

## การเปิดเผยอารมณ์และทัศนะส่วนบุคคลทางสื่อออนไลน์: กรณีศึกษาการใช้สื่อเฟซบุ๊กของนักศึกษาไทยและอเมริกัน

### Online Expression of Emotions and Personal Viewpoints: A Case Study of Facebook Usage among Thai and US Students

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#### Abstract

This study researched the use of Facebook by university students in Thailand and the US comparing their activities and use of that Website. The researchers found that Thai students made more intensive use of Facebook in the amount of time spent on the Website, frequency of log-ins, and regularity of their status updates than US students. Thai students also had reported a greater attachment to this social media Website, and appeared to be more open than US students to the use of Facebook for expression of their viewpoints and their emotional states.

**Keywords:** *Intensity of Facebook Use, Expression of Emotions, Expression of Personal Viewpoints*

#### บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาครั้งนี้ค้นคว้าเกี่ยวกับการใช้สื่อเฟซบุ๊กของนักศึกษาระดับมหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศไทยและสหรัฐอเมริกา โดยเปรียบเทียบกิจกรรมและลักษณะการใช้งานในเว็บไซต์ดังกล่าว คณะผู้วิจัยพบว่า นักศึกษาไทยใช้สื่อเฟซบุ๊กอย่างเข้มข้นกว่านักศึกษอเมริกันทั้งในเชิงปริมาณเวลา ความถี่ในการเข้าใช้งาน และการให้ข้อมูล ปัจจุบันเกี่ยวกับสถานะของตน ทั้งนี้ ผลการวิจัยยังระบุว่านักศึกษไทยมีความผูกพันกับสื่อสังคมชนิดนี้มากกว่านักศึกษอเมริกัน และกล้าเปิดเผยทัศนะและอารมณ์ความรู้สึกของตนเองบนสื่อเฟซบุ๊กมากกว่านักศึกษอเมริกันอีกด้วย

**คำสำคัญ:** *ความเข้มข้นในการใช้งานสื่อเฟซบุ๊ก การเปิดเผยอารมณ์ การเปิดเผยทัศนะส่วนบุคคล*

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## Introduction

The popularity of Social Networking Sites (SNS) has grown enormously over the previous decade, allowing millions of users to remain in easy contact with friends whether near or far away. Facebook claims that each day, more than 800-million users log on to update their status or review activities of their friends, and the total number of active accounts totals about 1.3 billion (Newsroom, 2014). However, messages exchanged via SNS are not always comforting—sometimes exposing ones' intimate thoughts and personal states of mind can have disastrous consequences. One widely publicized case involved a 13-year old named Megan Meier who took her own life after becoming the object of bullying on her Myspace account. Meier's response to rejection by a fake cyber-boyfriend created by her neighbors was extreme, possibly aggravated by her attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and depression ("Mom: Myspace...", 2007) Notorious cases such as Meier's have prompted researchers to focus their work on social media effects on users' online self-disclosure and their habits of expressing themselves on social networking sites.

In this study, we surveyed a general population of university students who were social media users to evaluate how they presented themselves and their personal lives on Facebook in two areas: 1) their intensity of Facebook use, and 2) their expression of emotions and personal viewpoints on Facebook. To date, most research studying youthful social media users has been conducted in North America or Europe, and this study aimed to offer a broader perspective, allowing a comparison of Facebook users in Thailand and the US. These two nations were selected for an examination of the way cultures shape online behaviors and interactions because

in both countries, Facebook has great popularity as the leading social media Website (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011; Millward, 2013). Additionally, the two nations provide a contrast of Eastern and Western societies.

A 2013 national survey by Thailand's Electronic Transaction Development Agency (2013) found that smartphones and notebooks were the primary devices Thai people used to surf the Internet (69.5% and 67.9% respectively). The study suggested that these devices were preferred due to their availability and convenience. This study also found that about one-third of those surveyed used the Internet to access social media. According to Millward (2013), Facebook was the most popular social network in Thailand, amounting to 18.5 million users in the first quarter of 2013, though Sakawee (2013) estimated that number at 24 million just three months later. The Bangkok University Research Center's 2013 poll of 1,186 respondents found that social media were most often used to chat with friends (80.2%) and to follow the friends' updates (53.4%). These findings make it clear that Thai youth of this generation have largely adopted social media networks as a part of their daily lives.

