

# **Exploring Activities of Social Influence Asserted through Social Networking Sites: A Stage Theory Approach**

*Completed Research Paper*

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## **Abstract**

*The advent of Social Networking Sites (SNS) took social influence to a new level allowing a large number of individuals to interact, and influence each other unlike the traditional society bound by face-to-face interactions. While this substantial change generated by SNS has motivated information systems researchers to examine social influence and attitude and behavioural change in individuals in the context of SNS, the studies have not paid adequate attention to exploring how individuals behave in light of the social influence s/he receives. As such, adopting a literature meta-analysis approach, and reviewing 65 studies, this research identified four distinct categories of responses to social influence given by individuals in SNS, based on social influence theoretical perspective. While the study was completed in SNS context, the broader implications of this study are applied to research development and methodology, where the study implications apply broadly across all research contexts.*

**Keywords:** Social influence, symbolic action, substantive action, research methods, social networking sites

## **Introduction**

*“This holiday season all of us need (and all of us can give) love, kindness, and community. I believe kindness can change the world so please join me in pledging to #MultiplyYourGood today!...” (Lady Gaga December 17, 2018).*

This particular *tweet* by the popular celebrity Lady Gaga was liked by 23,363 users of Social Networking Sites (SNS) and *retweeted* 3987 times as of January 15, 2019. While the celebrity encouraged her followers to join her in supporting a social cause, what would make an individual to actually take part in joining the cause or simply engage in *retweeting* or *liking* the message? Will such a message simply make an attitude change in an individual or make the individual act in a certain way? Do all individuals in SNS behave in the same manner when they get exposed to such a post, or would they act differently based on the relationship they have with the person who influences them? This research paper seeks to investigate the relationship between such varying actions exerted through SNS and the effect of social influence received by individuals through their social circles in SNS, utilizing a unique methodological approach.

Since the advent of SNS, an individual’s average number of friends has increased up to 338 (Smith 2017) from 10 to 20 friends a person had prior to the advent of SNS (Parks as cited in Tong et al. 2008). Such a leap in the number of people an individual would interact with, as opposed to the traditional

society bounded by face-to-face interactions, has only become possible due to opportunities provided by SNS to reach a vast number of people at once regardless of space and time barriers (Palekar et al. 2015; Palekar et al. 2013; Palekar and Sedera 2012). Particularly, in a time in which scholars are expecting information technology to play a crucial role in the fourth industrial revolution, understanding the power of social influence facilitated by SNS becomes crucial. In an article to the World Economic Forum (WEF) on the fourth industrial revolution, for instance, Schwab (2016), the founder and executive chairman of WEF, indicated the power of SNS that could be utilized in a negative way if not properly guided, as follows.

*“Discontent can also be fuelled by the pervasiveness of digital technologies and the dynamics of information sharing typified by social media. More than 30 percent of the global population now uses social media platforms to connect, learn, and share information. In an ideal world, these interactions would provide an opportunity for cross-cultural understanding and cohesion. However, they can also create and propagate unrealistic expectations as to what constitutes success for an individual or a group, as well as offer opportunities for extreme ideas and ideologies to spread”.*

Considering the ability of SNS to bring people together to interact with each other and thereby to influence each other (Alarifi et al. 2015; Alarifi and Sedera 2014), it is a timely need to understand in what ways the social influence generated through such a mass population online could lead individuals to change their attitudes or engage in different types of actions.

While exploring this relationship between the social influence generated by fellow individuals in SNS, researchers in Information Systems (IS) have used various theories of social influence. As such, two of the commonly used theories in IS to investigate social influence are, social influence theory by Kelman (1958) and social impact theory by Latané (1981). However, previous studies that employed different constructs of social influence have come up with inconsistent findings in relation to the application of social influence constructs to SNS (Lim et al. 2016; Zhou 2011) due to the complexity of SNS as opposed to the traditional society.

