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A Cross Cultural Study of Brazilians and Indians

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COMMON GROUND

Self-Presentation on Facebook and Orkut:
A Cross Cultural Study of Brazilians and Indians

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Abstract: Alongside the exponential growth of popularity of Facebook worldwide, several other social network sites (SNSs) are popular in nations like China (e.g., Renren.com), Brazil, and India (e.g., Orkut.com). Though Orkut has been discontinued on September 31, 2014, prior to its shutdown many Brazilian and Indian users still actively used both Orkut and Facebook to be involved in their two different social networks. In this paper we investigate whether, and if so how, Brazilian and Indian users of Facebook and Orkut represent themselves differently on these two SNSs. 30 Brazilians (15 females and 15 males) and 30 Indians (15 females and 15 males) were selected by convenience and judgment sampling. Web content analysis (Herring 2010) (specifically feature analysis) and visual content analysis (Bell 1996) were used to analyze their personal information on profile pages and their profile pictures. Results show that Brazilian users disclosed equal amount of personal information on Facebook and Orkut, while Indian users provided more personal information on Orkut than on Facebook. Moreover, most male and female Brazilians used 'casual' dressed profile pictures while most male Indians used 'smart casual' dressed ones on both SNSs. However, most female Indians tended to use 'traditional' dressed profile pictures on Orkut but 'professional' or 'smart casual' dressed ones on Facebook. These differences can be explained in terms of cultural traditions and gender roles in Brazil and India, and the norms and design features of the two SNSs.

Keywords: Self-Presentation, Impression Management, Facebook, Orkut, Brazil, India

Introduction

In today's era of new digital media, people are increasingly exposed to and participating in various online activities such as social networking, entertaining, studying, collaborating, and innovating. Various types of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) have become increasingly popular, for people to present themselves, to establish social ties, to construct and maintain friendship, and even to facilitate participation in the offline world–a rising networked society.

According to Pew Internet and American Life Project (2013), social media use has become so pervasive in the lives of Americans that 73% of online adults now use a social networking site of some kind. Ellison and Boyd (2013) discussed the features and history of SNSs, and highlighted the rapid development of SNSs: In 2007, there were only three types of SNSs (profile-centric, media-centric, and location centric,) while in 2013 SNS use has become a dynamic combination of content provided by the user, activity reports, content provided by others, and/or system-provided content (e.g., Facebook).

Thus online profiles on SNSs have constituted a common mechanism for self-presentation on the Internet (Boyd and Heer 2006), and identity has become one of the five key issues in today's digital age (James et al. 2009). However, most previous studies of online self-presentation only focus on users who were from the same culture and on the same SNS platform (e.g., Kapidzic and Herring 2015, Ellison et al. 2006). Some studies compared self-presentation differences between SNS users who were from different cultures but still focused on only one platform. For example, Banczyk et al. (2008) studied the differences in self-presentation on MySpace between American and German users. Other researchers studied more than one SNS platform but only focused on separate user groups, such as Cho's (2010) study of Koreans on Cyworld and Americans on Facebook, and Panek et al.'s (2013) study of the relationship between American adults' narcissism and Facebook and Twitter use. In general, little work has been done to explore how and why the same users may have different patterns of self-presentation in different systems (i.e., more than one SNS).

To answer these questions, this study extends to the understanding of SNS self-presentation by comparing users from Brazil and India who are active on both Orkut and Facebook. Although Facebook has been the largest SNS since 2008, it was not until 2010 that Facebook started to gain a massive number of users in countries such as Brazil and India. Before then, most Brazilian and Indians used Google's Orkut as their major SNS (Aguiari 2010). In 2011, Facebook had finally become the most visited SNS in Brazil and India (Social Network Watch 2011), and Orkut was discontinued on September 31, 2014.

In an attempt to increase our understanding and comprehension of SNS use for self-presentation across cultures, gender and SNSs, and especially using data collected before Orkut went completely dead, this study contributes to understanding how the same users present themselves and interact in different but similar SNSs. A total of 60 users from Brazil and India and a total of 120 profile pages were analyzed by two content analysis methods: Feature analysis aimed to measure users' personal information on their profile pages, while image analysis was used to investigate and extract meaningful information from users' profile pictures.

Literature Review

Some researchers have investigated issues of self-presentation (e.g., Goffman 1959), self-identity (e.g., Turkle 1985; 1997), and new changes emerging online (e.g., Boyd and Heer 2006). They all provide insights for studies on constructions of identities in different SNSs. In his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) concentrated on the performative and characteristic structure of society and employed the metaphor of theatrical performance. His main argument is that human interaction happens on the front stage or the back stage, and between performers and audiences. Thus identities are shaped in this process via impression management. Goffman provides a strong theoretical framework for studying both online and offline self-presentation: He highlights the collective and interactive process of constructing self-identity in different social settings, and points out the importance to identify "audience" – so as to adjust "performance."

