WHY INDIVIDUALS TAKE PART
IN SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

This paper reports about groups, needs and social media. The combination of scientific research about human groups and human needs explains the success of social media. The paper describes the reasons to be a member in a group. The main focus is on social media groups and online networks. The theoretical background for this paper is the well proved concept of Maslows "Hierarchy of motivation" (Maslow, 1943). This psychological theory gives advice to understand human behaviour and to understand the reasons of individuals to join a group.

Influenced by the internet there are changes that have to be under consideration. Today the individuals have a new situation and opportunities. This creates a new perspective on social capital and to understand the theoretical background regarding the reason to join a group or network.

One particular aspect is the need of individuals. This gives a good overview about individual's interest to be in a group and to join a group. The explanations are under the consideration of the needs of groups. There is a difference between individuals and group needs.

Further illustrate the paper the relation between groups and social media. The paper support further steps to create new knowledge and perspectives regarding social capital under the consideration of the motivational theory of Maslow. The issue is to illustrate the reason for individuals to join a group or network.

Introduction

This paper is about the psychological perspective of needs and motivation under the consideration of social capital. The reason of an individual to join a group is the basis to understand social media and the success of social media. The paper explains the needs and motivation to join a group mainly from the psychological perspective and gives a new focus on social capital. Satisfaction and expectation are two more important issues to join a group and both issues are in relation with needs. The theoretical psychological background is mainly given by Maslow (Maslow, 1943) with his paper "A theory of human motivation". He develops in his paper a motivational theory. The theory explains individual's behaviour and needs. The theoretical background for Maslows motivation theory is the content theory (Gambrel & Cianci, 2003). Social media platforms success is amazing and explainable. WebPages for example Facebook or LinkedIn have million of members. In addition provides the internet a lot of

different forms of social media e.g. forums, blogs or communities. All of them have mainly the same purpose. That members exchange their experience and knowledge about e.g. a product or the online community gives advise how to handle e.g. products.

Social capital is the network theory to describe reasons to join groups. Social capital satisfies the needs of the members of the group. That means that the need and social capital is a reason for individuals to join a group. Putnam is one advocate of social capital who describes in his papers the value of norms. His theory is that norms are social capital for the community. Of course there are disadvantages for groups to have norms or for individuals who are not member in the group (Putnam, 1995) (Siisiainen, 2003). Granovetter and Burt explain social capital with the structure of a network. Their focus is on the relationship between individuals. Maslow mentions in his paper the need to belong to a group (Granovetter, 1973) (Burt, 2002). Coleman describes social capital in his paper at page 95 as: "Three forms of social capital are examined: obligations and expectations, information channels and social norms" (Coleman, 1988).

Social capital fulfils needs of individuals. Maslow explains that the motivation for individuals are needs to change something or to do something. This paper concentrates on European western cultures and social platforms in the internet. The paper does not differ between the ages or gender of individuals.

The Different Needs of Individuals

Definition for needs: Needs are restricted set of basic physical and social needs that must be at lease minimally fulfilled for a person to experience overall well being. Needs are satisfied on various degrees (Deci & Ryan, 2000) (Steverink & Lindenberg, 2006).
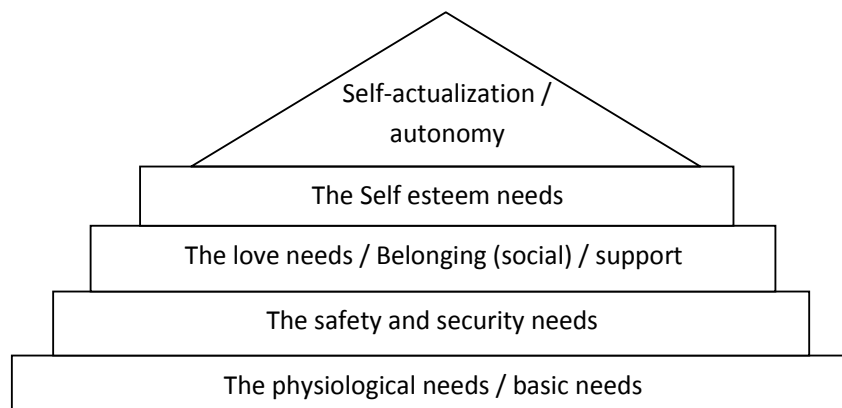

Figure 1.   Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Hornsey & Jetten, 2004) (Maslow, 1943) (Villarca, 2011)

The individuals needs depend on the individual situation and context. Individuals are different and they have a different kind of motivation and needs (Steverink & Lindenberg, 2006). Maslow creates a hierarchy of needs but this hierarchy has to be adapting to the different cultural backgrounds and situation. For example in China is the hierarchy of needs different compared with the hierarchy of needs in Germany (Gambrel & Cianci, 2003) (Maslow, 1943).