At the same time, another issue that has been identified when referring to previous studies is that very limited attention has been paid to the response an individual would give based on the social influence received through SNS. The outcomes of social influence could be a change in the attitude, or a commitment of an action (Kelman 1958). In particular, the *actions* committed post social influence would not be the same. Therefore, not considering the variations between the responses that an individual could generate, starting from an attitude change to the commitment of various types of actions, would make it difficult for the researchers to make a complex assessment based on the social influence exerted through SNS. As such, it is crucial to understand the possible variations of actions that an individual could commit based on the types of social influence s/he receives.

Considering these concerns in employing social influence for SNS, in this study, we aim to (i) review an anthology of social influence literature to understand how individuals respond to social influence exerted through SNS; (ii) revisit varying actions exerted through SNS; and (iii) introduce a different methodological approach that could be used to classify varying responses of individuals in the SNS context. Hence, this study presents a classification system of responses an individual would give based on social influence s/he receives through SNS. While the classification derived herein pertains to SNS, we see a broader application in other disciplines and fields of studies.

## **Literature Review**

Theoretical foundations of social influence mainly lie in the discipline of social psychology and consists of a number of different constructs used across many disciplines in understanding how social influence could affect the attitudinal change and behaviours of people. Deutsch and Gerard (1955) came up with two constructs namely *informational influence* and *normative influence*, which have been utilized in IS to examine negative firestorms on social media (Chan 2018; Sedera and Lokuge 2018; Sedera et al. 2017b). Cialdini and Goldstein (2004) discussed two types of social influence namely, *compliance* and *conformity* and highlighted an individual would be influenced based on three types of rewarding goals; goal of accuracy, goal of affiliation, and goal of maintaining a positive self-concept. In addition, the

concept of *spiral of silence* (Palekar et al. 2015) has also been utilized in IS to examine the relationship between social influence and passivity of SNS users in terms of participation in SNS.

After carefully considering such theories of social influence, this study employed social influence theory of Kelman (1958) and social impact theory of Latané (1981) to investigate the actions exerted through SNS. Kelman's social influence theory consists of three constructs; *compliance*, *identification*, and *internalization*. Compliance can be defined as the process in which an individual engages in a certain behaviour expecting the receiving of gain(s), or in avoidance of punishment(s); identification can be defined as the process in which an individual would be susceptible for influence because s/he wants to form or continue a relationship with another individual or a group; internalization can be defined as the process in which an individual becomes influenced by the message rather than the messenger since it adheres with the beliefs/ values of the individual (Kelman, 1958).

This theory was decided as appropriate for the objectives of the study due to multiple reasons. First, there is a substantial amount of literature in IS that have confirmed the applicability of the three constructs of the social influence theory as applicable for IS when compared with other social influence theories (Sedera et al. 2017a; Shen et al. 2010; Tsai and Bagozzi 2014; Zhou 2011). Second, constructs of 'compliance', 'identification' and 'internalization' have also been identified by these previous studies as measurement constructs of social influence in SNS.

When considering the social impact theory of Latané (1981), through the literature analysis, this too was identified as a suitable theory to examine social influence in SNS. Particularly, Kelman's social theory mainly discusses about the processes through which individuals get influenced without considering aspects such as how the number of people in an individual's social circle, the power of the influencer, and the proximity of the influencer to the influencee would directly affect the social influence process and thereby the attitude and behavioural change of the particular individual. Latané's social impact theory provides explanations for these missing points, which make both theories complement each other. Social impact theory (Latané 1981) consists of three constructs; *strength* – the power of the person who influences a person determines whether the individual would follow him/ her or not, *immediacy* – the proximity of the person who influences an individual has an impact on the influence process, and *the number of people* – the higher the number of people influencing an individual on a particular aspect, the more that individual would accept the influence. Simply, social impact theory claims that social influence processes can be better understood as resulting from the operation of these three constructs; meaning increases in the 'strength', 'immediacy' and 'the number of people' who are the source of influence should lead to increases in their effect on an individual. In addition, similarly to social influence theory, the applicability of social impact theory in the digital sphere has also been validated by previous research (Chan et al. 2018; Kwahk and Ge 2012; Miller and Brunner 2008; Mir and Zaheer 2012).