However, Goffman's self-presentation theory, especially his dichotomized notion of front and back stages seemed to be questioned by the new changes emerging online. For example, Turkle (1985, 1997) investigates how people reevaluate and recreate their identities through digital media using an analytical and psychological profiling approach. She proposes that a new sense of identity—as decentered and multiple—is emerging, and discusses how playing with identity in cyberspace can shape a person's real-life understanding of identity. In addition, computers and the Internet are no longer mere tools but parts of users' social and psychological lives—Users' awareness of self-identity, of one another, and of their relationship with the world are impacted by these technologies.

Focusing on visual presentation, Kapidzic and Herring (2015) analyze how teens represent themselves through their profile pictures on a popular English-language anonymous chat site. Their findings echo previous findings of gender and race differences in face-to-face interaction, suggesting that the teens used their profile pictures to invite others to interact with them online.

For SNSs in particular, Boyd and Heer (2006) conducted an ethnographical study to analyze and visualize the communicative aspects of profiles on a SNS called Friendster. They found that with online profiles, users did not just depict themselves but also helped shape the representation of others in the system. Kyung-Hee and Haejin (2007) conducted a qualitative analysis of in-depth interview data from 49 users of Cyworld, a Korean SNS. They conclude that Cyworld's design features and functions encourage users to transcend the high-context communication of Korean culture by offering an alternative channel for elaborate and emotional communication, which virtually extends the offline Korean cultural concept of blood ties. Focusing on gender stereotypes on SNSs, Bailey et al. (2013) investigated how young North American women (age 18 to 22) interpret stereotypical representations of femininity on Facebook. They found that young women

understood SNS as a commoditized environment in which stereotypical kinds of self-exposure by girls are markers of social success and popularity.

DiMicco and Millen (2007) concentrate on the management of different social networks (e.g. past social groups from school and current social connections in the workplace) on one SNS. Based on survey data, they concluded that on the one hand, multiple user profiles and multi-level access controls (e.g. those controls provided by Facebook) can help users manage their online identities without unintended leakage between their corporate identities and social identities. However, on the other hand, managing multiple profiles is also an added burden for users, because sophisticated access control mechanisms are difficult to navigate, and may cause identity crisis. In addition, Hargittai's (2007) survey study suggests that users' gender, race, ethnicity, and parental educational background are all associated with their different use of different SNSs such as Facebook, MySpace, Xanga, and Friendster. In addition, Panek et al. (2013) studied how Facebook and Twitter use were related to narcissism. They found that for college students, posting on Twitter was associated with the Superiority component of a narcissistic personality while Facebook posting was associated with the Exhibitionism component; while for adults, Facebook and Twitter are both used more by those focused on their own appearances but not as a means of showing off.

With a special interest in cross-cultural comparison, Cho (2010) explores cultural differences in SNS usage patterns between Korean and American SNSs (Cyworld and Facebook) using a paper-and-pencil survey and a content analysis of SNS profiles of survey respondents. His findings suggest that users' SNS relationship patterns replicated those of their offline relationships. Similarly, Banczyk et al.'s (2008) questionnaire study highlights the importance of impression management and explores the relationship between self-esteem, personality and the self-presentation on MySpace profiles. A total of 107 American and German MySpace users' self-presentation patterns (private details displayed, number of words, number of friends, design) were analyzed. Banczyk et al.'s results reveal that self-esteem and aspects of personality are the driving forces that shape users' self-presentation on the SNS. This study also identified cultural differences in self-presentation. For example, American users have more elaborate profiles and display more private information than German users.

In sum, researchers usually study SNS users' patterns of self-presentation via different approaches (e.g., cultural/theoretical analysis, psychoanalytic, surveys, interviews, statistics, ethnography), and with different focuses (e.g., different research questions and user groups).

It is almost certain that differences of self-presentation between these users would arise. What is missing here is whether different SNSs make the same users present themselves in the same way or not. This paper attempts to answer this question.

Methodology

Data Sampling

Potential participants for this study were first identified by convenience sampling: They were on our friend list on both SNSs – Facebook and Orkut. In December of 2012, we contacted all of them via Facebook and Orkut private messages to inquire if they would be willing to participate in this study. We got 73 positive and 42 negative replies from Brazilian users and 54 positive and 13 negative replies from Indian users.

Later, in January of 2013, we used judgment sampling to select qualified participants. We asked the users who replied with a positive answer whether they were active users (i.e., still interacted and maintained their accounts) on both SNSs. Since users that belong to the same social world tend to disclose the same information (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010), we chose the active users that had no connections with one another, in order to avoid similarities and to reach a more diversified user population. A total of 60 users were recruited by voluntary participation: 30 users from Brazil, including 15 male and 15 female, and 30 from India, also 15 male and 15 female.

