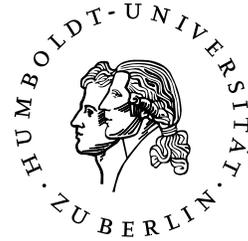


HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
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**INVESTIGATING THE USE OF FACEBOOK BY ARAB PEOPLE:
AN EMPIRICAL APPROACH**

A thesis submitted for the degree of
“Master of Science” (M.Sc.)
in Information Systems

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Berlin, 10th February 2012

Erklärung

Hiermit erkläre ich, **Safa'a AbuJarour**, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit allein und nur unter Verwendung der aufgeführten Quellen und Hilfsmittel angefertigt habe.

Die Prüfungsordnung ist mir bekannt. Ich habe in meinem Studienfach bisher keine Masterarbeit eingereicht bzw. diese nicht endgültig nicht bestanden.

Unterschrift:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Safa'a". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a hand-drawn oval loop.

Ort und Datum: Berlin, 10. Februar 2012

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<Safa'a>

Contents

1	Introduction: Social Networks	1
1.1	Context: The Increasing Popularity of Facebook	2
1.2	User Profiles on Facebook	4
1.3	Methodology and Contributions	5
2	Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions	7
2.1	Power Distance	7
2.2	Uncertainty Avoidance	8
2.3	Individualism versus Collectivism	9
2.4	Masculinity versus Femininity	10
2.5	Long- versus Short-Term Orientation	11
2.6	Indulgence versus Restraint	12
2.7	Discussion	13
3	The Arab World	14
3.1	General Facts	14
3.2	Arab Culture	16
3.3	Religion in the Arab World	18
4	Theoretical Background	21
4.1	Literature Review	21
4.2	Research Model	23
4.2.1	Enjoyment	23
4.2.2	Self Presentation	24
4.2.3	Relationship Maintenance	25

4.2.4	Emotional Support	25
4.2.5	Offline Participation	26
4.2.6	Networking Value	26
4.2.7	Privacy Concerns	27
4.2.8	Trust	27
4.2.9	Control	28
4.2.10	Awareness	29
4.2.11	Distributive Justice	29
4.2.12	Informational Justice	30
4.2.13	Interpersonal Justice	30
4.2.14	Self Disclosure	30
5	Empirical Study	32
5.1	Survey Instrument	32
5.2	Demographics	33
5.3	Results	36
5.3.1	Enjoyment	36
5.3.2	Self Presentation	37
5.3.3	Relationship Maintenance	38
5.3.4	Emotional Support	39
5.3.5	Offline Participation	40
5.3.6	Networking Value	41
5.3.7	Privacy Concerns	43
5.3.8	Trust in Facebook	45
5.3.9	Awareness	46
5.3.10	Control	47
5.3.11	Distributive Justice	48
5.3.12	Informational Justice	50
5.3.13	Interpersonal Justice	50
5.4	Discussion	52
6	Summary and Outlook	54
6.1	Summary	54
6.2	Outlook	56
	Bibliography	57

Abstract

The Internet has been changing our life since its emergence. However, its recent changes might be considered the most crucial. For instance, the increasing popularity of Social Network Sites (SNS), e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Google+. Investigating the use of SNSs has been a fruitful research topic. Nevertheless, there is inadequate research about the impact of specific cultures on Facebook usage, such as the Arab culture. In this thesis, we investigate the effect of culture on Facebook usage by Arabs and compare this effect with the effect of German culture on German Facebook users.

We use primarily Hofstede's cultural model to describe both Arab and German cultures. However, due to the several specialties of Arab culture, we give an overview of the main characteristics of this culture in this thesis as well. The relation between the Internet and culture has been gaining an increasing attention, where the expansion of the Internet has affected the way people practice and experience culture. Therefore, focused studies are required to understand the emerging types of social networks, because they mix both traditional (e.g., culture) and non-traditional (e.g., SNSs) worlds together.