While the findings of previous studies that have employed these two theories in IS have contributed to a wealth of knowledge, application of these theories to the context of SNS has often led to inconsistent findings. Zhou (2011), for instance, claimed social influence constructs such as internalization and identification affect online community participation the most whereas social influence constructs such as compliance which is based on rewards and punishments cannot be applied to SNS. However, evidence shows that individuals using SNS would consider even actions such as 'liking' a post as a reward (Sherman et al. 2016) confirming the possibility of employing social influence constructs such as 'compliance' to examine individual actions exerted through SNS due to social influence. Considering these issues that are present when applying social influence constructs to the context of SNS, we argue that the social influence processes that are exerted through SNS should be understood with the actions or the attitude changes that take place following social influence. In fact, lack of investigation on different social influence processes leading to varying actions, could be the reason behind inconsistent findings of the previous studies which have failed to identify this distinct relationship between different social influence constructs and varying individual responses.

Depending on the nature of the social influence construct, the behaviour a certain individual engages via SNS may be subject to change. Therefore, in the following section, adopting the *stage theory*

approach, we propose four categories of responses to social influence that could be taken into account when conducting social influence studies for the specific SNS context.

## Methodology and Theoretical Basis of Categories

Weinstein et al. (1998) in their study on “stage theories of health behaviour: conceptual and methodological issues” indicated the necessity of considering stage theories to predict diverse actions of individuals. Providing examples from continuum theories such as theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen 1977) and theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen 1991), Weinstein et al. (1998) argued that such approaches which have only “*single prediction equations*”(p. 291) do not consider the diversity of actions that could be committed by various individuals based on certain variables, and expect the responses of the individuals to be the same, ignoring the different stages that could exist in the process of behavioural change. This can be further explained using the same example of the tweet by *Lady Gaga* (2018) mentioned in the *introduction* section of this paper. The tweet was an open invitation for individuals to donate for a good cause. However, the individuals who see the tweet would respond to it in different ways. Some people would retweet the message, some would ignore it, and some would actually make a financial contribution. The influence of the celebrity would thus result in multiple responses among different individuals without all individual actions following a continuum. Understanding such responses in a continuum may not be appropriate because it would only indicate that there is one single outcome for that influence. But considering these responses in terms of stages would allow the researchers to acknowledge the possibility of individuals engaging in different responses in relation to various social influence constructs they were exposed to.

Further supporting the view on considering the changes of behaviours or the commitment of different actions by individuals in relation to the stage theory, Weinstein et al (1998) proposed four guidelines that should be understood in the stage theory as follows.

### (i) Categorizing the stages

Developing classifications for responses individuals would give in a certain circumstance would allow the researchers to differentiate individuals based on the various ways they behave and identify which individuals should be grouped together depending on similar characteristics. For example, in relation to *Lady Gaga's tweet*, some individuals would simply form an attitude about the tweet by being *happy* or *excited* about the initiative of the celebrity, and some would retweet the post which would be a simple action that would not require much effort. In the meantime, some individuals would take extra effort in response to the tweet and decide to donate or volunteer to support the cause. Thus, depending on the nature of the response given by individuals to social influence, different categories of responses can be created.

### (ii) Organizing the stages in a sequence

This means, when considering the different ways an individual would react to social influence, identifying those varying actions a person would take in a sequence is important. However, it is crucial to highlight that this does not indicate a person would follow the exact same sequence when engaging in a certain behaviour. It is possible that some individuals would skip certain stages when modifying their behaviour. In relation to *Lady Gaga's tweet*, this means there is a possibility for the individual form an a) attitude (e.g. be happy about the *tweet*), which leads the individual to b) generate an intention to act, and finally, if the conditions to engage in a particular action are satisfied, the individual would c) commit a specific action. These three factors show there is a possibility to organize the individual response in a sequence satisfying the criteria of the stage theory.