Their profile pages on both Facebook and Orkut (N=120) were captured for this study. They provided an average of 8 features (categories of personal information) on their profile pages on both SNSs and had a picture associated with their profiles. In the whole process of data collection and data analysis, we made sure that we did not breach any ethical rules, and protected the subjects' confidentiality by disguising their real identities.

Three limitations of the data should be noted. First, all participants were volunteers recruited from the authors' Facebook and Orkut friend lists. There is a potential bias in a self-selected convenience sample. Second, we only compared two SNSs in this study. Further study is needed to analyze a larger sample and compare more SNSs. Third, Orkut has been discontinued on September 30, 2014. Therefore, it is impossible to conduct any follow-up studies. At the same time, despite these limitations, our personal knowledge of the participants facilitated our data collection, and improved the quality of our interpretation of the data. Users of Facebook and Orkut represent demographic diversity and different experience with social media. Thus, comparing these two SNSs can provide useful insights on cultural differences. In addition, it is because Orkut has been discontinued that our study becomes especially valuable -- as both a historical study of Orkut and a comparative analysis of successful and dying SNSs.

Data Analysis

The 120 profile pages were analyzed using two content analysis methods: feature analysis and image analysis. The analytical procedures for each method are described below.

Feature Analysis

Feature analysis focused on the varieties of personal information shared on the user's profile page. A feature is defined as a field or category on the About page (Facebook) and Profile page (Orkut), including name, last name, sports, television, about you, and so forth. Facebook and Orkut provide a range of features in which users can fill out their personal information. However, the lists of features provided by Facebook and Orkut are not exactly the same. For example, only Orkut has the feature of "fashion" in which users can label themselves as casual, classic, minimal, and so forth. In contrast, only Facebook has the feature of "languages" in which users can list languages they know.

In order to legitimately compare the two SNSs, a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) was used to select the features that were present on both SNSs' profile pages. According to Strauss and Corbin (1994, 273), "[g]rounded theory is a *general methodology* for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed." Such an approach is especially appropriate for exploratory studies in which theories might be initially and inductively generated from the data.

A total of 26 features were chosen for further analysis. The 26 features account for 71% of all features provided on a Facebook Info page and 68% of all features provided on an Orkut Profile page. Thus, although some features were opted out of the analysis, the 26 chosen features have covered the majority of all possible information on a user's profile page. Table 1 shows the list of the selected 26 features.

Table 1: 26 selected Features on Both Facebook and Orkut.

Features		
First Name	Phone	Sports
Last Name	SNS Instant Messaging[1]	Books
City	Gender	Music
Country	Relationship Status	TV Shows
Address	Religious view	Movies
Hometown	Political view	Education
Birthday	Sexual Orientation	Work
Birthday Year (age)	Personal webpage	About (self-introduction)
Email		

The 26 features were coded in two steps. First, it was coded as "present" or "absent" on the user's profile page. Second, all "present" features were coded as "bona fide" or "non-bona fide." "Bona fide" means "in good faith," which suggests that information provided by the user in this feature is sincere and honest. "Non-bona fide" suggests that information provided by the user in this feature is playful or fake. The decision whether the information was "bona fide" or not was based on our judgment. Since the selected users were our personal friends, we had sufficient knowledge to make accurate judgments. For some information that we were uncertain with, we manually checked them to verify the authenticity. For example, one user had "www.idonthaveasuperwebsite.net" listed as his personal website. We tried to visit this URL but it did not exist. Thus, we coded this feature on his profile page as "non-bona fide". Another user listed her name as "Sailor Moon." The name *Sailor Moon* is a reference to a popular anime cartoon show and we knew her real name based on previous interactions, this feature was also coded as "non-bona fide."

Image Analysis

Users' profile pictures were coded in two steps. First, they were coded for whether or not they were "bona fide." "Bona fide" means that the user was in the picture and "non-bona fide" means that he or she was not in the picture.

Then profiles pictures that were coded as "bona fide" were further coded for two variables. First, they were coded for "dress" based on a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The variable "dress" has four possible values, as shown in Table 2:

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[1] The feature "SNS Instant Messaging" was a space that users would add their screen name or username of their instant messaging platform such as Skype, MSN Chat, AOL IM, etc.

Table 2: Codebook for "Dress"

Variable values for "Dress"	Examples
Professional	long and fancy dresses, suits, button down shirts
Traditional	clothes typical of a country / region
Smart Casual	nice pants (or capris), skirts (with appropriate shirts, blouses or sweaters) or dress (no jeans or shorts), polo shirts
Casual	shorts, tee shirts, halter tops, bathing suits, sport and gym clothes.

