

B. Myspace: A place for Friend

In 2000's, the time that young adults spent online was increasing, especially on the entertainment and social networking sites (Uri.sta, Dong & Day, 2009). Myspace was a famous social networking site in that period. The growth of Myspace was generated mostly by word of mouth as members began inviting more friends and acquaintances to join the site (FreeMyspace).

The main function in Myspace was that users could comment each other back and forth. The activities most often engaged in on Social Networking Sites were reading/responding to comments on their profile pages (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). Moreover, the additional services on Myspace are group, blog, bulletin, friend list and playlist (after merging with imeem.com). Group was similar to the forum or webboard which many users could talk about the same topic. Friend list was like the folder which was created by the user, and the user could classify their friends and put them in separated folders. Friend list could help Myspace users to manage their friend systematically. Blog in Myspace was similar to other blog service providers, but Myspace blog was safer since that their staff always kept it clean from illegal sharing of music and photos.

II. OBJECTIVE

A. Objective

The purposes of this study are (1) to study the main issues in the research in the area of social networking site: Myspace appeared in the papers published during 2006 to 2012, (2) to support the main issues found with the researcher's self-experience, and vice versa, (3) to classify the types of data collections in the qualitative method in the selected papers, and to understand how these data collections could work with the topic of Myspace, and (4) to describe the effect of elements in Myspace on the participants' emotions and behaviors. One of the important parts of this study was to identify the problems occurred in Myspace. These problems were created by the elements or functions in Myspace itself, and the users' behaviors through those functions. One user's behavior was able to effect on the feeling of other users.

B. Research Question

(1) What were the interesting issues in the research studying about Myspace during 2006 to 2012?

(2) How did the elements or rules in Myspace affect the users' emotions and behaviors?

(3) What are the methods of data collection in qualitative research in the area of social network: Myspace?

III. METHOD

This research is a collaborative narrative research which combines the researcher's self-experience with Myspace during 2006 to 2010, and documentary analysis of the 14 research papers published during 2006 to 2012. Both resources would form a list of issues, that contains the important evidences and conflicts happened in Myspace. These issues could be used to explain Myspace users' preference which could be similar to the user preference in other social network (Levine & Madsen, 2011).
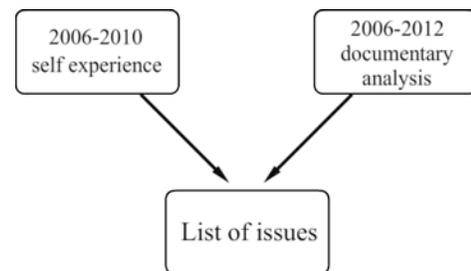

Fig. 1 Conceptual Model

Inclusion criteria of the selection of the papers:

(1) The selected papers need to discuss about Myspace and its users.

(2) The method of the selected papers needs to be qualitative. The qualitative methods could be interview, open-end question in questionnaire, texture analysis and other methods which are considered as qualitative method.

(3) The selected papers need to provide the issues that this research could use to describe the users' preference, users' behavior, or the problem that led to the fall of Myspace.

(4) The selected papers have to be published during 2006-2012, since most of the research papers written about Myspace were published during this period, as show in Figure 2.

(5) Two papers would be selected for each year. Hence, 14 papers were selected from the 7-years period of 2006 to 2012. To select 2 papers per year would show the wider view comparing with the finding of one single paper.

(6) The selected papers need to have "Myspace" in the title. "A Place for Friends" is also allowed, because this phrase refers to Myspace.

IV. RESULTS OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

Qualitative method provides a flexible tool for the researchers to collect the data. The researchers of the selected papers mostly collected the data from Myspace users, and some from the key informants. The tools found in the selected paper are followings:

A. Interview

The selected papers show various types of interview. The interview could be up to 30 minutes, and the in-depth interview could be over 1 hour, which the researchers could work with discourse analysis. In a selected paper, the researcher let the experts describe the unclear data, which

he/she collected from the interview with Myspace users. This phase of qualitative method could give an exact and deep understanding of results.