Another important point is that groups define their own priorities and satisfaction. That means that needs have different values for different groups (Cook, 1984).

The presented hierarchy of needs in this paper is the hierarchy of needs for an average European western individual. In addition the needs of individuals are increased and developed by other authors (Gambrel & Cianci, 2003) (Maslow, 1943) (Villarca, 2001). Needs are changing because cultural, technological or environmental changes influence the needs.

Maslow and other scientists explain in their papers that individuals have different level of needs. Figure one shows the hierarchy of needs, described as pyramid of needs. Maslow explains his motivation theory with the hierarchy of needs. The basic needs are the physiological needs. If this needs are in danger or not satisfied than individuals react immediately and heavily to satisfy this needs. The individual try to change the conditions under all possible circumstances. The situation is for the individual critical if the conditions do not change. The physiological needs are in relation to body needs that means e.g. somebody is thirsty or the environment is life threatening polluted. That needs are important to existence, individuals cannot existence for a long time if the physiological needs are not satisfied. Maslow mentions the physiological needs as the major motivation for individuals. These needs have to be satisfied or it is difficult to fulfil other needs. A general answer about physiological needs is difficult because physiological needs depend on the individual as already mentioned above. Costanza et al mention in their paper the physiological needs as subsistence for example. Physiological needs are clean air and essential food for example (Costanza et al., 2007). An example for a physiological need regarding the group is a team that delivers clean water to their members. The team member gets clean water because the group provides clean water that means the group has the ability to satisfy this needs (Cook, 1984) (Krishna, 1999).

If the physiological needs are satisfied then the next steps are the safety needs. Maslow mentions in his paper that the individuals look for a safe environment and protection. Individuals who live in an unsafe area have the needs to change this situation to have a safe and comfortable life for example. If the environment is dominated by danger the individuals are not satisfied and their motivation is to change the situation. They found a vigilance committee for example. The security needs can be rules, laws and protection of assets (Cook, 1984). One important point is the family. Individuals are keen that their family is safe and that any circumstances are secured e.g. illness or unexpected negative circumstances. The result of the identification with a group can be that members integrate in the group and that gives the group more power and security (Tajfel, 1982). The security need is one more reason to be member in a group. The group members protect each other and guarantee the security of their members. The group is a framework that protects their members against other individuals and negative circumstances.

The love needs or belonging to needs. Anyone needs support and affection. The objective of individuals is to have a relationship with other individuals. This individual needs somebody to share their intimacy and to trust somebody (Gambrel & Cianci, 2003). However this need is in relation to the social community. That means that individuals take care for each other. There is solidarity and individuals create a community or group (Cook, 1984). Social identity can be developed with a group membership. The individual has to be member in a group to have a positive well being. That is a positive effect and enjoyment to be member in a group (Borum, 2004) (Tay & Diener, 2011) (Sukoco & Wann-Yih, 2010). Later wrote Sukoco and Wann-Yih at page 616: "The desire to make relationship with others is a basic human need" (Sukoco & Wann-Yih, 2010).

That means that individuals have to have member of a group and anyone needs a relationship to other individuals. The reverse is that individuals in social isolation have the need to have a relationship (Jahn, 2004) (Levine & Moreland, 1994) (Stark & Bainbridge, 1980). This explanation is fundamental to explain the interest of individuals to be member in a group.

The next step in Maslows hierarchy is esteem needs. This need means that individuals have the desire for reputation and prestige. Other authors mention the status of an individual in a group as a benefit. Individuals are keen to be useful and necessary for their community. Groups give individuals the opportunity to participate in decisions and to act meaningful for the community and their own interest. They have some control and influence over the group e.g. with an election of a leader. This satisfied and enrich the life of the individuals (Costanza et al., 2007) (Cook, 1984) (Hornsey & Jetten, 2004) (Tajfel, 1982). Steverink and Lindenberg mention in their paper that members of the society have the feeling of respect and reputable. That means the members of the society have the opportunity to reach the stage of esteem needs (Borum, 2004) (Steverink & Lindenberg, 2006). For an esteemed need is an exclusive club membership an example. Exclusive clubs have a high reputation and high entry requirements. Their members get similar reputation because the members fulfil the club requirements. That means who fulfil the club requirements is a person with a status and high prestige. Another esteemed need is the status. Individual's prestige and status is only recognizable in groups.