Second, the "present" profile pictures were coded for "social distance". According to Kapidzic and Herring (2015), "social distance" was originally identified by Hall (1966) as part of his ideas on "proxemics," the research on how people use and perceive spaces. The values assigned to this variable come from Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) study by applying Hall's categories of individuals' perception of the space around them as public, social or intimate from the perspective of the viewer of that image. Six values of social distance were used in this study: intimate (head only), close personal (head and shoulders), far personal (from the chest up), close social (from the knees up), far social (entire figure visible), and public (multiple figures visible) (Kapidzic and Herring 2011).

Results

Our feature analysis of the 120 profile pages shows that Brazilian users disclosed almost equal amount of personal information on Facebook, since they provided information for 54% of the 26 features on Facebook while 53% of the 26 features on Orkut. In contrast, Indians shared more personal information on Orkut (60% of the 26 features) than on Facebook (52%), as shown in Figure 1.
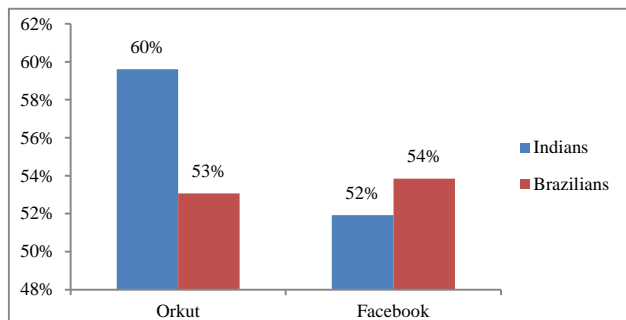

Figure 1: Amount of Information Shared per SNS x Nation.

In terms of gender patterns (Figure 2), both male and female Brazilians shared equal amount of personal information on both SNSs (M: 58% vs. 58%; F: 48% vs. 49%). Male users also shared more information than female users on both sites (Facebook: 58% vs. 49%; Orkut: 58% vs. 48%). In contrast, both male and female Indians shared more personal information on Orkut than on Facebook (M: 53% vs. 48%; F: 66% vs. 55%). And Indian females shared more information on Indian males on both sites (Facebook: 55% vs. 48%; Orkut: 66% vs. 53%).
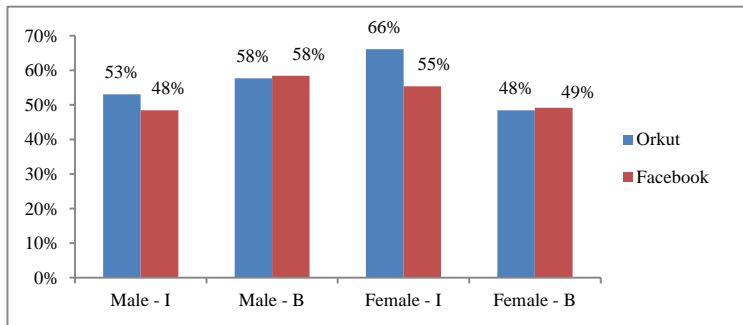
Figure 2: Amount of Information Shared by Gender x Nation x SNS.

In terms of differences of features used cross SNSs, many more Brazilians shared information in features of "gender," "work," "e-mail," and "hometown" on Facebook than on Orkut. Especially, gender was not shared in any Orkut's profiles we coded in this study. In contrast, many more Brazilians provided information in "about you" and "political view" features on Orkut than on Facebook, as presented in Figure 3.
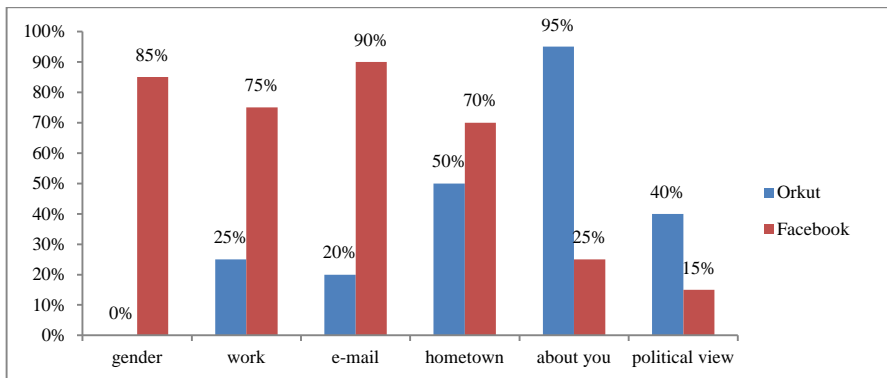

Figure 3: Differences of Features of Information Provided by Brazilians across SNSs.