One of the selected papers (Salimkhan, Manago& Greenfield, 2010) showed a method of interview which is, "Take a Tour". The interviewees would describe their profiles along with answering the questions from the interviewers. For this paper, male interviewer would interview male interviewee, and vice versa. This is because, according to Folch-Lyon and Trost (1981), the communication of the same gender was more comfortable than the different-gender communication.

B. Open-ended-question questionnaire

Open-ended-questions in the selected papers appear on both paper questionnaire, online questionnaire and also on e-mail. The open-ended questions could be used in e-mail for the research about Myspace, because every Myspace user needed to have an e-mail to register for a Myspace account. This is how the e-mail was a convenient method for all Myspace users.

C. Group Discussion

Group discussion normally appears in an actual place, such as a room or a hall. Group discussion for the research about online social network users could be different. One of the researchers of the selected papers created chat rooms and displayed them on Myspace page. This method was suitable for Myspace users which normally spent their time online. The data of this paper were collected from the youth of color with HIV infection. Myspace could be the right tool to reach this group of people. Danah Boyd (2006) wrote about the usage of Myspace by working class group in "Viewing American Class Divisions through Facebook and Myspace". This might be possible that hard-to-reach populations would use Myspace as the tool to communicate.

D. Textual Analysis

The researchers of some selected papers visited the profiles and bulletin post of Myspace users which were selected randomly. They labeled each material they found, and analyze the conversational pattern and conflict to see users' self-disclosures and other users' behaviors.

Discussion of the finding of the Qualitative Data Collection:

In my opinion, the online data collection is a great method to collect the data from online participant. Even it is group chatting, e-mail conversation or online questionnaire, the online tools provide a comfortable environment for the people who always spend their time online, and more comfortable they are, the more fluent they communicate. How fluent they communicate would increase the quality and the depth of their answers.

V. Results and Discussion of Outstanding Issues

Figure 2 shows the interesting issues in each year. The issues shown in the left side are negative findings or attitudes through Myspace, which continuously happened from 2006 to 2012. The issues shown in the right side are positive findings

or good points of view. This type of issues was interesting during 2007 to 2011. Normally, a research paper will be published after the year it is written. This shows how the positive issues were interesting in the moment that Myspace was famous, 2006-2010. The popularity of Myspace is represented by numbers of monthly unique visitors shown in Figure 2.
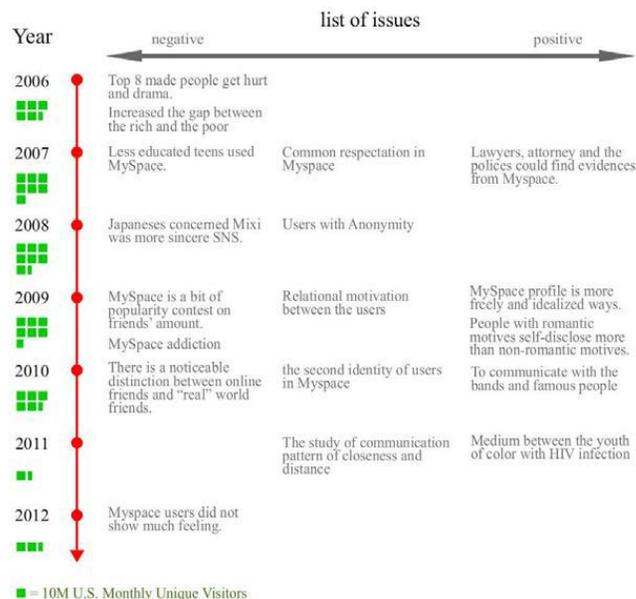

Fig. 2 The timeline of the issues in the selected papers published during 2006-2012 comparing with the US monthly unique visitors

A. Top Friends Conflict

"Top Friends" is a function in Myspace in which users could show some favorite friends on the profile page. The profile page refers to the main page which other users could visit it directly with the link of the Myspace URL. The early Myspace version 1.0, the first version of Myspace default layout, Top Friends allowed only 8 friends on the profile page of each user, which we regularly called it, "Top 8". Top 8 caused the jealousy in the users who were not on the Top 8 (Boyd, 2006). Some users tried to hack their friends' account because of Top 8. After the problem with Top 8, Myspace increased the number of Top Friends to be 12, 16, 20, 24 and 32, but this was not finally the way to solve the problem. When Top 32 was full, one or more users would be pushed down from it, and this still caused the same hatred and jealousy.