The need for self-actualization depends on the individual. If all further steps are satisfied than individuals have their own special desires. Important to know is that this special desires are not in relation with former needs. Spirituality is one self actualized need for example. Individuals identify in spirituality their satisfaction. A further part of this need is creativity and art. The highest level is freedom and to have the opportunity to fulfil any desire. To create the own leisure time is a typical self actualization need for example. This means that the individual do not have restrictions and the individual has different opportunities. There is not any situation without different opportunities (Cook, 1984). Already to be a member of a group can be a pleasant for an individual to reach their self actualized goals. Groups can help to satisfied self actualized needs. A specialized group gives the opportunity to create a special music event for example.

New literature mention that needs can be satisfied without satisfaction for a lower level of needs. Some author describes that all needs are important and that there do not exist a difference between the levels of needs (Villarca, 2011). Maslow mentions that the quality of the satisfaction has not to be fulfilled to 100% to reach a higher need. In general the needs have to be fulfilled as much as possible to get a higher satisfaction. The identification of unconscious needs is another point that influences individual's motivation (Maslow, 1943) (Tay & Diener, 2011). Satisfaction is only measureable by the individual. That means that the individual decided if the individual is satisfied or not. Another important focus is that the needs are not fixed. The satisfaction is influenced by the duration and sustainability (Cook, 1984) (Varlamis & Apostolakis, 2006). Individuals compare their situation with the situation of another individual. The result of the observation and comparability of the other individual influence the satisfaction and desires (Cook, 1984). One more difficulty is to measure satisfaction because the objective and subjective perspective can be different (Levine & Moreland, 1994).

Needs are important for social, psychological and physiological well being. All needs are necessary for a satisfied, well being and healthy life (Tay & Diener, 2011) (Steverink & Lindenberg, 2006).

The group perspective gives an opportunity for individuals to reach their goals. The Individuals try to compensate or substitute not reachable targets. That means to reach another target they will activate resources, make investments and increase their efforts or they reach their objective with a group (Steverink & Lindenberg, 2006).

The motivation depends on unsatisfied needs. Individuals have many different needs on different levels (Tay & Diener, 2011). The difficulty is to link one special behaviour with one special need. An individual is working for example. Their motivation is to earn money to buy food that is a physiological need. But the individual is not looking only for food, the individual looks in addition for prestige and status in his company. Prestige is in Maslows hierarchy of needs an esteem need.

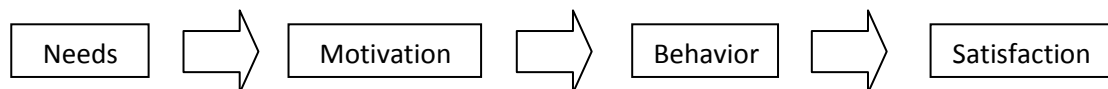**The process from needs to satisfaction**

Figure 2. The process from a need to a satisfaction (Maslow, 1943)

The illustration describes the way from the needs to the satisfaction and shows that the behaviour and activities are controlled by needs. The motivation gives the direction for the individual, the behaviour is the executive to reach the objective and the objective is the satisfaction. That means that the need gives the reason to be a member in a group because individuals have to fulfil their needs and some of the needs can be only fulfilled in groups. Needs and motivation are recognized as energy to reach a goal or satisfaction or to fulfil a desire. As larger the needs and motivation as larger is the energy that the individual invest to reach the satisfaction. The same situation is happens with groups and the investment to be member in a group (Sukoco & Wann-Yin, 2010). Social capital supports the individual to reach goals and to satisfy the individual.

Satisfaction, pleasure and well being is described for groups and individuals as happiness, utility, welfare for individuals or groups (Cook, 1984) (Reis & Collins, 2009).

Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation influences the needs of an individual. Further decides extrinsic and intrinsic motivation about a group membership of individuals (Cook, 1984). The decision to be member in a group depends on the group decision and the member decision.