Regarding the Indian users, many more also shared information in features of "gender," "work," "e-mail" and "hometown" on Facebook than on Orkut, while on Orkut more users provided information in "about you" and "political view" than on Facebook (Figure 4). The feature "gender" was a mandatory field on Facebook that the users had to select when creating an account. However, they had the option to make it invisible on their profiles for other users. In contrast, on Orkut gender was not a mandatory field, and we believe the both Brazilian and Indian users did not share gender information (0%) because it was very easy to infer their gender based on their profile photos and other shared personal information. In addition, The information in "about you" was usually shared on Orkut than on Facebook due to the different design of the two SNSs. The section of "About you" was a prominent part of the Orkut user's profiles, while hard to be noticed on Facebook users' profiles.
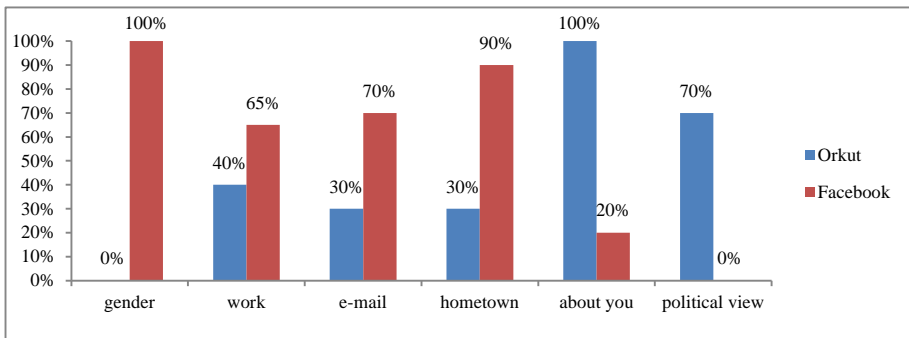
Figure 4: Differences of Features of Information Provided by Indians across SNSs

In general, both Brazilian and Indian users showed similar cross SNS differences when providing personal information in features of "gender," "work," "e-mail," "about you," "hometown," "about you," and "political view." However, they also showed differences when providing information for some other features. For example, on Orkut more Brazilians disclosed information regarding "birthday," "birthday year" and "sexual orientation" than Indians, while more Indians share information on "religion view," "education," "sports," and "relationship status" than Brazilians (Figure 5).
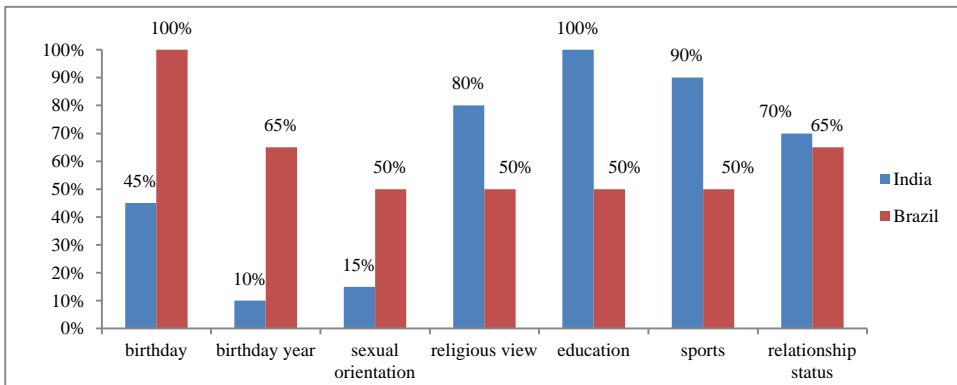

Figure 5: Differences of Features of Information Provided by Brazilians and Indians on Orkut

Brazilians and Indians also showed important differences on Facebook when disclosing personal information (Figure 6). Contrary to their behavior on Orkut, more Brazilians disclosed information about "sports" (55% vs. 30%) and "religion view" (15% vs. 10%) than Indians. "Relationship status" was also shared more often on Brazilian profiles than on Indian profiles (75% vs. 60%).
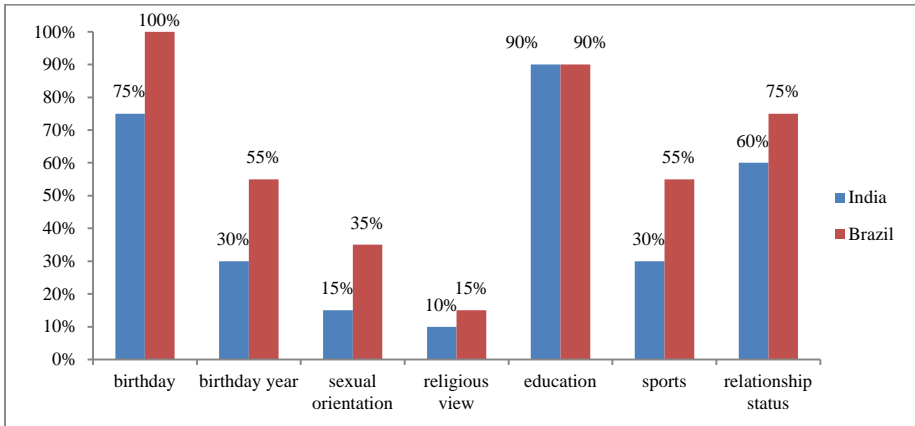
Figure 6: Differences of Features of Information Provided by Brazilians and Indians on Facebook.