We identify a set of 13 constructs that we investigate in the context of Facebook, e.g., enjoyment, relationship maintenance, awareness, trust, privacy concerns, informational justice, and interpersonal justice. To measure the effect of culture on these constructs, we create two surveys with around 90 distinct questions in total. We translate these surveys carefully into Arabic to avoid any bias in the expected results, and publish them among Arab Facebook users through multiple channels, e.g., Facebook, universities' mailing lists, personal messages. We were able to gather 433 valid participations in both surveys.

Our results show that most of our Arab respondents find Facebook enjoyable and entertaining. We find also that Facebook is typically used by Arabs to impress others and present things they are proud of to others. The majority of our respondents believe that Facebook helps them maintain their relationships. Additionally, our results show that Arab users get the required emotional support from their Facebook friends and using Facebook increases their offline participation. We show further interesting findings in this thesis as well.

Our results reveal a couple of relative similarities, several clear differences, and other border-lines. Both Arab and German respondents show relatively similar attitudes in terms of enjoyment, and relationship maintenance. However, they show clear differences in terms of self presentation, emotional support, awareness, control, and trust in Facebook. The differences between Arabs and Germans on Facebook are not so clear in terms of offline participation, networking value, and privacy concerns. We believe that additional research is required to clarify these issues.

Introduction: Social Networks

The Internet has been changing almost every aspect of our life and has become an integrated component of our daily routines. It has changed the way we learn, research, entertain, do business, communicate, etc. One of the aspects of this effect is the emerging trend of “Social Networks”, such as LinkedIn (2003), Facebook (2004), Twitter (2006), Google+ (2011), etc. Social Network Sites (SNS) are defined as platforms that enable users to create *profiles* and connect to others (Boyd and Ellison 2008). These profiles are typically used by users to attract and/or impress other users, where they provide useful and interesting *personal* information about themselves, such as their profile pictures, education, hobbies, favorite movies and music, political views, etc. Although SNSs do not force their users to give this information, different users show different attitudes towards providing and disclosing their personal information on such sites. One of the key factors that affect users’ attitudes towards publishing and disclosing their information and content on SNSs is *culture*. In this thesis, we investigate the impact of cultural on the behavior of Arab Facebook users and compare this behavior with German Facebook users.

In this chapter, we discuss the increasing popularity of Facebook, in particular in the Arab World in Section 1.1. In Section 1.2, we explain the concept of users’ profiles on Facebook. Finally, we show our methodology and contributions in Section 1.3.

1.1 Context: The Increasing Popularity of Facebook

The popularity of Social Network Sites has been increasing since their emergence. These days, there are more than 200 popular, notable, and well-know social sites¹. With more than 800 million users, Facebook is the most used SNS². Since July 2010, Facebook has become the third largest society in the world (Figure 1.1). Additionally, Facebook belongs to the top five population density countries in the world, (Japan, Russia, Brazil, and Nigeria) (Faerman 2010). Facebook has been used in multiple non-traditional domains and tasks (i.e., rather than communication). For instance, Facebook has gained recent attention in the media for its use in aiding criminal investigations and college disciplinary hearings (Kornblum and Beth Marklein 2006). Additionally, it has also been used by companies to screen job applicants and by campus police to monitor the college party scene (Brady and Libit 2006).