Groups and Individuals Needs and Goals

Groups have their own needs and they can be different from the individual objective. The interesting point is that both, group and individual have different needs but maybe the same objective. The priority of the needs depends on the situation (Gambrel & Cianci, 2003) (Jahn, 2004). The quality of needs is different for groups and individuals. Both have their singular needs and desires but mainly they can fulfil their needs only in cooperation and satisfaction of group and individuals needs (Jahn, 2004).
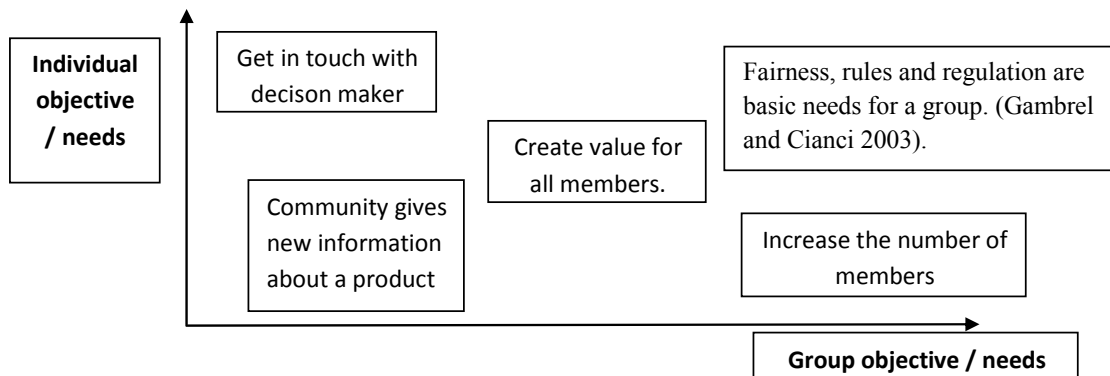
Figure 3. Groups and Individuals have different objective and needs

Individuals can be a caregiver and intimidates of a group or they can be a user of a group. That means individuals use the group for their individual objectives or they create an advantage for all group members because they help the group to reach the group objectives. The important point is that individual's objectives and group objectives can be the same or that group objectives can support the individuals objectives or contrary (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005).

It is possible that the group needs and the individual needs are in a conflict (Cook, 1984). Some groups give their members an identity and a sustainable objective (Brito, Waldzus, Sekerdej, & Schubert, 2010). "Social organization is composed of interlocking relationships among individuals within a social network." (Peterson et al., 2005).

Many groups or communities give their members the opportunity to discuss solutions and to ask questions. Members of communities give support and solutions. Members support each other to get a higher prestige. They are more satisfied because they are aware that they give a great support to other members. They identify themselves with the group. That means the supporter gains recognition and the individual that take the support to get a solution. Both parties fulfil their needs. These increase their motivation and influence their behaviour for further tasks (Sukoco & Wann-Yih, 2010). This is the motivation for individuals to take part in a group. The exchange of their needs is an important issue for members of groups. Groups support the individual to satisfy their desires and needs (Jahn, 2004) (Sukoco & Wann-Yih, 2010).

Reasons to Be Member in a Group

First of all is the definition of a group important. Groups can be defined by their members and external observers. Secret groups would not publicities their group for example. Further have the group members to recognize that they are member in a group and they have to have the desire to be a member (Tajfel, 1982).

The scientific literature mentions different reasons to be member in a group. The paper mentioned already some reasons above. Illustration four gives an overview about needs for individuals to be a member in a group. As expected group and individuals needs are not very different and some needs are similar.

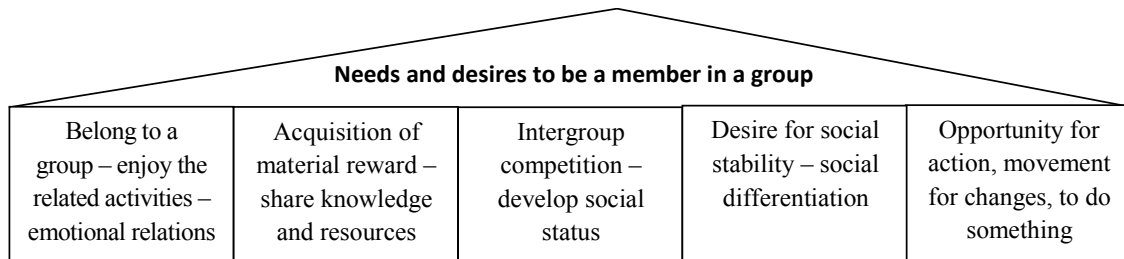| Needs and desires to be a member in a group				
Belong to a group – enjoy the related activities – emotional relations	Acquisition of material reward – share knowledge and resources	Intergroup competition – develop social status	Desire for social stability – social differentiation	Opportunity for action, movement for changes, to do something