Concerning whether or not users provide "bona fide" personal information, we only found few "non-bona fide" information on Orkut (Figure 7). 90% of the "non-bona fide" information was provided in the feature of "name" and the other 10% in the feature "website." In addition, both Brazilian females and Indian females provided more "non-bona fide" information than males (Indian: 6% vs. 1%; Brazilian: 8% vs. 3%).
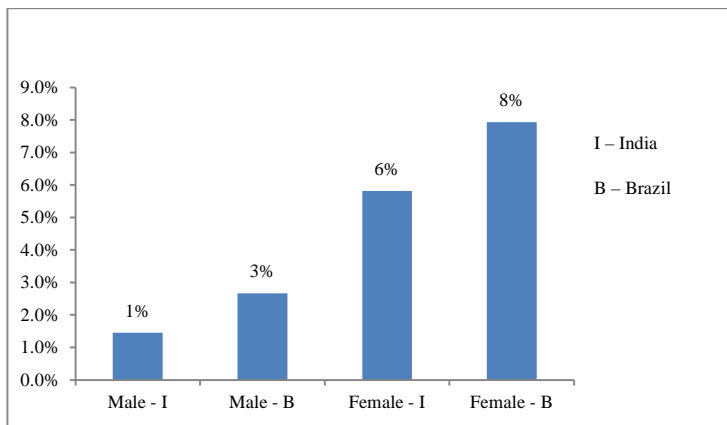

Figure 7: Percentage of "Non-Bona Fide" Information on Orkut.

For the Image Analysis, a total of 120 profile pictures were analyzed. 50% of the male users from Brazil had the same profile picture on both SNSs, while 40% of the Brazilian females had the same profile picture. However, only a few Indian users shared the same profile picture on both SNSs, as shown on Figure 8.
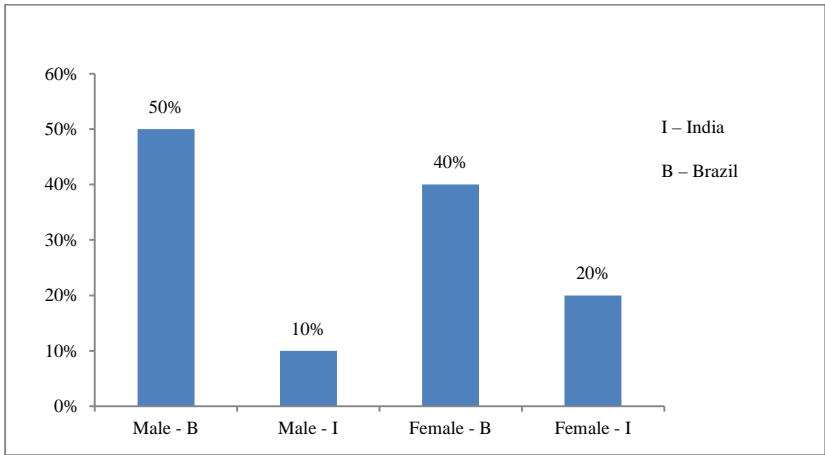
Figure 8: Percentage of Users with the Same Profile Picture on Both SNSs.

As for the "bona fide" category, all the "non-bona fide" profile pictures were from female Indian users. They also used more "non-bona fide" profile pictures on Facebook than on Orkut, as shown in Table 3. It is interesting to highlight that the same users that had "non-bona fide" profile pictures on Orkut also had it on Facebook. Another interesting finding is that the users with "non-bona fide" profile pictures on Orkut also disclosed "non-bona fide" information in their profile features.

Table 3: Percentage of Non "bona fide" Profile Pictures on Both SNSs (India).