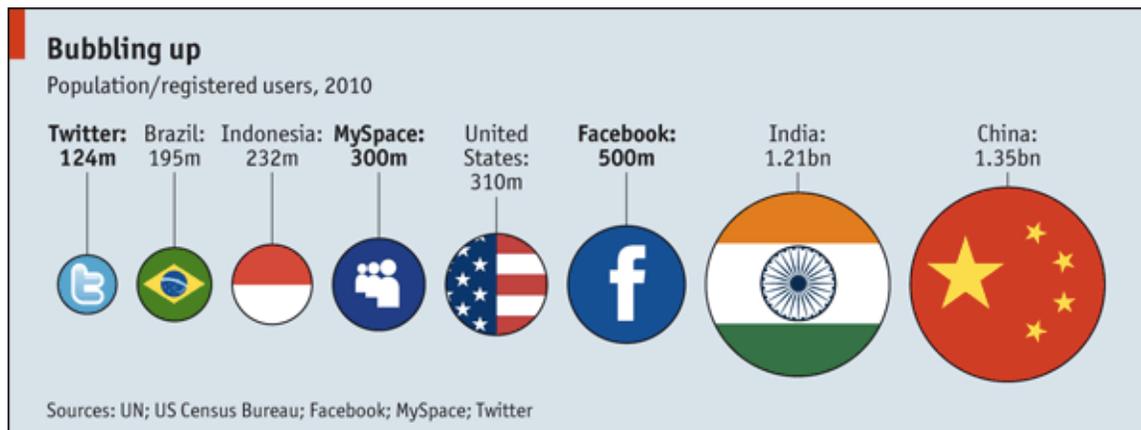


Figure 1.1: World's top populations and Social Network Sites' users as of July 2010 (<http://www.economist.com/node/16660401>)

With respect to Facebook in the Arab World, Arabic has been one of the fastest-growing languages on Facebook, in particular in Egypt, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia. For instance, number of Arab Facebook users has doubled last year to exceed 32 million users³. Facebook identified this greater Middle East market, therefore, it made a deal in February 2010 with a regional advertisement service provider that allows it to better target users in the area. Consequently, Facebook presence has been expanding in these countries and in other

¹List of SNSs: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites

²Nov. 2011: <http://www.incharm.co.uk/our-services/digital-marketing/social-media>

³Sep. 2011: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/21733.aspx>

1.1. CONTEXT: THE INCREASING POPULARITY OF FACEBOOK

Arab countries. Table 1.1 shows a snapshot of three months of growth of Facebook users in Egypt, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia. With penetration rates and overall user numbers beginning to reach an interesting size, investigate the reasons behind this increasing popularity becomes a valid research topic, in particular given that there is not a clearly-entrenched competitor for Facebook in these countries (Madrigal 2001).

Table 1.1: *Growth in three Arabic-language markets (June – August 2010) [Inside Facebook Gold]*

Country	Total	Change	% Change	Penetration
Egypt	4,077,520	641,380	18.7%	5.4%
Morocco	2,158,680	405,500	23.1%	6.9%
Saudi Arabia	2,623,660	363,660	16.1%	10.6%

Source: <http://www.insidefacebook.com/2010/09/14/facebook-grows-in-egypt-morocco-saudi-arabia-but-faces-challenges-ahead/>

Using Facebook in the Arab World cannot be decoupled from the Arab culture that is typically held by Arabs, and that affects most aspects of life in Arab countries (Rohm Jr. 2010). Understanding this relation between Facebook and the Arab culture requires in essence considering religion that has influenced virtually every aspect of Arab culture (Findlay 1994). The Arab culture is generally conservative, separates between roles (i.e., in families), separates between different genders, treasures personal relations, respects personal images, and is emotion-driven (Barakat 1993, Doan and Bisharat 1990, Rohm Jr. 2010). From the technological aspect, Arab World does not depend on online services to a large extent, where such services are not well-developed and are not so common (Aljazeera 2012, Khushman et al. 2009). For instance, within the current wave of SNSs, no mature SNS has been developed in these countries yet. Facebook's global rank among all websites is 2, whereas the global rank of the Arab SNS Friendsawy's is more than 100,000 according to www.alexa.com. This lack of adequate online services is typically resolved through the use of international services. Facebook is a prime example of such international services that makes up the absence of local mature SNSs in Arab World. One of the factors that enable Arabs to use such services is their reasonable knowledge of foreign languages. For instance, a large portion of people in Egypt, UAE, Jordan, and Palestine have reasonable English skills, and people in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia have reasonable French knowledge.