### (iii) Individuals within the same stage facing similar barriers

This guideline indicates that once individuals are put into a category or a stage, all individuals in the same category should face the same barriers. If we relate this to social influence, the social influence constructs that are identified in relation to the commitment of a particular action should be the same for all individuals who become subject to those constructs thereby leading those individuals to act in a similar manner.

(iv) The same barriers should not be present in different stages

This highlights that if the factors leading to different actions are the same, such situations could be explained in terms of a continuum rather than using ‘stage’ approach. As such, if different actions are considered in relation to ‘stages’, the aspects you identify with one stage should not be the same with another stage. Considering Lady Gaga’s *tweet*, this would mean individuals will act in a certain way only because they are susceptible to the influence of this particular celebrity, and different responses given by the individuals would be triggered by different sources of influence. Hence, individuals behaving in the same manner should have been exposed to the same constructs of social influence.

### ***Selection of the Literature Sample***

Next, following the stage theory approach and its four guidelines, we looked into 65 studies of social influence and SNS to observe whether the responses of individuals based on social influence they receive can be identified in relation to different stages. The 65 studies for this purpose were selected following five steps. First we identified the keywords in relation to social influence and SNS, and did a literature search on the key words “social media”, “social influence”, “influence”, “social impact”, “social influence and social networks”, “social influence and social media”, “social impact and social media”, “impact”, and “social interaction and social media”. Second, literature related to these keywords were searched in the basket-of-eight journals in information systems in the period from 2008 to 2018. From approximately 300 research papers that appeared in the search results, only the most relevant research papers that discuss social influence and SNS were selected in this step by removing the research papers that do not serve the purpose of this study. Third we included the most cited social influence studies in the literature sample. Fourth, PlumX highly cited SNS studies that were not identified in the first two events were added to the literature sample. Finally, based on the list of references in the selected papers, we identified more papers relevant to our study using the snowball method.

Once all these steps were completed, a total of 65 research papers remained in the literature sample. These research papers were then tabulated chronologically to identify which social influence constructs as per Kelman’s social influence theory (1958) and Latané’s social impact theory (1981) have been explicitly or implicitly examined in each study (refer to Appendix A). The six social influence constructs studied were compliance, identification and internalization (from Kelman’s social influence theory) as well as strength, immediacy and the number of people (from Latané’s social impact theory). If a certain social influence construct was discussed in a specific study, the column relating to that construct was marked with ‘Y’ indicating ‘yes’, and if not, the column was marked with ‘N’, indicating ‘no’. The outcomes of the social influence received by individuals or the individual responses to social influence were also examined by the two co-authors. All such responses identified in each study were mapped by one author and confirmed by the other following the guidelines of stage theory. This resulted in the identification of four different categories of outcomes/ responses of individuals; (i) attitudes, (ii) attitudes towards actions, (iii) symbolic actions, and (iv) substantive actions (The definitions and characteristics of these four categories of behavioural responses are illustrated in Table 1). As such, the Table in Appendix A also includes a separate column illustrating the outcome of social influence or the response to social influence by individuals in the form of above mentioned four categories. The studies that have not specifically discussed social influence constructs in relation to individual responses were marked as ‘not applicable’ (N/A).

The identification of such a classification of responses of individuals who are influenced by SNS becomes crucial due to several reasons. First, the previous SNS and social influence studies have mainly focused on the responses to social influence in a continuum leading the researchers to consider the variety of actions in a *single prediction equation* as highlighted by Weinstein et al. (1998). Considering the substantial differences between SNS and traditional era (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2002) coupled with the magnitude of influence generated due to a large number of individuals interacting with each other at once, understanding the individual responses in a continuum would hinder the IS researchers from forming assessments that consider the diversity of the context.