Studies of US social media users have revealed a similar pattern. In 2013, the Pew Research Center found in its national survey that Facebook was the dominant social network site in terms of the user volume. Of those with online access, 71% had Facebook accounts and of these 63% logged in at least once daily. Moreover, the rate of growth in the number of users was remarkable, growing at an annual rate of about 12% in the total monthly active users worldwide. Facebook announced that during 2012, its users clicked "likes" 1.13 trillion times and 219 billion photos were uploaded on its

Website. In addition, 604 million users accessed the site via mobile phones (Tam, 2013).

### Literature Review

Research on social media users and their online activities has been broad and has grown at a rapid pace, especially focusing on users' personal characteristics. For example, Alloway, Runac, Qureshi, and Kemp (2014) studied the way social media use was associated with empathy and narcissism; Kalpidou, Costin, and Morris (2011), found that youthful heavy users of Facebook were more likely to express low self-esteem; Kross et al. (2013) concluded that the use of Facebook led to reduced well-being; Toma and Hancock (2013) employed self-affirmation theory to examine Facebook uses; and ul Haq and Chand (2012) analyzed relationships between Facebook use and academic performance.

A large portion of worldwide online users is university-aged youth (Henrikson, 2011). At this exploratory yet vulnerable age, young adults establish large social networks (Manago, Taylor, & Greenfield, 2012). Although diverse and wide, these networks also contain a subset of especially deep and close relationships (Collins & Laursen, 2004). Galambos, Barker, and Krahn (2006), noted that this transitional period in life poses challenges to personal identity and satisfactions in life that can lead to depression, anger, self-doubts, and generally low self-esteem. How these conditions interact with online behaviors has received attention. Carpenter, Green, and LaFlam (2011) reported that Facebook use was correlated with users' curiosity about the other people's lives rather than its use as a tool to maintain and develop relationships. Molden, Lucas, Gardner, Dean, and Knowles (2009), in their experimental study of networked communication, found that

online rejection produced a sense of social loss as well as morbid and hostile responses. Despite this, Chu (2011) found that Facebook users were prone to greater self-disclosure than non-Facebook users.

On Facebook, interactions occur among a network of other users identified as "friends" to whom one might reveal one's innermost thoughts. For this reason, in a social media setting, the notion of close and intimate friendships needs to be carefully evaluated. In this study, we accepted the definition of intimacy proposed by Furman and Buhrmester (1987) as engaging in self-disclosure by sharing intimate thoughts and feelings with others. Manago et al. (2012) suggested that intimate relationships offer benefits such as companionship and enhanced self-esteem. When people feel comfortable with their intimate friendships, they feel free to disclose private information. In this sense, intimate friendships require high levels of trust and confidence. Although the work on social media usage of Hampton, Goulet, Rainnie, and Purcell (2011) found that Facebook users had more close relationships and received more social support (p. 4), contrasting findings were presented by Koehl and Goetzenbrucker (2012) who found that social media communication did not seem to support strong ties among virtual friends. To address this contradiction, this study examined the extent to which university Facebook users open themselves to others by means of their expressions of emotions, personal viewpoints, and self-disclosure to their online friends, some of whom may not be all that close.

Facebook itself recognizes the possibility that friends may be categorized according to closeness and intimacy. Users may group their Facebook friends into three classifications—close friends,

acquaintances, and social friends. Our study sought to analyze how the proportions of users' allocation of Facebook friends in these three categories was associated with the degree of trust users had in online expressions of emotional states and personal perspectives. The number of Facebook friends users have can easily grow large. A survey by Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2011) discovered the median number of Facebook friends reported by university students was 300, compared with a median number of 75 close real world friends.

Findings like these underscore the importance of exploring Facebook users' behaviors and the extent to which they revealed their personal information and states of mind online. The behaviors of interest for this study included the amount of time spent on Facebook, number of Facebook friends, device(s) used to access Facebook, and users' self-presentation by name and profile photos. We also examined students' expression of emotions and personal viewpoints on Facebook, as well as their main activities on the Website—ranging from actions such as clicking “like” or posting “comments” to more explicitly disclosing acts such as posting messages as a way of relieving frustrations.