During 2006-2010, people talked a lot about Top Friends in their comments. Many people changed their Top Friends every day. They also visited the pages of their friends to see if they were still one of the Top Friends of those friends. Some people could not stand with Top Friends anymore, but there was no option to remove this part out from the profile page, except using CSS code to hide the section. A user created other 8 empty accounts just to put them on his Top 8 instead of his actual friends.

To remove a friend who was really sensitive could change

the future behavior of that friend (Student, 2008). To have someone on the Top Friends was like the promise. The one who was not sensitive would simply remove his friends from the Top Friends if they removed him first. If the one did not remove them, the one will be considered as the foolish.

Although Top Friends caused the emotional problem among many Myspace users, it was also a function of Myspace to which people were addicted to look at it or change it every day. The early Facebook page layout also contained a part which was similar to Myspace Top Friends. This part was the family relationship. If one listed a person as a family member, that person profile picture would appear on the left bar of Facebook profile page. Many people who were listed as family members of their friends were not real-world family members. Family relationship on Facebook was like the 2-way Top Friends, but people could still hide some friends in it. For the current version of Facebook, 2012-2013, Facebook does not show the family members' profile pictures on the main profile page anymore, but it still shows in the about/details page which was not often visited.

Discussion of "Top Friends Conflict":

Top Friends could be considered as an engaging element on Myspace. It led both advantage and disadvantage. If the disadvantage was a big amount of problems, the social networking site or the organization should find the way to solve it correctly. To increase the number of Top Friends was not the best way to solve the problem. It could temporary solve the problem, or it could make the original friends on Top Friends feel like they were unimportant. Since the problem was created by this element, this element should be simply removed by a simple command which everyone were able to work with it.

B. Friendship: Sincerity or Friend is only number.

Levine & Madsen (2011) studied about to use Myspace to reach the youth of color with HIV infection. They found that Myspace communication could make these people feel at home. They talked with their friends in Myspace, and Myspace also allowed the users to decorate their own profile pages, as if they decorated and painted their own houses.

Although some people needed a real friendship or sincerity in Myspace, many users did not treat them the same way as expected. The famous people, the music-related people and the band profile accepted every friend request, and they did not like private profile, because they could not add them easily (Rossi, 2010). Some of them also used the software, Friendblaster to add more friends every day. Friendblaster only needed a list of Myspace friendID to add everyone in the list without visiting the actual profile page. How fast the friendship created among Myspace accounts did not match Japanese tradition. Takahashi (2008) stated that Myspace was too aggressive for Japanese people. Japanese people would use Myspace only to update about music, improve their English skill and to communicate with other people who did not have Mixi account. Mixi was a social networking site commonly used in Japan which was considered as a sincere online community.

Discussion of "Friendship" in Myspace:

The researcher believes that in every social network contains both sincere users and the users who only need to increase the number of connections. Today the privacy settings and the channel to add one as the connection could be the best solution. For example, LINE users need to have the LINE id or the QR code to add someone as a friend, the LinkedIn users need to have the e-mail address of someone they need to add as a connection, and Facebook users can control the level of people who are able to add them as friends.

C. Be Friend with Famous People

Every connection in Myspace was called, "friend", even they were a famous band (Rossi, 2010). This might be a symbol of American belief that everyone is equal. The friendship in Myspace was 2-way friendship, unlike Twitter which divided the connections to be following and followers. This was strength of Myspace. The artists could simply impress their fans, and their fans could talk to other people that they were friends with famous people.