As such, the classification approach followed in this study not only allows IS researchers to modify their research methodologies specifically to the context of SNS, but also enables them to rethink about adopting research strategies from other disciplines to examine individual behaviours in specific contexts to IS.

**Table 1. Classification of Individual Responses to Social Influence**

	<b>Attitude</b>	<b>Attitude towards Action</b>	<b>Symbolic Action</b>	<b>Substantive Action</b>
<b>Definition</b>	“A cognitive representation that summarizes an individual’s evaluation of a particular person, group, thing, action or idea (Smith and Mackie 2007, p. 229).	Formation of an attitude that could possibly guide an individual to form a particular behaviour through intention (Smith and Mackie 2007).	An action that expresses, signals, or symbolizes what the individual feels, wants or believes (Burke 1966).	A substantive action is an activity that involves some risks, allocation of time, maintenance of a vision to reach an objective and active engagement with the cause throughout the process of achieving that objective (Cabrera et al. 2017).
<b>Characteristics</b>	<p>An attitude is formed in response to a particular situation (LaPiere 1934).</p> <p>Attitudes prepare individuals to behave in a particular manner (LaPiere 1934).</p> <p>Forming a particular attitude doesn’t mean an individual would always behave in congruence to the attitude formed (Smith and Mackie 2007).</p>	<p>Attitude towards action is the stepping stone between formed attitude and the expected behaviour which can be identified as ‘intention to act’ when a decision is taken thoughtfully (Smith and Mackie 2007).</p> <p>This consists of two aspects namely attitude and the pressure of the society that affect the intention of the individual to engage in a particular behaviour (Madden et al. 1992).</p>	<p>The action is committed ceremonially without actual implementation (Meyer and Rowan 1977).</p> <p>The action only ‘appears’ to adhere to the society (Richardson 1985).</p> <p>The action does not take much effort as only the ‘appearance’ matters, and less risk is involved due to that reason (Ashforth and Mael 1989).</p>	<p>The action involves an actual change and active engagement to support a particular belief of the society (Ashforth and Gibbs 1990).</p> <p>A real change takes place as a result of the action to adhere with the society (Richardson 1985).</p> <p>The action should be implemented after proper planning to produce a good outcome and it involves risks (Berrone et al. 2009).</p>

Table 1 combined with the literature analysis table in Appendix A provide information as to how past studies have focussed on exploring different consequences of social influence utilizing the same social influence constructs. This further denotes the necessity of revisiting social influence constructs to understand how they operate when individuals are encouraged to think/ behave in a certain way based on the nature of the social influence they receive.

The classification of individual responses into four categories also emphasizes the necessity of differentiating *intentions to act* from *actual actions*. Smith and Mackie (2007), for instance, indicated that even though the intention to act mostly predicts the behaviour the individual would engage in the future, it may not necessarily guarantee that s/he would engage in the exact action. This distinction between intention to act (attitude towards action) and engagement in a real action (symbolic versus substantive action) encouraged us to pay further attention to varying actions exerted through SNS.

### ***Investigating Symbolic versus Substantive Actions in SNS***

While social influence in SNS can take place in the form of constructs discussed above, the end results of such processes of social influence, meaning the type of actions that are being exerted based on such social influence constructs are not adequately emphasized in the previous literature as opposed to attitudes towards actions (Refer to Appendix A<sup>1</sup>). In IS, Even though there has been ample research conducted on social influence in SNS, mainly focusing the user participation (Zhou 2011), contribution behaviours of users in SNS (Tsai and Bagozzi 2014), effect of SNS on e-commerce (Kwahk and Ge 2012), and impact of SNS on consumer behaviours (Matook et al. 2015), there is lack of discussion on what salient social influence constructs may lead an individual to engage in varying actions in SNS. In fact, not all individual actions exerted through SNS are similar in nature and the social influence constructs would affect these varying actions differently. Furthermore, most IS studies in the selected literature sample examined *attitudes towards actions* (as indicated in appendix A) rather than investigating the actual actions of individuals. This highlights the importance of looking into possible actions that could be exerted in SNS in relation to social influence. It is also vital to note that IS researchers have a responsibility to acknowledge these varying actions exerted through and investigate the relationship between different social influence constructs and behavioural responses of individuals.