Figure 4. House of group needs (Brito et al., 2010) (Tajfel, 1982) (Sukoco & Wann-Yih, 2010)

Individuals in a group have a value and that is the reason to be a member in a group. The value for the individual is that the group gives certain selective benefits to their members. There are consequences and properties for group members for example. Both can be beneficial for group member (Borum, 2004) (Costanza et al., 2007) (Levine & Moreland, 1994) (Tajfel, 1982).

Furthermore is socialization a reason that individuals are members in a group. Parents introduce their children to other children, enrol their children in the kindergarten and introduce their children to the neighbourhood for example. That means that individuals are members in groups without their influence (Brito et al., 2010) (Helliwell & Putnam, 1999).

Emotions, cognitive context and social mechanisms are an important issue for individuals to be a member in a group. In addition the emotions, cognitive context and social mechanisms are important variables for individuals and groups. This variables influence heavily the result and satisfaction (Peterson et al., 2005).

Individuals are members of a group because with the group they have more power and influence. They have the opportunity to change and influence other individuals or decisions. Power and leadership is important for individuals and to fulfil their needs. The individuals reach power because they have regularly communication and interaction with other individuals. That is very often the advantage of a group against an individual. A group has more opportunities, resources and availability as an individual (Bargh, 2009). If Individuals recognize that they can achieve with their group their objectives than they are highly energized and they invest energy or values in the group (Sukoco & Wann-Yin, 2010).

Social Capital under the Consideration of Maslows Theory

Social capital and Maslows theory complement each another. Both theories explain the reason of individuals to join a group. Social capital has the perspective of the positive or negative value for the individual to join a group or network. The channel for information and resources between individuals is an important social capital. All stages of the Maslow pyramid needs this social capital to fulfil needs. The difference between the channels is the volume, value and kind of resource or information that is transferred. However to fulfil needs individuals have to cooperate. They need other individuals to reach their goals and to fulfil their needs. The basis for social capital is trust, obligations, reciprocity and sympathy between individuals. This

points support the exchange of resources and information. The access to information and resources is the social capital.

The physiological and basic needs are the most important needs for Individuals. Individuals have more opportunities to fulfil their basic needs if they cooperate. Cooperation between individuals implies trust. Trust is important for social capital because without trust is social capital not possible. Many author mention trust as an important part of social capital (Coleman, 1988) (Lin, 2001) (Uphiff, 1999).

Serageldin and Grootaert explain in their paper at page 48 that "Uncoordinated or opportunistic behaviour by economic agents can also lead to market failure" (Serageldin & Grootaert, 1999). That means that individuals have to cooperate to fulfil their needs. In the book from Dasgupta and Serageldin are different examples about individuals who cooperate to fulfil their basic needs. Cooperation is a form of social capital to reach objectives and to fulfil needs (Dasgupta & Serageldin, 1999).

Safety and security needs are the next stage of Maslows pyramid. Putnam explains in his paper that norms support a community to be safe. The norms are given by the community. The norm helps the community to protect them against other individuals. Individuals feel safe if they have norms and rules. That supports them to find a decision and gives them an orientation. Norms fulfil the safety and security needs. The disadvantage of norms is that they can have a negative impact of non members of the community or that the norms barrier the members to develop or improve their community (R. Putnam, 1995) (Helliwell & Putnam, 1999).

Love needs and belonging to needs can be fulfilled by social capital. Many authors mention in their papers that people join a group because they like to have a relationship. The reason for the relationship is to get access to resources of other individuals and to get sympathy. The transfer of social capital needs the ability to transfer the social capital and the willingness to transfer the resources or information. That is the important point. An individual has to belong to a group to get access to social capital and the individuals need the sympathy from another individual to get social capital and the needed resources. However to belong to a group has great advantages for individuals. The transfer costs of information and resources is between group members less expensive and faster. That means that individuals of a network have a benefit against individuals who do not have a network. That explains the need to be a member of a group or belong to a group because the individual has advantages. The advantages depend on the perspective of the individual and on the situation. The disadvantage to be a member in a group is the barrier between individuals and resources outside of the group. Group decision can have a negative impact on the society or other communities. The love needs are deeply related with trust because only individuals who trust each other can exchange information or resources especially intimae or secret information. (Coleman, 1988) (Rose, 1999) (Narayan & Pritchett, 1999)

