

Psychologists say Facebook, Twitter harden gender walls

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Adding to a cynic's file of Hardly-Shocking research is a new study out from the University of Bath that reports women are more attracted to social-networking sites than are men, who learn more toward Internet sites that carry games and gambling. Where the study does merit interest, however, is that it is a ten-year follow-up study that explores what if any changes have occurred since its first examination of gender differences in Internet usage in 2002.

The paper, "Gender, Internet experience, Internet identification and Internet anxiety: a ten year follow-up," appears in *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*. Dr. Richard Joiner is the lead author.

"In our previous research we had found no [gender differences](#) in the use

of the Internet for communication, whereas in the current study we have found that females use the Internet for communication than [males](#) and were using social network sites more than males."

As the study authors point out, the Internet has changed considerably since their 2002 look, with the introduction of Facebook, Twitter and deluge of smartphones. Interestingly, some theorists claimed early on that technology advancements would lessen gender differences and that the Internet would be an equalizer, but these authors have found otherwise.

Women were more attracted to [social networking](#) sites such as Facebook and Twitter and were significantly more likely to use email and telephone over the web than males; males were more likely than females to use newsgroups, gaming and gambling sites.

The University of Bath study examined results from 501 first-year psychology undergraduate students from six UK universities. There were 389 females and 100 males. Twelve participants did not specify their gender. The sample was chosen to match as closely as possible the 2002 study sample.

Product vendors and marketing agencies, among others, are most likely to pay attention to Internet gender-usage studies. The takeaway of the University of Bath Department of Psychology study is that its authors say the gap has grown wider between the way in which men and women use the Internet.

"Our findings indicate that rather than transcending or overcoming gender differences in wider society, Internet use by males and females seems to reflect, and in some instances even exacerbate, these broader trends."

They also express support of the view that gender differences in the use of the Internet reflect gender differences in wider society and are thus “more resistant to change than some people have suggested.”

More information: opus.bath.ac.uk/30228/

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