When revisiting the past studies on varying actions exerted through SNS, Heimans and Timms (2014) have focused on varying actions taking place online such as consuming, sharing, shaping, funding, producing and co-owning in relation to power and participation level of people. While this study has focused on actions in terms of the power dynamics which have transformed SNS users from passive recipients to active contributors, the range of actions they discuss is limited to organizational and management related activities, and group behaviours. However, when considering the diverse range of activities that could be exerted through SNS, it is important to consider classifications that could facilitate the inclusion of diverse individual behaviours exerted through SNS.

Albarracin et al. (2011) differentiated *activity* from *inactivity* by considering the high effort levels involved in engaging in a certain action. As such, non-engagement or inaction would indicate the *resting state* of an individual (McCulloch et al. 2012). While these aspects experienced by an individual may be personal aspects relevant only to that particular individual, McCulloch et al. (2012) argued that *socialization* should be taken into account when understanding activities. Considering this aspect of socialization and social influence that plays a vital role in SNS, in relation to *activities* or actions, one could commence from the view point of symbolic vs. substantive actions as stated in the institutional theory (Berrone et al. 2009).

While these actions were broadly applied to organizational settings (Oliver 1991; Suchman 1995), this study applies these two types of actions to SNS. A symbolic action inherits less risks for the individual and costs little or nothing (Lee and Hsieh 2013). Moreover, a symbolic action bears less effect on the outcomes (Shulman 2009), and requires low engagement of the individual who is making the action

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<sup>1</sup> The list of the references for the table in Appendix A is available in the following link. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1K9gthHIXacCng5a7-ozRPbIf4Mm-LrRfJr-Pnx91ack/edit?usp=sharing>

(Walker and Wan 2012). In the context of SNS, examples of such symbolic actions are common. “Following” charities in social campaigns on Twitter, *re-tweeting*/sharing their links, clicking a “like” on Facebook, adding stickers to profile pictures supporting various campaigns, or writing generic comments in one’s YouTube channels on mundane activities can be considered as examples for symbolic actions. On the other hand, substantive actions require much effort as opposed to symbolic actions and carry a certain level of risk with them (Cabrera et al. 2017). Activities such as donating money, dedicating time for volunteering or fundraising are examples of substantive actions (McAdam 1986).

One important fact to note when differentiating between these two types of actions is, under certain circumstances, even ‘clicking a like’ can be counted as a substantive action. Assume you are a citizen of a country which is ruled by a dictator. In that particular context, clicking a ‘like’ in SNS against that particular ruler or the government could bring some risk for you. Such efforts by individuals would be counted as a substantive action. Hence, the context in which the action takes place would lead to the amount of risk/ effort involved in the action and based on those factors, the action exerted through SNS would be classified either as a symbolic action or a substantive action.

The characteristics identified in Table 1 would allow the researchers to determine whether the action committed by an individual via SNS is symbolic or substantive or simply a change in the attitude. However, when considering the previous social influence studies on SNS as well as outside SNS, one common aspect we noticed is that the researchers have attempted to link the same social influence constructs with either attitude change or an action, without considering how different social influence constructs would allow individuals to come up with different types of responses. Therefore, with the generation of a classification system to identify individual responses exerted through SNS, this study allows researchers to go beyond the traditional research methods adopted in IS to look into social influence in SNS.