The self esteem needs are described by different authors of the social capital theory. Individuals like to be part of a group to get access to resources. Social capital provides them with exclusive resources and fulfils the need. Especially prestige supports the member of the group to get attention of other individuals. The identification with the group is important for members because they have an advantage to be a member of a exclusive group. It can be that the membership of a group can have a negative impact and then the need is not anymore fulfilled. In that case the individual will leave the group and search for a new group which provides the

expected social capital and resources. However the influence of other individuals and the structure of the group is one more described social capital that fulfils the esteem needs. It is possible to control and lead other individuals with the power of social capital. The contact to a decision maker is an important asset to reach a goal (Burt, 1997) (Dasgupta, 1999) (Lin, 2001).

The self actualization / autonomy needs are the highest stage of the pyramid of Maslow. Some of those needs can be only fulfilled in groups or relations. Relations are the basis for social capital. That means individuals need the relation and the response from another individual to fulfil the self actualization / autonomy needs. Another important point is the information channel. That support the individuals to share information and to identify new opportunities to self actualize themselves. However to present results to the community can be part of the self actualization or self esteem needs (Coleman, 1988) (Dasgupta, 1999) (Lin, 2001).

Social Media under the Consideration of Maslows Theory

There are different types of social media. However social media is anytime in relation to groups because the content of social media is created for different receiver and groups. The different groups use social media to satisfy their needs. Social media has the technological ability to create content for the physiological, security, belonging to, esteem and self-actualized needs. Satisfaction can be online or offline. The needs are overlapping and social media platforms satisfy different needs. Mainly social media platforms satisfy a combination of needs and individuals use the social media platforms to satisfy their needs. This makes social media platforms in the internet so successful because social media fulfil needs.

The physiological need in social media is mainly important information. The given information helps individuals to satisfy physiological needs. That means that individuals take this information to get further information about a product or situation. Those satisfy the individuals and fulfil their needs. These groups can be communities that support individuals in their daily life to satisfy physiological needs for example.

Security and protection needs are an important topic in social media. There are two kinds of possibility for that need in social Media. The one type is online and the other type is offline. There are groups that exchange information to protect their member offline. Individual warns their group with twitter about violent events or danger situation for example. Groups can protect their members online because they offer them a protected environment to share private information. Online communities share knowledge about a new developed product which is not officially introduces to the audience for example. That information has to be protected or individuals have damages. That needs can be fulfilled by social media and satisfy the members of groups on social media platforms.

The needs belonging to and love is a typical need for social media. There are different platforms like Facebook or LinkedIn that satisfied the need to belong to a group. These business models use this need to get members. The individuals trust and support each other. They share useful information and meet each other online to communicate. The group members trust each other and they have an intimacy.

One more reason to be a member in a group is esteem needs. This need is fulfilled by social media. There are millions of groups and communities about different interests. All social media groups have the ability for their members to share information and to support each other. These satisfied the members. Members in groups who are successful support other group members are

more satisfied. They are more respected from the other group members. That means the different kind of tools in social media platforms provides the ability to gain prestige or status.

Self actualized needs under the consideration of social media. The new technology and abilities gives individuals the chance to create new things together. Individuals are members in a group because they develop with other member's new products, ideas or creations. There are product communities that helps user to find solutions for problems with new developed solutions.

Conclusion

Individuals use social capital to satisfy their needs. They join the group to get access to information and resources. That supports the social capital theory because the member of the group would not join the group if the group do not fulfil their needs. Maslows stages at the pyramid compared with social capital explains that social capital can fulfil needs. Social capital is a benefit for the individual and a reason to join a group. The needs are fulfilled with the support of the social capital.

Social media satisfy all kind of needs. Members of social media groups have the same needs like members of other groups. The advantage of social media groups is that the technological changes support the ability of the members and individuals. The exchange of information and resources is faster and easier. That gives social capital new opportunities and creates new needs. Social media fulfil needs of individuals.

However there are disadvantages and advantages for companies. Groups and individuals have different needs and objectives. The differences between group members can be extreme because the members have different interests. That depends on the numbers of members and the level of specialization.

For further research is of interest to identify the changes of social capital and the motivational theory under the aspect of the technological changes.

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