After music fans attended a live show, they always posted their photos with their favorite artists in Myspace even on profile page, comment or in photo gallery (Salimkhan, Manago& Greenfield, 2010). Levine & Madsen (2011) also found that their participants did not only add their real-world friends as the friends in Myspace, they also added interesting people, too.

Discussion of "Be Friend with Famous People":

This "everyone is friend" rule of Myspace created more positive outcome than the negative outcome. The artists could communicate with their fans, and their relationship was called, "friends". The negative outcome was only that the fans of those artists who did not have Myspace account might feel like underdog. Many cases of this problem had been solved by the fans who created fan pages. If the artists did not have a Myspace account, their fans could not have them as the Top Friends, but their fans could still bring the fan pages to be on Top Friends instead. To create fan pages is the solution for this kind of case in other social network, too.

D. Comment Collection

Just as the high number of friends could show the popularity of the profile, so could the number of comments show how active and how interesting the profile was. We could see how emotional the users were in the issue of Top Friends conflicts and friendship. Some people could simply delete their own profiles out of their frustration. How they deleted their profiles affect the comments that they made on other profiles. Their friends would lose all their comments which were the memory and also the number. One of the rudest things that Myspace users could do was to go to delete the comment they made on other profiles. This act could let those profiles' users block the one who deleted the comments.

Discussion of "Comment Collection":

The above statement shows how important the comment was. Myspace users were addicted to check the comments, or to check the comments became their habit (Urista, Dong &

Day, 2009). The comments in Myspace Version 1.0 were arranged as a list. The newest one would be on top of the list. The comments were not separated to be topic or group. If the users could not remember what they had talked with their friends, they needed to visit the profiles of their friends to see their last conversation in the comment part. This channel of communication seemed to be inconvenient, but it could increase the views of the profile which everyone needs to show to the others.

E. Conflict in Comments

The Myspace users control the privacy of viewing the comments posted by others as in Facebook. Comments in Myspace were public messages between users who had public profiles. These comments persisted through time on the profile, unless the users chose to remove them (Salimkhan, Manago & Greenfield, 2010) If a user wrote an inappropriate thing in the comments or posted inappropriate images in the gallery, people who visited their profiles would judge them with those items. Those items became their representation even they were not real (Gajjala, 2007). Posting things on Myspace was not like on webboard or forum that people could not know who the user was (Rossi, 2010). Lawyers and police also used comments and photos in Myspace as witnesses to arrest some criminal (Francis, 2007)

Noticeably, Myspace users tended to keep the conversation ball as well as in the real-time conversation. The users would speak about themselves in the same topic as their friends (Goodings, 2011). Gajjala (2007) who studied about Myspace usage among Mexican participants found that friend rejection, friend blocking and unreplying comment were really impolite in Mexican culture. A case that Goodings (2011) found among his participants was that the female user blocked the male user, when he tried to cross the line of friendship to be a boyfriend. While some users did not need their friends to cross the line of friendship, many users used Myspace to look for the boyfriends or girlfriends. One thing that could be noticed easily was that the users who looked for a romantic relationship would post more sexual attractive photos (Salimkhan, Manago& Greenfield, 2010) and more self-disclosure (Kim, Klautke & Serota, 2009). On the other hand, the unromantic users did not even show their sexual orientation and gender in their profiles.

Discussion of "Conflict in Comment":

The online conversation is different from the real-world conversation that the online users could break the relationship with the stranger easily. This might be because they did not really care someone they did not really know. However, after the social network became a part of our life, it provided a new area for the researchers to study the comparison between the real-time communication and the communication in social network (Student, 2008).

F. Wannabe and the creation of online identity

All the users in social network were able to create their new identity online, which was not the same as the real world identity. Leslie, one of the participants of the selected paper said that on Facebook , she gave her college location and used it for personal purposes, but on Myspace, she creates a second identity with the goal of marketing a distinct commercial self (Salimkhan, Manago & Greenfield, 2010). The second identity could refers to the user who perform as themselves with a different look, the people who borrowed the others' identity such as the Hollywood star wannabe, and those who did not show their portrait, but showed instead their work or their interest. Even there was no real portrait on the Myspace profile, the other users could know who he/she was by reading the comments on both the profile and also the comments made on the friends' page (Rossi, 2010).