Although Arab countries share a lot of cultural values, they have different perspectives with respect to the use of Facebook ranging from religious to political factors. For instance,

Saudi women can access the internet and create Facebook profiles and communicate with men, which is not widely- accepted in the real world. In Egypt and Morocco, the potential issues are more political. For instance, Facebook was one of the main channels used by the main candidates for the presidential elections in Egypt 2011; Hosni Mubarak (the former president) and Mohammed ElBaradei, who has accumulated around 500,000 followers on Facebook. The role of Facebook in the political life in the Arab World has been vital in the revolutions that have been spreading from one country to another, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, etc. In these countries, the term “The Youth of Facebook” is usually used to refer to the youth who ignited these revolutions, because they use Facebook to communicate and organize their movements (Zewail 2011).

With this non-traditional channel of communication and unique popularity, political and religious authorities in these countries need time and effort to understand the behavior and motivation of users on Facebook. We identify this challenge as an interesting and essential research direction. In this work we aim at understanding the behavior of Arab Facebook users and the factors that affect their activities on Facebook. The effect of culture appears mainly on users’ profiles and their activities on Facebook in terms of richness, diversity, openness, content, topics, friends, pages, and groups.

1.2 User Profiles on Facebook

Facebook is an online community that allows anyone above 13 years old and with an email address to create a *profile* augmented with a profile picture and a variety of specific *personal* information. Personal information is *voluntarily* supplied by the user and usually contains information, such as major, hometown, relationship status, political views, interests, favorite music/movies/books/quotes, and an “About Me” section which contains a short description of the user (Gross and Acquisti 2005). Facebook allows its users to send and post messages, browse other users profiles, and establish visible links via friend requests, which can be confirmed or denied.

The goal of Facebook profiles is to impress or attract other users. Therefore, Facebook users usually keep their profiles’ information rich, complete, and up-to-date. On the one hand, most of the information provided in user’s profile is not validated by Facebook. This uncontrolled information increase spam and fraud chances on SNSs. Additionally, this uncontrolled information is used to attract other users so that friend lists grow in size. Increasing the size of Facebook friend lists using such information weakens *trust* among Facebook users, because they communicate with people that they do not know in real life

and because they know that these people might provide inaccurate information to promote their profiles on Facebook. This lack of trust in members is crucial in Facebook, because users could re-post content published by their friends in a way where the original publishers do not have control over the re-published content anymore. For instance, it might be acceptable for a user to publish a private picture among his/her Facebook friends, but not among friends of their friends. This lack of control users experience over their information and content applies to some extent to all items provided to Facebook by its users, because publishing content or providing information to Facebook entitles Facebook to use it for research, for advertising purposes, or to sell it to third-parties (Helmbreck 2010). Such risks might hinder the use of Facebook in privacy-sensitive societies. On the other hand, spammers might use profiles' information to send spam messages to Facebook users or attack and steal users' personal information (Brown et al. 2008). Therefore, Facebook users might provide incomplete or inaccurate information in their profiles to avoid potential attacks or spam messages.

Facebook users enjoy it as long as they find interesting and continuous content published by friends, pages, or groups they follow. The more the users publish, the more they disclose. For instance, Facebook is so popular that every 60 seconds, there are more than 695,000 status updates and 79,000 wall posts (Lubin 2011). This observation implies that social network providers need to encourage user self disclosure in order to remain attractive and popular. Research has shown that self disclosure on SNSs is highly-coupled with cultural concerns. Nevertheless, there is not sufficient research in the impact of cultural differences on self disclosure on SNSs (Krasnova and Veltri 2010).

1.3 Methodology and Contributions

The goal of this thesis is to investigate the impact of cultural differences on the usage of Facebook by Arab users and compare this impact with its counterpart among German Facebook users. To achieve this goal, we use the cultural model introduced by Hofstede in our approach (See Chapter 2). We gather relevant information for this model from Facebook users by means of online surveys that we have compiled and distributed among a random sample of Arab Facebook users. We provide the questions of these surveys in Arabic so that our results are not biased (i.e., no specific language skills are assumed). Our results provide relevant insights for the social network providers (aiming to operate in international markets) who can adjust their expansion strategy with regard to cultural differences.