Although it is likely that tendencies to self-disclose are shaped by culture, most studies on social media have been conducted in North America or Europe. How such online behaviors differ in other parts of the world is consequently not well understood. Koehl and Goetzenbrucker (2012) carried out one of the few cross-national studies and found that Thai social network users' online behaviors were quite different from Austrian counterparts, especially in Thai students' greater inclination to reveal their emotions and personal viewpoints. Another study compared risky online behaviors of youth in Bahrain and the

UK, and found that in both nations young users shared personal information and interacted with strangers they encountered online, with older youth even expressing a willingness to meet these virtual friends face-to-face (Davidson & Martellozzo, 2013).

Youthful users not only build extensive networks of contacts, many are intensively engaged with social media. Valenzuela, Park, and Kee (2009) in their survey of university students found an association between Facebook usage intensity and life satisfactions, social trust, and civic and political participation. In the media, intensity of use has tended to be measured by dimensions such as time spent using or frequency of use. However, in SNS studies particularly involving Facebook, its interactive nature suggests another dimension of intensity—activeness, referring to how often a user updates their status page. Our study further enlarged the intensity of use concept, as developed by Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007), to include the dimension of attachment by measuring the degree of users' dependence on Facebook.

It seems obvious that intensity of usage—meaning the three dimensions of use (time, activeness, and attachment)—would affect user's online experience, but how one's willingness to reveal personal emotions and viewpoints might be associated with intensity is unclear. This study took up these issues discussed above with the following research questions and corresponding hypotheses:

*RQ1: Do Thai and the US university students differ in their willingness to express emotions and personal viewpoints on Facebook?*

*H1: Thai and the US university students differ in the degree to which they express emotions and personal viewpoints on Facebook pages.*

*RQ2: Do Thai and US university students' intensity of Facebook use differ?*

*H2: Thai and the US university students differ in their intensity of Facebook use on the dimensions of time spent logged on and frequency of log-ins, activeness, and attachment.*

## Methods

A survey of Facebook users was conducted in two sites: a major metropolitan university in Bangkok, Thailand and a Midwestern university in the United States. Students attending lecture classes who had a Facebook account were included in our sample. Courses selected at both sites were conducted in English and so this was the language employed in all questionnaires. A power analysis based upon pretest data indicated a total N-size of about 200 would be sufficient in each of the samples. There were 431 questionnaires collected, including 204 from Thai respondents and 227 from US participants. Among those persons included in the sample, 220 were male and 209 were female. Two additional respondents declined to reveal their gender. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 28 years.

The questionnaire was based in part on previous studies reported in the literature and included a number of items intended to capture demographic information. The key variables of expression of emotions and personal viewpoints, and intensity of Facebook use received special attention in pretesting procedures.

The Facebook intensity measures were comprised of three dimensions as discussed above. The number of hours users spent each day on Facebook in the previous week and the number of times they logged on Facebook daily were used as measures of the time dimension. To assess activeness of use, respondents were asked the

number of times on average they updated their status each week. The attachment dimension consisted of six Likert items adapted from the work of Ellison et al. (2007): 1) Facebook is part of my everyday activity; 2) I am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook; 3) Facebook has become part of my daily routine; 4) I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while; 5) I feel I am part of the Facebook community; and 6) I would be sorry if Facebook shut down. Cronbach's Alpha for attachment among the entire sample of 431 respondents amounted to 0.868, indicating satisfactory reliability of this measure.

The expression of emotions and viewpoints variable was assessed by items adapted from previous studies. It was comprised of eight items describing participants' use of Facebook as a forum for personal expression: 1) I feel free to express my emotions on Facebook; 2) I feel comfortable to express my feelings on Facebook; 3) I am concerned about how much intimate information I should post on my Facebook status updates; 4) Facebook is a place where I can relax without worries; 5) Searching friends' postings on their pages gives me pleasure; 6) I look at friends' postings to satisfy my curiosity; 7) I post messages on my friends' walls to maintain our close relationships; and 8) Facebook helps me maintain good relationships with friends. Chronbach's Alpha for expression of emotion and viewpoints was 0.792 which suggests that these items were reliably measuring the concept.