Anonymity refers to the act of users who created the second identities online. These users were the unromantic users, who also did not show the sexual orientation (Kim, Klautke & Serota, 2009), but still looked for the trust between online friends (Student, 2008). They needed more friends to chat with them, which were opposite from their real life that they always stayed at home with personal computers (Student, 2008). Some groups of anonymity performed a different communication pattern. For example, the dog lovers had the image of their dogs as their profile pictures, and they talked to each other as they were dogs. This could affect how a user felt differently about their online friends and real-world friends (Urista, Dong & Day, 2009).

Discussion of "Wannabe and the creation of online identity":

The users with anonymity were often called, "Fake", even to create a new online identity was not a wrong thing. The online identity might be more real than the real-world identity which was shaped by the family, school and the society. Lately, these users moved themselves to register the accounts on Facebook, and some group of original Facebook users did not need to see them in the same social networking site. Scene kids in the research of Urista, Dong & Day (2009) suggests that many young people today are using SNS to create a virtual identity that resembles an idealized self that will boost one's status and self-esteem in both the online and "real" world. The original Facebook users did not perform that way, some of them created the Facebook pages about anti-scene/emo kids.

G. Technical and Usability Problem

The term "digital divide" implies a gap between those who have access to Internet technology and those who do not. Digital divide does not only separate the young and the old, but it separates people who have fewer financial and technical resources from the world of social network (Shafrir, Yuan & Sinai, 2012). In the early era of Myspace, 2004-2006, Waite (2006) concerned about how this social networking site formed a gap between the rich and the poor. The computers, digital cameras and internet connections still cost much money. Some users uploaded their high school photos and also the photos taken before they had Myspace accounts (Salimkhan, Manago& Greenfield, 2010). This act shows economic status of those users, before Myspace became a part of their life. Gajjala (2007) also stated that the online community also separated the races or the colors. The photo shown in the comment and the gallery could tell about the

racism, friendship and the level of couple relationship (Salimkhan, Manago& Greenfield, 2010).

Before 2007, Myspace allowed only 16 photos in the gallery, and later, Myspace allowed the unlimited photo uploading. Although Myspace offered more space for the photo uploading, users' behaviors were not changed. The previous limitation of 16 photos uploading still impacted the users' behavior. They would upload their photos used for their comments on other websites, such Photobucket.com. Goodings (2012) stated in his study that Myspace users needed the tools of other websites to add more functions/widgets they needed to show on Myspace profile page.

The early version of Myspace, version 1.0 and 2.0 also allowed HTML and CSS used for decoration the profile page. The embedded widgets from other websites were allowed. The samples of embedded items were Flash game, Youtube video player and MP3 playlist from imeem.com. These items were also allowed in comment post. Sometimes the auto-play video in the comment caused the sound- overlapping problem on the profile which had the auto-play MP3 song. Myspace might concern that many users embed music player of imeem.com, even in the same period, the musicians could upload up to 10 songs and the fans could add the auto-play Myspace music on their own pages.

In 2009, Myspace bought imeem.com for less than 1 million dollars (The Associated Press, 2009), and merged two music databases together. This caused the disappearance of old music and non-American music. The fans of these bands/artists tried to create the music profiles on Myspace to play their favorite songs, but all of them got deleted. Only the real bands/artists could have the music profiles, and most of the current bands had them (Rossi, 2010).

The digital divide problem was decreasing after the electronic supplies were cheaper. The removing of imitation profiles of bands/artists were the right thing Myspace did. Both problems did not lead the users to leave Myspace, but the main issue that uses finally left Myspace was how complex the default layout of profile version 3.0 was. The version 1.0 and 2.0 were close to each other, but the version 3.0 was totally different. This changing did not like other user-friendly software that the 10-year-ago version still looked similar to the newest version. Many participants acknowledged that social networking sites made staying in touch with friends much more convenient (Urista, Dong & Day, 2009), but the changing caused the inconvenience for the users.