The main contributions of this work are:

- An empirical approach to investigate the effect of Arab culture on Facebook usage.
- Comparing the behavior and attitudes of Arab and German Facebook users.

The rest of this thesis is organized as follows: In Chapter 2, we summarize the cultural model used in this thesis. After that, we present the main characteristics of the Arab World in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, we introduce the research model we use. Then, we describe our methodology and analyze our results in Chapter 5. Finally, we summarize the main findings of this thesis and outline several potential extensions in Chapter 6.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Analyzing cultural differences is typically achieved by means of cultural models that include specific cultural dimensions, such as, Florence Kluckhohn, Edward Hall, Geert Hofstede, and Harold Driver. In our research, we adopt the five cultural dimensions proposed by Geert Hofstede, because his model is widely accepted in the community and because it addresses both targeted regions, Arab World and Germany. Hofstede defines five dimensions to differentiate cultures, namely, *Power Distance*, *Uncertainty Avoidance*, *Individualism and Collectivism*, *Masculinity and Femininity*, and *Long- Versus Short-Term Orientation*. Hofstede based this model on a survey that he conducted twice; in 1968 and 1972, including 53 countries and different nations. In his research, Geert Hofstede refers to the Arab societies as the Arab World, where he considers only *seven* (out of 22) Arab countries: Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. In this chapter, we describe these five cultural dimensions proposed in Hofstede's model, in addition to a sixth dimension considered recently by Hofstede but has not been investigated in his survey (Hofstede 2012, 2001).

2.1 Power Distance

The *Power Distance Index* (PDI) captures the degree, to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. The fundamental issue here is how a society handles inequalities among people. People in societies exhibiting a large degree of power distance accept a hierarchical order, in which everybody has a place

and which needs no further justification. In societies with low power distance, people strive to equalize the distribution of power and demand justification for inequalities of power. Inequality can occur in diverse areas. For instance, physical and mental characteristics, social status and prestige, wealth, power, and laws, right, and rules.

The world average value of PDI stands at 57. The two societies that we address have different PDIs. The PDI value for the Arab World stands at 80, that is much higher than the world average. The PDI value for Germany stands at 35, that is much less than the Arab World and the world average.

High and low PDI countries have different characteristics, attitudes, and values. In low PDI countries, freedom is more important than equality, whereas, equality is more important than freedom in high PDI countries. While authority is based on tradition in high PDI countries, it is based on secular-relational arguments in low PDI countries. It is more often that leaders are younger in low PDI countries, yet older in high PDI countries. In low PDI countries, people should be interdependent, whereas, they are not in high PDI countries. In low PDI countries people should have equal rights, and powerful people should try to look less powerful than they are. On the other hand, power holders in high PDI countries are entitled to privileges, and they should try to look as powerful as possible. Citizens of low PDI countries believe that there is more need for technology, whereas their counterpart in high PDI countries believe in less need for technology.

On the family level, high PDI countries tend to have more respect for the parents and the older relatives. Parents and grandparents continue to play a role in their children's lives as long as they are alive, and are treated with formal deference even after their children have taken control of their own lives. Conversely, the goal in low PDI countries is to give children control of their lives as soon as they can. Children are allowed to contradict their parents, and they learn to say "no" very early. When children grow up, they replace their child-parent relationships with relationships of equals, and they are not supposed to take their parents' permission in important decisions.

2.2 Uncertainty Avoidance

The *Uncertainty Avoidance Index* (UAI) captures the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. The fundamental issue here is how a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known: Should we try to control the future or just let it happen? Countries exhibiting strong UAI maintain rigid codes of belief and behavior and are intolerant of unorthodox behavior and ideas. Low

UAI societies maintain a more relaxed attitude, in which practice counts more than principles.

Hofstede investigates the societies' uncertainty avoidance with respect to three domains: Technology, law, and religion. In this scope technology includes all human artifacts. Law includes all formal and informal rules that guide social behavior. Religion refers to all revealed knowledge of the unknown. Hofstede believes that each of these three domains helps people defend themselves against different uncertainties; technology against uncertainties caused by nature, law against uncertainties in the behavior of others, and religion to accept the uncertainties they cannot defend themselves against.