In addition, we examined participants' online behavior through items that referred to actions one might take on Facebook: 1) Post messages about your situation in life; 2) Review friends' status updates; 3) Click likes; 4) Share opinions or comment on posts; 5) Post information about your

interests; 6) Post messages asking for suggestions; 7) Update your status on where you are or what you are doing; 8) Express your current emotional state (such as sadness, received good news, or am excited); and 9) Post statement to relieve frustrations. Cronbach's Alpha for the whole sample of participants was 0.782, indicating a good level of consistency among the nine items.

## Findings

Browsing Facebook was a popular pastime for both Thai and US students. Overall, only two persons indicated they logged in less frequently than once each day and almost one-fourth of respondents (24.5%) claimed to access their Facebook page more than five times daily. More than half of the participants in both survey sites indicated that they accessed their Facebook accounts at least once but less than four times each day.

Thai and US students viewed their Facebook pages somewhat differently however. Roughly half of respondents in both countries used a combination of both computers and mobile devices to access their pages—52.5% of US students and 48.9% of Thai participants—but just 15.2% of Thai respondents only used computers and never used mobile devices for access as compared with 27.8% of US students who did the same. Similarly, Thais who only used their mobile devices for access were 32.4% of the total whereas among US students that figure was 23.3% ( $\chi^2[2, N = 431] = 11.192, p = .004$ ).

### Facebook Friends

A key benefit of a Facebook account is the ability to establish an extensive network of social contacts. This is accomplished by identifying another user as a "friend." Facebook sets the

absolute limit at 5,000 friends. In our study, we found that more than half of both Thai and US students claimed more than 400 Facebook friends. Although the mean number claimed for Thai respondents was greater at 685.49 compared to 590.89 for US students, the difference was not significant ( $t = 1.660$ , adjusting for unequal variances  $df = 359$ , n.s.).

Because users' willingness to disclose their personal viewpoints and emotional state might be dependent on the kinds of relationships they had with online friends, we sought to closely evaluate the nature of Facebook friends. We did this using the same criteria that Facebook provides its users to define friendships. Facebook delineates three categories: friends, acquaintances, and restricted. This categorization scheme determines whether an individual can see another person's Facebook posts, photos, or any other content on their pages. Based on these definitions, respondents were asked to identify the percentages of all their friends that fell into each of the three categories.

Some students reported that they had no Facebook friends that they defined as close, yet a few others reported that all theirs were close friends. The mean number of close friends that Thai college students claimed came to 269.5, which was significantly larger than 184.0 reported by US students ( $t = 3.182$  adjusting for unequal variances,  $df = 329$ ,  $p = .002$ ). Facebook describes acquaintances as "friends you don't need to stay in close touch with. People on your acquaintances list will rarely show up in your News Feed" (Help Center, 2013). The mean number of acquaintances that Thai respondents had were about the same as that of US students, 267.1 and 261.4 friends respectively ( $t = .206$ ,  $df = 412$ , n.s.). Facebook does not define the "restricted" category but explains that it is "for people you've added as a

friend but just don't want to share with, like your boss. When you add someone to your restricted list, they will only be able to see your public content or posts of yours that you tag them in" (Help Center, 2013). In this survey, we preferred the term "social friends" for this category and participants were told that this designation referred to persons the respondents accepted as friends but did not know well or were seldom thought of

when using Facebook. In general, we expected that this type of Facebook friend would constitute the smallest proportion among respondents, but this was found not to be the case for Thai students. Their mean number of social friends was large, 190.9 friends, as compared to 125.2 reported by US students ( $t = 2.82$ , adjusting for unequal variances  $df = 334$ ,  $p = .005$ ). Details are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Comparison of Thai and US university students' Facebook friends

Facebook friends	Thai		US		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> **
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Close friends	269.5	323.39	184.0	208.12	3.182	329*	.002
Acquaintances	267.1	304.312	261.4	254.87	.206	412	n.s.
Social friends	190.9	266.40	125.2	191.285	2.82	334*	.005

\* Levene's test for equality of variance was significant; therefore, *df* was adjusted to account for the inequality of variance.

