"MANAGING YOUR SOCIAL NETWORK IDENTITIES: ONE OR SEPARATE PROFILE?"

By

Andi Windah

*) *Lecturer at Department of Communication Studies,*
Faculty of Social and Political Studies, University of Lampung

ABSTRAK

Eksistensi media sosial bagi individu menjadi sangat signifikan bila telah melibatkan domain personal dan professional dalam kehidupannya. Mengatur keseimbangan di antara penampilan dua dimensi tersebut jelas bukanlah hal yang mudah bila individu tidak memiliki strategi tersendiri. Tulisan ini menyajikan betapa peliknya apabila kehidupan personal dan professional individu bercampur aduk dalam dunia maya, terutama di media sosial. Tulisan ini juga mendiskusikan kegunaan pemisahan profil sebagai pilihan yang lebih baik dalam mengatur identitas personal dan professional di media sosial. Pemisahan profil menjamin privasi individu dengan tingkat kegunaan yang lebih tinggi. Selain itu pula, pemisahan profil dapat mempertahankan kepantasan dalam mempertukarkan informasi di media sosial. Tulisan ini juga menjelaskan beberapa kelemahan dalam pemisahan profil, di antaranya tertukarnya informasi dan kendala teknis. Sebagai penutup, tulisan ini menawarkan dua solusi alternatif bagi pengguna pemisahan profil, yakni pemanfaatan alat yang berbeda serta pengaplikasian fitur pemisah profil.

Keywords: Media sosial, identitas, pemisah profil

Introduction

This article discusses use of separate profile as better option for managing personal and professional identity on social network sites. Separate profiles offer more privacy, better utility and maintain information propriety whereas other options such as one profile as well as behavioral and mental strategies are not. This article notes some weaknesses of segregating personal and professional identity into separate profile such as accidental information blend over and technical obstacles. This article also offers two best solutions to deter them from happening in future extent, namely utilization of different device to log in to separate profile and profile aggregator application.

Contemplating SNS (Social Networking Sites) Usage in Personal and Professional Life

Since their first introduction, social network sites (SNSs) have attracted millions of users, many of who have integrated these sites into their daily practices. Perego (2010) acknowledges that, indeed, social network sites have inevitably infiltrated our lives. One

report suggests that social-Network sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, are among the most visited sites on the Internet, just behind the major search engines (Ronn, 2007). Following that, the increasing adoption of social network sites presents an interesting quandary for people who want to use social network sites for their both personal and professional identity. Moreover, the advents of social network sites have contributed to presence of blurry line between professional and personal identity. As the sites grew more popular, individual experienced a collapse of contexts, in which heterogeneous social contexts were merged into a single space. In order to avoid the dilemma, an individual may adopt a number of options for identity management which separate profile is one of the most identifiable choices (Clark, 2009).

According to Stutzman (2006), social media, such as social network site, is a set of identity-centric information and communication technologies (ICTs) that enables production and sharing of digital content in a mediated social setting. Byod (2007) further explains social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site. Thus, Russell (in Stutzman, 2010) describes online identity as the representation of one's persona in a digital context which primary factor in this representation is the collection of links that represent an individual in search. In other word, social network sites allows individual to create pages and write notes or post videos or still pictures that people who they confirm as "friends" or "followers" can see. Hence, social network identity is defined as sum of individual's characteristics presented throughout Internet. The importance of personal and professional identity segregation into separate profiles will be discussed in here, regardless to types and features of social network sites that have been used or accessed.

Although the usage of social network sites into our daily activities is unavoidable, Bush (2009) claims that segregation between both personal and professional identity is not directly needed. Besides, there are other options that have been offered in managing our social network identity. Stutzman (2006) considers use of a single profile with highly segmented controls as an alternative. In addition, separate profile is more difficult to maintain due to technical issue (Pinola, 2010). However, it will be argued here that using separate profile in social network sites is likely to be better option of managing personal and professional identity in social network sites.