In the early period of Myspace, profile version 1.0, the users needed to grab the CSS code from the website such "Pimp your profile" (Salimkhan, Manago& Greenfield, 2010). Users who always updated their profiles and changed the CSS layout were judged as the active users, which other users would like to communicate to (Goodings, 2012). The bands liked to hire the website designer to create unique Myspace layouts which were fit to the concept of the songs. For the late Myspace profile versions, Myspace turned to be more self-dependent site. CSS code for profile decoration, embedded MP3 player, fancy widgets, and HTML comments have not been allowed, so the users do not need to use other websites along with Myspace anymore.

Non-HTML comment impacted the communication pattern of Myspace Users especially the non-famous bands. Before the period of non-HTML comment, the band often posted the comment, "Thanks for the add" or "Thanks for being friends" to their new friends, and also posted the comment about all the festival such as "Merry Christmas & Happy New Year" and "Happy Halloween". Their comments were always attached with the logos or the photos of the bands' members. They could add the hyperlinks on these images to traffic to their official websites or their online stores.

VI. CONCLUSION

Myspace does not call the contacts as friend anymore, after it traveled from "A Place for Friends" to "A Place for Music". The original 2-way friendship became "connections", which is similar to Twitter and Google Plus. The friends of the band are now called, "fans". Every time the channel of the communication changes, the platform of communication would change. The organization should study the using of the social network site before changing its look and function. The good one should be maintained, and the one with good and bad side should be improved. We all need to remember that the more convenient social networking site or social network application is, the more engagement on the users. All the functions in social networking site and application need to be simple or user-friendly and cause fewer problems on emotion. If a problem was occurred, the organization should find the way to reduce it permanently without causing another problem.

Boyd (2006) has stated that Myspace could be a fashion. The current prime social networking sites and applications might be a fashion, too. Tom Anderson left Myspace in 2010, and he appeared on Myspace again in 2012, nine months after Justin Timberlake and Panasonic announced to bring MySpace back as social television viewing (Timberlake, 2012). No one could predicts the future by only listening to the news, but the past studies could direct the way to forecast the outcome of each individual engaging element created to support each social network place.

VII. SELECTED PAPERS

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VIII. PUBLICATION PRINCIPLES

The contents of **WASET** are peer-reviewed and archival. The **WASET** publishes scholarly articles of archival value as well as tutorial expositions and critical reviews of classical subjects and topics of current interest.

Authors should consider the following points:

1) Technical papers submitted for publication must advance the state of knowledge and must cite relevant prior work.

2) The length of a submitted paper should be commensurate with the importance, or appropriate to the complexity, of the work. For example, an obvious extension of previously published work might not be appropriate for publication or might be adequately treated in just a few pages.

3) Authors must convince both peer reviewers and the editors of the scientific and technical merit of a paper; the standards of proof are higher when extraordinary or unexpected results are reported.

4) Because replication is required for scientific progress, papers submitted for publication must provide sufficient information to allow readers to perform similar experiments or calculations and use the reported results. Although not everything need be disclosed, a paper must contain new, useable, and fully described information. For example, a specimen's chemical composition need not be reported if the main purpose of a paper is to introduce a new measurement technique. Authors should expect to be challenged by reviewers if the results are not supported by adequate data and critical details.

5) Papers that describe ongoing work or announce the latest technical achievement, which are suitable for presentation at a professional conference, may not be appropriate for publication in **WASET**.

IX. CONCLUSION

A conclusion section is not required. Although a conclusion may review the main points of the paper, do not replicate the abstract as the conclusion. A conclusion might elaborate on the importance of the work or suggest applications and extensions.

APPENDIX

Appendixes, if needed, appear before the acknowledgment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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