\*\* two-tailed test; n.s. indicates differences were not significant.

### Self-disclosure

How one identifies oneself on Facebook through username and photos is important because these are ways to directly disclose oneself to the Facebook community. Of course they are also important for reasons of online security and privacy. Overall, most participants (78.7%) indicated that they used their real names on their Facebook accounts, but there were wide differences between respondents of the two countries. Nearly everyone (93.8%), among US students reported that they used their real first and last names whereas less than two-thirds (61.8%) of the Thai students did so ( $\chi^2 [1, N = 431] = 65.809$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Nevertheless, there was little difference between the two groups in their use of real photos on their profile page as most Thai and US students (98.0%, 97.4% respectively) made use of genuine personal images.

The difference in Facebook usernames was perhaps due to the Thai preference for the use of nicknames to identify oneself in everyday life.

### Expression of Emotions and Personal Viewpoints on Facebook

Eight Likert items were used to evaluate users' inclination to express their emotions and personal viewpoints on their Facebook page based on a 7-point scale. A value of 7 represented the greatest attachment and 1 indicated the least. These measures were used to test Hypothesis 1:

An overall evaluation of the summed values for these items showed that Thai students were apt to voice their emotions and personal viewpoints on Facebook more than US students. Results are reported in Table 2. A comparison of the students' responses to the eight individual items showed

the same tendency in every case but one. That item, “I look at friends’ postings to satisfy my curiosity” failed to attain significance, indicating that this kind of behavior was equally common among students in the two survey sites. Especially

large differences were found between Thai and US students in response to the items “I feel free to express my emotions on Facebook” and “I feel comfortable to express my feelings on Facebook.”

**Table 2** Comparison of Thai and US university students’ expression of emotions and personal viewpoints on Facebook

Facebook activities	Thai		US		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> **
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
1. I feel free to express my emotions on Facebook.	3.48	1.526	2.38	1.484	7.561	429	<.001
2. I feel comfortable to express my feelings on Facebook.	3.48	1.497	2.40	1.532	7.350	429	<.001
3. I am concerned about how much intimate information I should post on my Facebook status updates.	4.05	1.567	4.48	2.117	-2.391	414*	.017
4. Facebook is a place where I can relax without worries.	3.66	1.438	3.03	1.457	4.512	429	<.001
5. Searching friends’ postings on their pages gives me pleasure.	3.53	1.490	3.21	1.594	2.157	428	.032
6. I look at friends’ postings to satisfy my curiosity.	3.73	1.442	3.81	1.807	-.539	423*	n.s.
7. I post messages on my friends’ walls to maintain our close relationships.	4.03	1.582	3.49	1.867	3.210	423*	.001
8. Facebook helps me maintain good relationships with friends.	4.26	1.416	3.79	1.787	3.024	420*	.003
9. Overall expression of emotion on Facebook	3.78	1.01	3.33	1.05	4.462	423	<.001

\* Levene’s test for equality of variance was significant; therefore, *df* was adjusted to account for the inequality of variance.

\*\* two-tailed test; n.s. indicates differences were not significant.

We also performed an analysis of students’ self-reported activities on Facebook based on a 5 point scale. On this measure, a value of 5 represented the greatest attachment and 1 indicated the least. The results reported in Table 3 paralleled the findings on expression of emotions and viewpoints. Online activities ranged from sharing

personal views by clicking “like” or posting “comments” to more revealing actions such as posting comments showing one’s emotional state or posting statements to vent one’s frustration. As can be seen, of the nine items, only clicking likes and posting information interests failed to attain significance in comparisons between the two



countries' students. In every case but one the difference was due to a greater tendency of Thai students to use Facebook for all these purposes. It should be noted that the five actions with the highest mean scores—meaning they were often performed—had little to do with emotional expression. Also, those five had means above the midpoint of the scale, indicating that these were

Facebook acts that respondents commonly engaged in. However, in both countries, students reported they tended not to participate in Facebook activities that were most revealing of their personal lives and emotions, especially postings about their current emotional state or ones expressed out of frustrations.