Based on his empirical study, Hofstede shows that the world average of UAI is 65. The Arab World and Germany have similar UAIs that are very close to the world average: 68, 65, respectively.

In high UAI countries, older people are more likely to disagree with the behavior of young people and to wait longer before leaving responsibility in the hand of juniors. In low UAI countries, tolerance of diversity includes also young people and their ideas. High UAI countries are more conservative and have strong desire for law and orders. In contrast, low UAI countries are more open to change and new ideas. While the emotions are normally expressed in high UAI countries, they are more controlled in low UAI countries.

Citizens of high UAI countries have a negative attitude towards legal systems, and they believe that laws are in general against them, and they should be broken if they are unjust. On the other hand, citizens in low UAI countries have positive attitude towards legal systems, and they believe that they must never be broken, because they are usually for their advantage.

2.3 Individualism versus Collectivism

Individualism (IDV) can be defined as a preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their direct families only. Its opposite, *Collectivism*, represents a preference for a tightly-knit framework in societies where individuals can expect their relatives or members of a particular in-group to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. Society's position on this dimension is reflected in whether people's self-image is defined in terms of "I" or "we".

Hofstede considers the dimension of individualism as a relation between the individual and the collectivity in a given society. He describes this relation in his book as follows:

“The relationship between individual and the collectivity in human society is not only a matter of ways of living together, it is intimately linked with societal norms in the sense of value systems of major groups of the population” (Hofstede 2001, P. 210).

There is a considerable difference in the values of IDV between the Arab World and Germany. The IDV value for the Arab World is 38, whereas, the IDV values for Germany is 67. The world average of IDV stands at 43. Therefore, Germany is considered relatively a high IDV country. Whereas the Arab World is considered relatively a low IDV society.

The main characteristic in the collective societies is high levels of loyalty towards families. In such societies, families are normally extended and consist of parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and sometimes neighbors and housemates. Breaking this loyalty is the worst thing a person can do. In the circle of these families, a dependence relationship is developed practically and psychologically. On the other hand, families in individual societies consist of parents and their children only. Children grow up learning to think of themselves as “I”. Every “I” is a stand-alone identity and differs from the other “I’s” by its individual characteristics, not by the group characteristics. In low IDV countries, it is abnormal that a person is alone at any time of the day. The case that might affect their privacy. This lack of privacy is unaccepted in high IDV countries. In collectivist societies, members are kept in order by the threat of “shame”. Each person has to feel guilty when doing a mistake, and feel ashamed if this mistake becomes known by others. In individualist societies, a person has a feel of self-respect, regardless the view of the society. In low IDV countries, students studying abroad consider their gender and religion important for their identity. For instance, they introduce themselves as Muslim men/Muslim women. In high IDV countries, gender and religion are less important for students’ identity. In the collectivist societies, laws and rights vary by group according to tradition and religion, and the private life is invaded by public interests. On the other hand, laws and rights in individualist societies are supposed to be the same for all, and everyone has a right to privacy.

2.4 Masculinity versus Femininity

Masculinity (MAS) stands for a society in which a social gender roles are clearly distinct: Men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success; women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. Its opposite, *Femininity* stands for a society where social gender roles overlap: Both men and women

2.5. LONG- VERSUS SHORT-TERM ORIENTATION

are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. Societies at large masculinity are more competitive, whereas societies at large femininity are more consensus-oriented.

Both Arab World and Germany have higher MAS values than the world average, which stands at 49. The Arab World MAS value is 53, which makes it almost in the middle of the global ranking. Germany comes at the 10th place globally in respect to MAS value 66.