Segregating Personal vs Professional Account

There are a number of arguments why separate profile is likely to be better option of managing personal and professional identity in social network sites. If users are not comfortable of sharing their personal life as well as professional work, separate profile is a good idea. Separating the profiles means there is more privacy at some higher degree (Stutzman, 2006). Users will have less fear of sharing information by knowing that they will not "posted" or "tweeted" to wrong audiences. In other word, they are able to disclose what they considered confidential at personal profile and use the other one to communicate professionally.

At the same time, users may avoid of putting themselves at risk for a variety of attacks on their physical and online persona such as identity theft, online and physical stalking, embarrassment, discrimination and blackmailing attempt (Gross, 2005). Besides,

separate profile provides us with better utilities (Stutzman, 2006). The segregation allows us to promote, collaborate or coordinate our activities effectively. It affords users to cater their audience through relevant profile. For example, one particular profile is intended to promote any topic that users are interested in and post as often as they want to. Whereas the other one is reserved for specific posts related to their professional identity.

Furthermore, separate profile keeps information in a sense of propriety. A normative conformity to prevailing customs and usages is taken into consideration at separate profile (Stutzman, 2006). It is often related to position in a stratified structure. Many users would befriend their boss on their professional profile, but not on their personal profile because it is not customary for employees to have such a candid relationship with their boss.

However, using precisely separate profile in managing our social network identity is somehow still debatable. There are some opposing arguments to it. The first argument comes from Lampinen et.al (2009) who verifies behavioral and mental strategies as alternatives. Behavioral strategy means preventing future negative consequences by dividing the platform into separate spaces (ex. create closed group home pages which its contents may only be accessed by its member), choosing a suitable communication channel for use in specific situations (private message for personal matter rather than post or tweet on wall), and doing self-censorship which basically means do not communicate anything that someone should not see.

In addition, mental strategy involves creating more inclusive in-group identities, trusting and being responsible. Similarly, Stutzman (2006) offers another closely related subject to the argument, one profile with high controls to restrict the disclosure of personal and professional content to one or other social group. Besides, signing in to separate profile at same time might be tricky. Stutzman (2006) reports that accidental blend over in separate profile is often occurred when it is being log in by one device, in the same time. For example, a particular content meant for one persona is unintentionally published to another because separate profiles are being accessed by one appliance such as personal computer (PC).

Combining the Personal and Professional Profiles

In the other hand, those arguments above are countered by the following arguments. Firstly, it is acknowledged that behavioral strategies are consciously performed by people but not all social network platforms are facilitating them to do so. For example, Twitter is unable to group friends and followers and direct tweets to a group of people or "group tweet" (Gube, 2009). Secondly, for mental strategy as well as one profile, although they are not aimed to be nor should they be considered, are more exhaustive because they required continuous management of work-life boundaries (Pinola, 2010).

Lastly, social networks sites are giving more attention to technical issues in order to comfort their users. Most of them allow their users to associate with specific settings and devices with personas. Accessing separate profile with different tools is one of ways to deter information blend over. For example, user may use personal computer primarily to update professional content and mobile device to post for personal subject (Stutszman, 2006). At the same time, social network profile aggregator is relatively new breed of alternative appliance. In brief, profile aggregator is an application that tries to consolidate all various social networking profiles into one, with varying success. Profilactic.com, Minggl.com and SocialURL.com are examples of the application.

Closing

In conclusion, it is acknowledged that infiltration of social network sites is inevitable in our daily lives. On the other hand, increasing trend of social network adaptation is apparently triggered a dilemma. There is a collapse of contexts in which heterogeneous social contexts are being merged into a single space. In order to avoid the quandary, an individual may adopt a number of options for identity management which separate profile is one of the most identifiable choices in terms of privacy, utility and propriety. Nonetheless, it is realized that separate profile is equipped with a considerable number of weaknesses such as accidental blend over due to technical matter. Therefore, utilizing different accessing tools such as mobile device as well profile aggregator application might be best practices of prevention.

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