**Table 3** Comparison of Thai and US university students' activities on Facebook

Facebook activities	Thai		US		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> **
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
1. Post message about your situation in life.	3.02	1.092	2.37	1.162	5.983	428*	<.001
2. Review friends' status updates.	3.30	.965	3.73	.998	-4.462	429	<.001
3. Click likes.	3.54	1.047	3.41	1.115	1.244	429	n.s.
4. Share opinions or comment on posts.	3.17	1.003	2.88	1.123	2.774	428	.006
5. Post information about your interests.	3.10	1.094	3.11	1.271	-.102	428*	n.s.
6. Post messages asking for suggestions.	2.65	1.167	2.21	1.175	3.855	429	<.001
7. Update your status on where you are or what you are doing.	2.75	1.216	2.05	1.135	6.153	429	<.001
8. Express your current emotional state (such as sad, got good news, excited).	2.76	1.159	1.80	1.073	8.957	429	<.001
9. Post message to release frustrations.	2.69	1.073	1.61	.902	11.233	398*	<.001

\* Levene's test for equality of variance was significant; therefore, *df* was adjusted to account for the inequality of variance; n.s. indicates differences were not significant.

\*\* two-tailed test.

#### Intensity of Facebook Use

Our measure of intensity of Facebook use was comprised of three dimensions: amount of use, frequency of use, and their devotion to the

Website. Each of these was employed to test Hypothesis 2.

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of hours per day they spent on Facebook

in the previous week. Eliminating non-responses and outliers, a total sample size of 416 was used. Thai students spent more time logged into their Facebook accounts than their US counterparts. Among Thai students the mean number of hours devoted to Facebook each day (with outliers eliminated) was 2.86 hours, compared to only 1.85 hours among US students ( $t = 4.343$ , adjusting for unequal variances  $df = 369$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Participants were also asked to estimate the number of times they logged on Facebook each day on average. Eliminating again non-responses and outliers, we employed a sample size of 426 for this comparison. On this, Thai students signed into Facebook more frequently. Their mean number of daily Facebook log-ins on was 7.57, and for US students the mean was 4.36 ( $t = 4.288$ , adjusting for unequal variances  $df = 299$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Activeness was assessed by using the frequency of status updates. Status updating is one of the most popular options available to Facebook users; it allows them to post anything they would like to share, such as their personal thoughts, opinions, or state of mind. This can be done as often as users wish. There were 240 students who said that they revised their status page once weekly, and this was the most common value reported. Among all students in both sites only 29 persons reported

that they updated their status less often than once weekly. Thai students were more active on Facebook, on average updating their status page 2.27 times weekly, as compared with 1.72 times for US respondents ( $t = 2.761$  adjusting for unequal variances,  $df = 359$ ,  $p = .006$ ).

A five-point Likert scale comprised of six statements was used to measure users' attachment to Facebook. A score of 5 represented the greatest attachment and 1 indicated the least. A comparison of mean differences of individual items found only two were significantly different: Thai university students indicated higher levels of attachment on the statement of "I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while"  $M = 2.61$ , than US students  $M = 2.22$ , ( $t = 3.413$ , adjusting for unequal variances,  $df = 427$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Thai university students also had higher levels of agreement to the statement "I would be sorry if Facebook shut down"  $M = 2.79$  than US students  $M = 2.47$  ( $t = 2.532$ ,  $df = 429$ ,  $p = .012$ ). However, aggregating the responses to all six items, the summed measures of attachment was significantly different for Thai  $M = 2.77$  and US students  $M = 2.65$  ( $t = 1.268$ , adjusting for unequal variances,  $df = 428$ ,  $p = .012$ ). A tabulation of the intensity of Facebook use scores and comparisons of the two student samples is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4** Comparison of Thai and US university students' intensity of Facebook use

Dimensions	Thai		US		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> **
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
<i>Time</i>							
1. Number of hours spent on Facebook each day	2.86	2.593	1.85	2.097	4.343	369*	<.001
2. Number of times they logged on Facebook each day	7.57	9.553	4.36	4.962	4.288	299*	<.001