## **Conclusion**

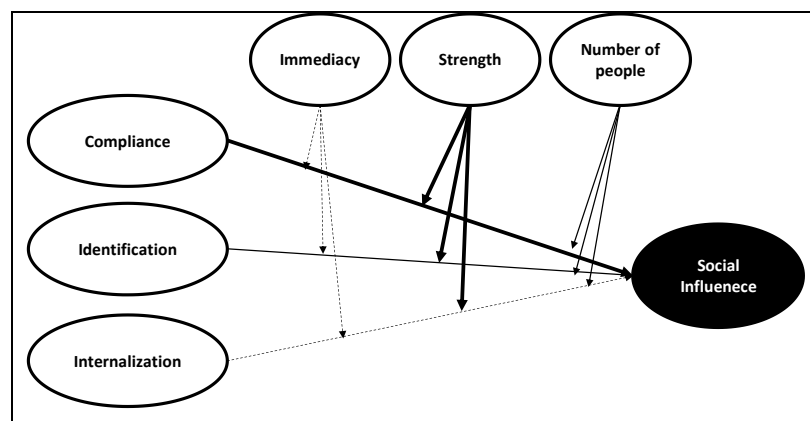
This study examined the different types of individual responses that could be generated through SNS in relation to key social influence constructs as identified in Kelman’s social influence theory (1958) and Latané’s social impact theory (1981). While both theories have been utilized in the past IS research to examine social influence (Mir and Zaheer 2012; Sedera et al. 2017a; Zhou 2011), this study further justifies the applicability of these two theories for SNS by emphasizing on the substantial changes of SNS as opposed to physical world which can be investigated clearly with the constructs that are discussed in these two theories (e.g. the high number of members in one’s online social circle as opposed to the number of people interacting with an individual in the physical world). By following a methodological approach adopted from the stage theory (Weinstein et al. 1998), we highlighted the possibility of improving IS research utilizing research methods and philosophies from different disciplines. This study contributes to knowledge in two ways. In terms of theoretical contributions, the study extends the social influence theory by adopting constructs from Kelman’s social influence theory (1958) and Latané’s social impact theory (1981) to incorporate a classification of responses that are applicable for SNS. The study also makes a distinction between varying actions exerted through SNS by determining two types of actions; symbolic and substantive actions. Since social influence theory has not been extended by taking the diversity of actions exerted via SNS into account, this too will contribute towards theory extension and thereby the generation of new knowledge. Most importantly, this study adopted a different methodological approach that could be followed by future IS researchers as well as researchers in the general domain of information technology to explore behavioural classifications when applying theoretical constructs to novel contexts within information technology.

In terms of practical implications, the practitioners particularly related to digital marketing organize their campaigns for a variety of purposes, such as enhancing “brand awareness, and brand liking” and promoting “customer engagement and loyalty”, ensuring “word-of-mouth communication about the brand”, and leading “traffic to brand locations on and offline” (Ashley and Tuten 2015, p. 17). Such statements indicate the complexity of SNS marketing and the expectations of the practitioners to engage customers in different ways. In other words, in some instances, the practitioners would expect the



customers to engage in either symbolic or substantive actions depending on the objective of the campaign. Some marketing campaigns can also be planned merely to generate a positive attitude among the consumers regarding a particular brand. Hence, the findings of this study will have direct implications on the practitioners and the results can be utilised by them to modify SNS campaigns based on the type of action they would expect the clients to take. It would also allow the public to understand the different means through which they are susceptible to social influence in SNS.

Using the literature as evidence, we propose the following conceptual model. Therein, we argue that (i) compliance, (ii) identification and (iii) internalization are *constructs* that would form a direct relationship with social influence, whereas (iv) strength, (v) immediacy and (vi) number of people are playing the role of moderators. Further, in the conceptual model in Figure 1, the width of the arrow (from darkest to lightest) highlights the use of that construct in the literature.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Model**

The study acknowledges certain limitations that could be investigated further through future research. First, based on the literature sample, the authors identified two main types of actions exerted through SNS as symbolic and substantive actions. This does not mean that actions exerted through SNS are limited only to these two categories. Future studies can investigate more varying actions that are committed by individuals in response to social influence in SNS. Second this study engages in a conceptual discussion following a literature review. Empirical studies should be conducted to validate these findings. However, the findings of this study would pave the path for future IS researchers to consider classification systems following a stage theory approach to examine the diverse nature of human behaviour, as opposed to formulating research models merely based on a continuum.