In high MAS societies, father's and mother's roles are normally unequal inside the family. Fathers are usually tough and strict, whereas mothers are softer and easier to deal with. Moreover, men in such societies deal with facts, whereas women deal with feelings. In low MAS societies, the roles of the father and mother overlap; both deal with facts, as well as feelings. While people in low MAS countries have positive feelings towards home and family, people in high MAS countries are less satisfied with home life. The religion point of view in high MAS countries is that women should be chaste at marriage, but men should not. Besides, the interaction with other sex is less intimate. These societies consider religion as the most important issue in life. On the other hand, in low MAS countries, religion is not so important in life, and the interaction with other sex is more intimate.

2.5 Long- versus Short-Term Orientation

The *Long-Term Orientation* (LTO) dimension can be interpreted as dealing with society's search for virtue. People in societies with a Long-Term Orientation, believe that truth depends very much on the considered situation, context and time. They show an ability to adapt traditions to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest, thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results. In contrast, societies with a *Short-Term Orientation* generally have a strong concern with establishing the absolute truth and they are normative in their thinking. They exhibit great respect for traditions, a relatively small propensity to save for the future, and a focus on achieving quick results. In other words, long term orientation stands for the fostering of virtues oriented towards future rewards. On the other hand, short-term orientation stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present, in particular, respect for tradition, and fulfilling social obligations.

Hofstede added this dimension to his five-dimensions model based on the work of Michael Harris Bond (Minkov and Hofstede 2010). Bond conducted a survey with students from 22 countries around the world using a Chinese Values Survey (CVS) that he ini-

tiated. The results of the survey were published by the Chinese Culture Connection in 1987 (Connection 1987). However, because this dimension was added later to Hofstede's studies, he does not provide an estimation for the long-term orientation score of the Arab World (Veltri et al. 2011). Consequently, we are excluding this diminution from our cultural comparison.

The world average value of LTO stands at 45. The LTO value of Germany is 31. High LTO countries have common values, such as, persistence and perseverance, ordering relationships by status and observing this order, thrift, having a sense of shame, personal adaptability, adaptation of traditions to new circumstances, leisure time is not so important, and they believe that most important events in life will occur in the future. Low LTO countries have different common values, such as, expecting quick results, people know how to spend, shame is not a common feeling, personal steadiness and stability, protecting the one's face, respect for traditions, reciprocation of greetings, favors, and gifts, leisure time is very important, and they believe that most important events in life occurred in the past or occur in the present.

2.6 Indulgence versus Restraint

In 2010 Hofstede considers a sixth dimension, based on Michael Minkov's analysis of the World Values Survey data for 93 countries (Hofstede 2012). This new dimension is *Indulgence versus Restraint*. Hofstede stated in one of his interviews that "This dimension is related to the importance of controlling your own life, and to the importance people attach to freedom of expression. Countries which are low in indulgence and strong in restraint will not think that free expression of thoughts is important" (Hofstede 2010). Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms. We do not include this dimension in our cultural comparison, because of lack of research on this dimension.

2.7 Discussion

Although Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Model is widely accepted in the community, it has some limitations, especially with respect to the Arab culture. We identify these enhancements:

Need for updates: Hofstede based his cultural model on two studies that he conducted in 1968 and 1972. Since that time, dramatical changes have occurred in the Arab World due to the huge impact of technologies, in particular, the Internet. Ignoring such changes is expected to give biased and out-of-date cultural characteristics of the Arab World. This limitation reveals a vital need for new empirical studies to obtain updated results.

Need for additional dimensions: Hofstede's model considers only five cultural dimensions in his survey. Several additional dimensions have also been proposed in the community. For instance, [Aberle et al. \(1950\)](#) propose the dimensions of communication, shared goals, and role differentiation according to age, gender, religion, and others, etc. Nevertheless, such models are not yet validated through empirical studies.

Need for countries expansion: Hofstede considers only seven (out of 22) Arab countries. We agree with [Berry et al. \(2002\)](#) that the study of some social behaviors has been carried out in a limited number of cultures. There is an urgent need to investigate social behavior in more representative samples of cultures ([Berry et al. 2002](#)).