**Table 4** Comparison of Thai and US university students' intensity of Facebook use (continued)

Dimensions	Thai		US		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> **
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
<u><i>Eagerness of use</i></u>							
1. Number of status updates	2.27	2.360	1.72	1.694	2.761	359*	.006
<u><i>Attachment to Facebook</i></u>							
1. Facebook is part of my everyday activity.	3.01	1.224	3.04	1.449	-.232	427*	n.s.
2. I am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook.	2.59	1.063	2.63	1.127	-.352	429	n.s.
3. Facebook has become part of my daily routine.	2.98	1.187	3.06	1.439	-.607	426*	n.s.
4. I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while.	2.61	1.070	2.22	1.277	3.413	427*	.001
5. I feel I am part of the Facebook community.	2.65	1.120	2.51	1.176	1.266	429	n.s.
6. I would be sorry if Facebook shut down.	2.79	1.294	2.47	1.308	2.532	429	.012
7. Overall attachment to Facebook	2.77	.896	2.65	1.018	1.268	428*	.012

\* Levene's test for equality of variance was significant; therefore, *df* was adjusted to account for the inequality of variance; n.s. indicates differences were not significant.

\*\* two-tailed test.

We were also interested in the association between users' utilization of Facebook to express emotions and the intensity of their usage. The findings in this analysis sharply delineated differences in the way young adults in these two nations made use of this social networking site. Results are shown in Table 5. For the amount of use as measured in frequency of log-ins and time spent on Facebook there was no association with

the overall expression of emotion and viewpoints among Thai students, but for US students there was. Among US students there was a significant correlation between expression of emotions and all intensity measures. This included frequency of log-ins ( $r = 0.207$ ,  $p = .002$ ), hours spent using Facebook ( $r = 0.309$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and frequency of status updates ( $r = 0.261$ ,  $p < .001$ ). A close inspection of results for individual items explains

more fully this pattern: Facebook use for US students was associated with actions such as posting messages for maintenance of friendships and reading friends' postings to satisfy curiosity about friends. On the other hand, for the measure of activeness—frequency of status updates—there was a significant correlation with expression of emotions and viewpoints for Thai participants ( $r = 0.194$ ,  $p = .006$ ). Thus Thai respondents

tended to use their Facebook status updates for their emotional expressions, whereas US students expressions of emotion were related to the intensity of their general Facebook use. Moreover, for both Thai and US students there was a strong correlation between attachment to Facebook and voicing emotions online ( $r = 0.438$ ,  $p < .001$  and  $r = 0.638$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively).

**Table 5** Association between Thai and US university students' intensity of use and expression of emotions and viewpoints on Facebook

Expression of emotions on Facebook.		Time		Eagerness	Attachment to
		Frequency of log-ins	Hours spent using FB	of use Frequency of status updates	Facebook Total attachment measures
1. I feel free to express my emotions on Facebook.	Thai ( <i>r</i> )	.065	.127	.173*	.199**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.356	.073	.014	.004
	US ( <i>r</i> )	.081	.119	.125	.266**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.223	.073	.060	.000
2. I feel comfortable to express my feelings on Facebook.	Thai ( <i>r</i> )	-.036	.068	.246**	.190**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.610	.336	.000	.006
	US ( <i>r</i> )	-.039	.051	.077	.189**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.560	.442	.247	.004
3. I am concerned about how much intimate information I should post on my Facebook status updates.	Thai ( <i>r</i> )	.072	.071	.115	.233**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.306	.320	.104	.001
	US ( <i>r</i> )	.097	.108	.123	.182**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.148	.104	.066	.006
4. Facebook is a place where I can relax without worries.	Thai ( <i>r</i> )	.086	.166*	.149*	.328**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.220	.018	.034	<.001
	US ( <i>r</i> )	.048	.219**	.084	.446**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.478	.001	.209	<.001
5. Searching friends' postings on their pages gives me pleasure.	Thai ( <i>r</i> )	.052	.115	.101	.346**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.464	.104	.153	<.001
	US ( <i>r</i> )	.143*	.151*	.033	.503**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032	.023	.625	<.001
6. I look at friends' postings to satisfy my curiosity.	Thai ( <i>r</i> )	.025	.168*	.164*	.402**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.717	.017	.020	<.001
	US ( <i>r</i> )	.197**	.165*	.007	.529**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.013	.915	<.001