	% of non "bona fide" profile pictures
Facebook	40%
Orkut	20%

Regarding "dress," most Brazilians tended to present themselves in "casual" clothes on both SNSs: 70% - male on Facebook, 80% - male on Orkut, 60% - female on both SNSs. India males tended to self-present in "smart casual" clothes: 70% on Facebook and 80% on Orkut. The female Indians had an interesting way to dress. 70% of the profile pictures on Orkut had the user garbed in traditional clothes, and on Facebook, half of the users were dressed in "professional" clothes and the other half were dressed in "smart casual" clothes. These results are displayed in Figures 9 and 10.
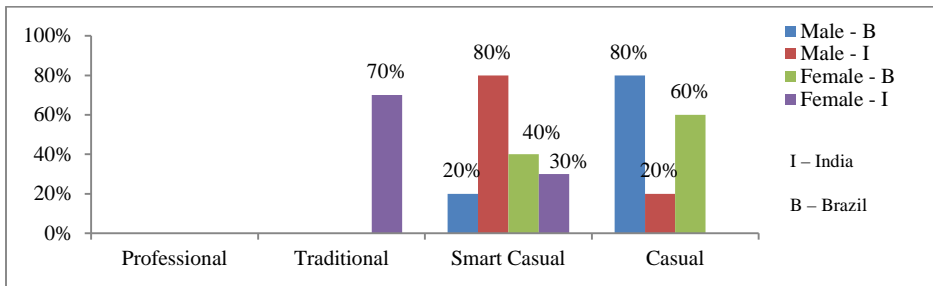

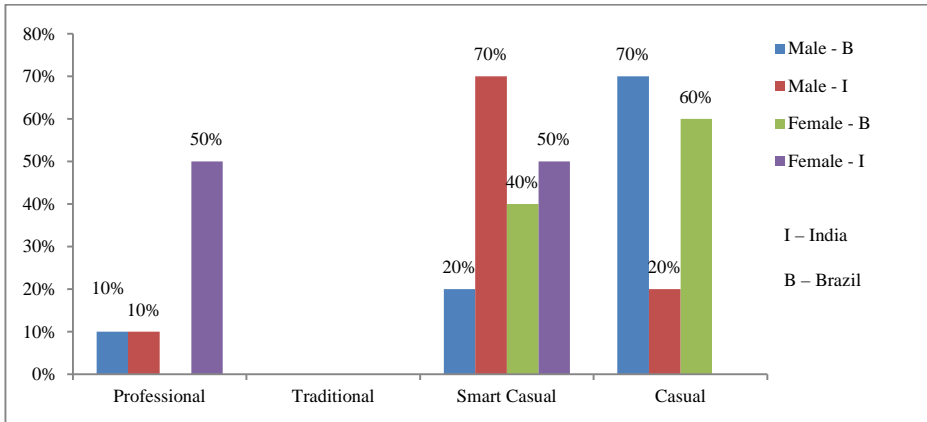*Figure 9: "Dress" Variable on Orkut*

Figure 10: "Dress" Variable on Facebook.

Brazilians also showed a consistent pattern on both SNSs when coded for "social distance". A majority of their profile pictures were coded as "close personal": 100% for male and 60% for female (on both SNSs). 70% of male Indian users' profile pictures on Facebook were coded as "close personal" and 60% were "far personal" on Orkut, while 60% of Indian females' profile pictures were coded as "close social" on Orkut and 80% were "far personal" on Facebook (Figures 11 and 12).

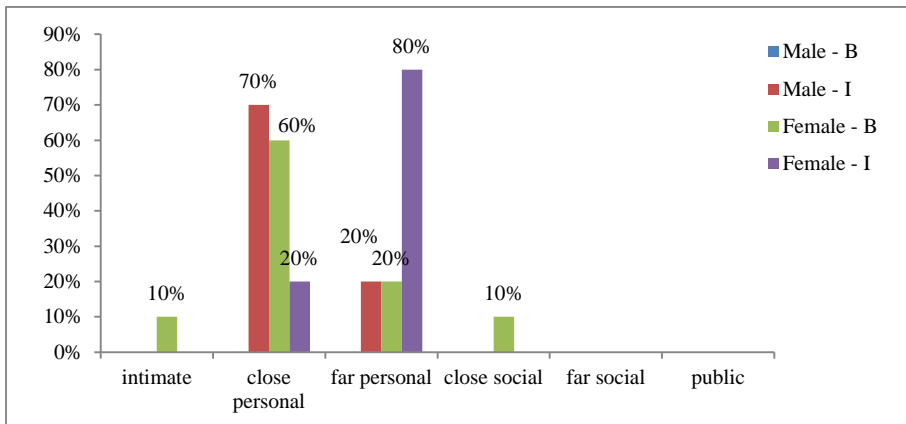*Figure 11: "Social Distance" Variable on Orkut*
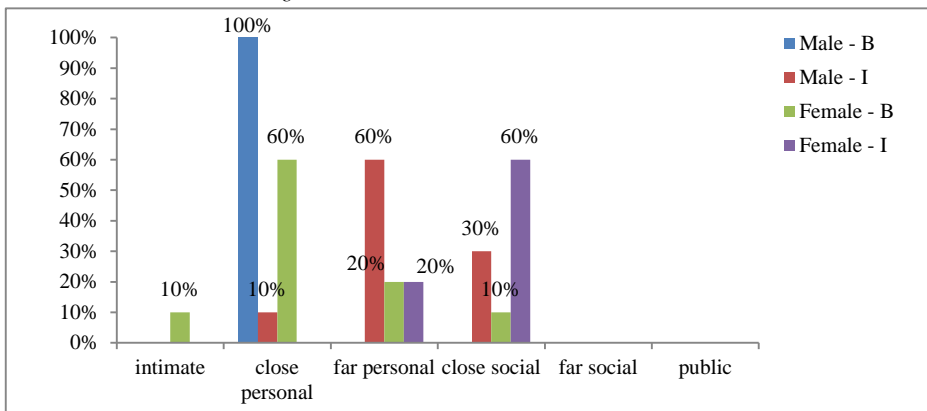
Figure 12: "Social Distance" Variable on Facebook