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**Appendix A: Table Depicting the Relationship between Social Influence Constructs and Individual Responses**

Study	A	B	C	D	E	F	Outcome of the Social Influence Received	Study	A	B	C	D	E	F	Outcome of the Social Influence Received
(Kelman 1958)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	attitude	(Zhou 2011)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	attitude towards action
(Latané 1981)	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N/A	(Datta 2011)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Substantive action
(Nowak et al. 1990)	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	attitude	(Shen et al. 2011)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	attitude towards action
(Latané et al. 1995)	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Symbolic action	(Cheung et al. 2011)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	attitude towards action
(Latané 1996)	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Symbolic action	(Kietzmann et al. 2011)	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N/A
(Latané and Bourgeois 1996)	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	attitude	(Hanna et al. 2011)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N/A
(Venkatesh and Davis 2000)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	attitude towards action	(Fischer and Reuber 2011)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N/A
(Bagozzi and Dholakia 2002)	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	attitude towards action	(Mir and Zaheer 2012)	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	attitude towards action
(Dholakia and Talukdar 2004)	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Substantive action	(Kwahk and Ge 2012)	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	attitude towards action
(Dholakia et al. 2004)	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Symbolic action	(Tufekci and Wilson 2012)	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Substantive action
(Algesheimer et al. 2005)	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Symbolic action	(Lipsman et al. 2012)	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N/A
(Lu et al. 2005)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	attitude towards action	(Gensler et al. 2013)	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N/A
(Gallivan et al. 2005)	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Substantive action	(Singh and Phelps 2013)	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	attitude towards action
(Lee et al. 2006)	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	attitude towards action	(Hildebrand et al. 2013)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	attitude
(Song and Kim 2006)	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	attitude towards action	(Wang et al. 2013)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Substantive action
(Li et al. 2006)	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	attitude	(Tsai and Bagozzi 2014)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Symbolic action
(Bagozzi et al. 2006)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Symbolic action	(Kuan et al. 2014)	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	attitude towards action
(Bagozzi et al. 2007)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Symbolic action	(Zhang et al. 2014)	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Symbolic action
(Miller and Brunner 2008)	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Symbolic action	(Godinho de Matos et al. 2014)	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	attitude towards action
(Walther et al. 2008)	N	N	N	Y	N	N	attitude	(Hu et al. 2015)	N	N	N	N	N	N	Symbolic action
(Eckhardt et al. 2009)	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	attitude towards action	(Wang et al. 2015)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N/A
(Yang et al. 2009)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	attitude towards action	(Matook et al. 2015)	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	attitude towards action
(Mangold and Faulds 2009)	N	N	N	N	N	N	Symbolic action	(Tussyadiah et al. 2015)	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Substantive action
(Pempek et al. 2009)	N	N	N	N	N	N	Symbolic action	(Oh et al. 2017)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N/A
(Kulviwat et al. 2009)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	attitude towards action	(Sedera et al. 2017)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Attitude
(Zeng et al. 2009)	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	attitude towards action	(Thomaz et al. 2017)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N/A
(Kaplan and Haenlein 2010)	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N/A	(James et al. 2017)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N/A
(Shen et al. 2010)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	attitude towards action	(Liao et al. 2017)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N/A
(Posey et al. 2010)	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Symbolic action	(Rueda et al. 2017)	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Attitude
(Huffaker 2010)	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Symbolic action	(Brandt et al. 2017)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N/A
(Glass and Li 2010)	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Symbolic action	(Dewan et al. 2017)	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Symbolic action
(Vannoy and Palvia 2010)	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Substantive action	(Zhang et al. 2018)	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Substantive action
(Cheung and Lee 2010)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	attitude towards action								

A – Compliance, B – Identification, C – Internalization, D – Immediacy, E – Strength, F – Number of people