**Table 5** Association between Thai and US university students' intensity of use and expression of emotions and viewpoints on Facebook (continued)

Expression of emotions on Facebook.		Time		Eagerness	Attachment to
		Frequency of log-ins	Hours spent using FB	of use Frequency of status updates	Facebook Total attachment measures
7. I post messages on my friends' walls to maintain our close relationships.	Thai ( <i>r</i> )	-.024	.016	.084	.294**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.737	.817	.236	<.001
	US ( <i>r</i> )	.170*	.179**	.149*	.489**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.007	.027	<.001
8. Facebook helps me maintain good relationships with friends.	Thai ( <i>r</i> )	-.046	.040	.038	.384**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.514	.572	.587	<.001
	US ( <i>r</i> )	.166*	.133*	.044	.565**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	.046	.517	<.001
9. Overall expression of emotions on Facebook.	Thai ( <i>r</i> )	.036	.113	.194**	.438**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.605	.119	.006	<.001
	US ( <i>r</i> )	.207**	.309**	.261**	.638**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	<.001	<.001	<.001

## Discussion

On the whole, Thai students appeared to be more open than US students to the use of Facebook for expressing themselves on Facebook. In particular, the greatest difference between the two groups of students was in their willingness to “express my emotions on Facebook” and to “express my feelings on Facebook.” Additionally, Thai respondents were more likely to use Facebook postings as a means of relieving their frustrations. This result was similar to the findings of Koehl and Goetzenbrucker (2012). In comparing online behaviors of Austrian students with Thai students, they suggested that social network sites were “liberating” for Thai students who were thus freed from “strictly hierarchically structured” real life relationships (p. 22). A simpler alternative explanation is that in communitarian societies identified by Hofstede (1980) such as Thailand's there is a greater level of trust in expressing one's self to others, in contrast to the individualistic

societies of the West where one might need to be more cautious in personal interactions, especially with strangers. Manago et al. (2012) suggested that “when people feel assured about their intimate friendships, they feel at ease to disclose private information. In a sense, intimate friendships require high levels of trust and confidence.” If so, then Thai students seem to be more trusting of their online friends than US students. In both countries, the number of friends was large, numbering in the many hundreds, but this was expected. Although Facebook itself suggests the average user has 120 such confirmed friends (Logan, 2009), most research indicates that university-age users build much larger networks.

There were also large differences in the two countries in the use of real names as Facebook usernames, with all but seven percent of US respondents doing so but almost 40% of Thai students using some other name. This finding needs further explanation: in Thai society, nicknames are

preferred among friends rather than lengthy formal names; Thai acquaintances normally address each other only by nicknames. Thus it is possible that Thai students might choose to use their nickname or some combination of names rather than their formal name on Facebook. Interestingly, neither group of students seemed concerned about being identified by their real photographs, as less than three percent used any other image on Facebook.

We believe it is noteworthy that Thai students are heavier users of Facebook in terms of amount of time spending on the Website, frequency of log-ins, and regularity of their status updates. The explanation seems to be that US students use Facebook differently, as demonstrated by the pattern of associations between intensity of Facebook use and online expression of emotions. For them, they mainly employ it as a tool to stay up-to-date with friends' statuses—what friends are currently doing. But for Thai students Facebook is more often used interactively—exchanging reactions to one's feelings and opinions and viewpoints. The use of Facebook in this way would naturally demand a higher level of attention and attentiveness to one's friends' reactions to postings. This, in turn, would perhaps lead to a greater sense of attachment to Facebook and would compel Thai users to become more engaged with this social media platform. Perhaps there is also a voyeuristic motivation for US Facebook users, as suggested by the work of Carpenter et al. (2011) that found activities on the Website were associated with users' interest in others' lives rather than maintenance of personal relationships. Even so, the mean scores for the intensity of Facebook use demonstrate that students in both our samples had accepted Facebook as

part of their daily routines, and the frequency of log-in and browsing its pages about two or three hours daily struck us as a large time commitment, probably representing the largest allocation of personal time except for work and sleep.

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