Discussion

Rethinking the research question that motivated this study: "Whether or not users disclose the same amount and type of personal information in different SNSs," we have shown that users indeed present themselves in different ways on different SNSs (i.e., Facebook and Orkut), regardless of gender and cultural background.

The differences were identified by feature analysis and image analysis. Brazilians shared almost equal amount of personal information on both SNSs, while Indians shared more information on Orkut than Facebook. Considering Facebook became popular in both countries around the same time, during the second half of 2010 (Social Network Watch 2011), it seems that Brazilians are switching over to Facebook faster, due to the confidence on the information they shared.

We have also seen that Indians were still more comfortable on Orkut than on Facebook. On Google's SNS, more Indians shared information about political and religious views, which may be considered taboo topics by some people, since India is a so-called "spiritual country" with various religious philosophies. Their profile pictures were socially closer than those on Facebook. Female Indian users seemed to be even more concerned about presenting themselves on Facebook, 40% of the users had their profile pictures coded as "non -bona fide", and for the "bona fide" ones, 80% were coded as "far personal." However, they seemed to be more relaxed in showing themselves in their traditional clothes on Orkut. In general, Indians appeared to take Facebook more professionally. They usually shared information that can be considered neutral (e.g., not as sensitive as religious and political views) such as: e-mail, work, education, and home town.

In contrast, Brazilians seemed to take Facebook in a relaxing way. Their profile pictures were almost coded the same way for "social distance" and "dress" on both SNSs. All Brazilian males' profile pictures were coded as "close personal" while 60% of Brazilian female were coded as that. Although Brazilians seemed more relaxed about the change from Orkut to Facebook, they still took Facebook slightly more professionally. More Brazilians shared information about e-mail, work, and education on Facebook than on Orkut. In contrast, more Brazilians tended to share information about political views, religious views, and "about you" on Orkut than on Facebook.

These findings show that users' cultural backgrounds and gender may shape self-presentation attitudes across SNSs. According to Hofstede and Bond's (1984) culture dimensions, India is considered a masculine society. This can explain why Female Indians seemed to be more conservative than male users; they kept the "safety" distance by sharing more "non-bona fide" information and profile pictures. They also used more socially distanced "bona fide" profile pictures than Indian males. In contrast, Brazil is considered less masculine and more indulgent,

suggesting that Brazilians tend to acknowledge their impulses and desires with regard to enjoying life and having fun. Therefore, Brazilian male and female users' self-presentation tended to be consistent across both SNSs (i.e., to recognize their true selves) and in a more relaxing way.

It should also be noted that technological features (i.e., site architecture) might influence these differences. According to Papacharissi (2009), site architecture refers to a composite result of structure, design, and organization, all specified by programming code. Though both Facebook and Orkut are SNSs that encourage social interaction and free behavior, the different features of the two SNS may guide how users can interact and display interests and tastes.

Conclusion and Future Work

This paper explored users' self-presentation across two cultures and two SNSs. It addresses one component of a larger research question that tries to identify the gender and cultural differences in self-presentation in different SNSs. This is a multifaceted problem space. Our findings show that users disclose different personal information in different SNS, and the users' cultural backgrounds and gender may shape their patterns of self-presentation.

A limitation for this study is that the data were collected from our SNS friends. All participants in this study were aged from 21 to 35 years old and had at least a bachelor's degree. As for future research, It would be interesting to apply a "more random" sampling procedure in order to analyze users with various of ages and backgrounds. Further research is also needed to explore results regarding gender, culture and image analysis using more SNSs. In addition, it would be interesting to analyze how users interact with others. Do they also show different patterns of interaction on different SNSs? What communication modes do they prefer when interacting on SNSs: textual, visual, or audial?

This study sheds light on important issues that will motivate other researches in exploring the differences on SNS self-presentation by comparing the use of SNSs in more cultures, in order to better understand cross-cultural, cross–gender, and cross-SNS similarities and differences in self-presentation.

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