MySpace, Twitter users more likely to share personal information: researchers

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The more social networking sites a person belongs to, the more willing they are to share personal information, accept the advice of others on those sites and then act on those suggestions according to recent findings presented by Penn State researchers.

Jim Jansen, associate professor of information sciences and technology, lead a survey of some 35,000 users of myYearbook, a social networking site primarily targeted toward teenagers. The site has more than 20 million members.

The majority of respondents, who ranged in age from 13 to 24 years, reported having accounts on three different social media platforms. About 84 percent had MySpace accounts, about 65 percent had Facebook accounts and about 25 percent had Twitter accounts.

Researchers found that the more social platforms with which a person is engaged, the more willing he or she will be to seek the opinions of others through status messages and act on those messages.

"Although people share information with companies, organizations and others via mechanisms like polls, they are more trusting of those in their social network," Jansen said. "Not only do people share information on social media sites, they act on information received. So, there are significant implications for a variety of areas, such as advertising and marketing."

Findings also showed that those with MySpace or Twitter accounts were more likely to participate in sponsored polls like the one posted to the MyYearbook site.

"There are differences among sites, most notably with Facebook," Jansen said. "This probably represents the more closed nature of Facebook relative to MySpace and, especially, Twitter."

Jansen's co-authors were Geoff Cook, the CEO of myYearbook, and Kate Sobel, an honors student in Penn State's Smeal College of Business. The paper, "Gen X and Y's Attitudes on Using Social Media Platforms for Information Sharing," was presented at the 2010 ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, held April 10-15 in Atlanta.

It can be viewed at ist.psu.edu/faculty_pages/jjan … ansen_myyearbook.pdf online.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University