Need for diversity: In his study, Hofstede surveyed IBM employees only. This selection is expected to have impact of the results. These respondents have a specific education level, probably live(ed) abroad, deal with other nations daily, speak foreign languages, etc. There is an urgent need for surveying more representative samples.

The aforementioned limitations in Hofstede's model might explain some of our observations in our study, where respondents show unexpected behavior.

Chapter 3

The Arab World

Due to several specialists of the Arab World, we introduce key specialties in this chapter. In Section 3.1, we give general facts about the Arab World. Then, we outline key characteristics of Arab culture in Section 3.2. After that, we explain the role of religion in the Arab World in Section 3.3.

3.1 General Facts

Geographically, the Arab World extends from the Gulf and the Zagros mountains on the Iranian frontier in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west, and from the Taurus range on the Turkish border in the north to Central Africa beyond the Sahara and the Horn of Africa in the south (Barakat 1993). The Arab World has an exceptional strategic location as it represents the junction point between Africa, Asia and Europe (See Figure 3.1). Additionally, it has long coasts on the Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, Arab Gulf, and Atlantic Ocean.

The Arab World consists officially of 22 Arab countries: Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen¹.

¹The Arab League: <http://www.arableagueonline.org>



Figure 3.1: *The map of the Arab Wold* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_League)

The combined population of Arab countries exceeds 300 million people (Nydell 2006). These countries have around 17 different ethnicities including Berbers, Nubians, Kurds, Assyrians, Arameans/Syriacs, Armenians, Coptic Egyptians, Maronites, Somalis, Turkmen, Yezidi, Shabaks, Mandaean, Roma, Circassians, Mhallami, and Jews. In addition to Arabic, there are other spoken languages, such as Kurdish, Berber, Somali, Afar, Armenian, Hebrew, Nubian, Persian, Syriac, and Turkmen².

Arab nationhood is based on what they have in common, namely, language, culture, sociopolitical experiences, economic interests, and a collective memory of their place and role in history. Arab national identity has been seen as based primarily on language. For instance, the great majority of the citizens of Arab countries identify themselves and are identified by outsiders as Arabs, rather than local nationalities (Barakat 1993). Arabs are more conscious of their language than any people in the world (Hourani 1962). Although Arabs speak the same language, there are many different local dialects (Barakat 1993). However, Arabs are able to communicate in the standard Arabic that is used in news, and scientific and official publications.

²http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_the_Arab_League

3.2 Arab Culture

The term “culture” has several definitions in the community, therefore, we mention the widely used definitions. **Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952)** define culture by identifying its components: “Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action”. **Useem et al. (1963)** define culture as “the learned and shared behavior of a community of interacting human beings”. **Bates and Plog (1980)** introduce another perspective of culture by defining it as “a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning”. **Damen (1987)** interprets culture as “learned and shared human patterns or models for living; day-to-day living patterns. These patterns and models pervade all aspects of human social interaction. Culture is mankind’s primary adaptive mechanism”. **Hofstede (2001)** defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another”.

Based on the aforementioned definitions of culture, we identify the following characteristics of the Arab culture:

- Maintaining tradition is more important than change: Arabs are generally very concerned about holding onto their cultural and religious traditions (**Rohm Jr. 2010**). Accordingly, adopting recent technologies usually takes time in the Arab World.
- The Arabic language has a special influence on Arabs: No people in the world manifest such enthusiastic admiration for literary expression and are so moved by the word spoken or written, as the Arabs (**Barakat 1993**).
- Arabs are group-oriented: Arabs value teamwork and collaboration, whereas they are less likely to act independently or allow themselves to stand out from others. Almost everything in the Arab World is very group-oriented, e.g., meetings, planning sessions, decision making, and social festivities (**Rohm Jr. 2010**). Arabs usually interact as committed members of a group, rather than as independent individuals who constantly assert their apartness and privacy (**Barakat 1993**). Arabs almost always travel in the close company of two or more people, intimately and spontaneously engaged in lively conversation. Moreover, individuals interact with other members of the group by sharing their joys and sorrows, achievements and failures, victories

and defeats. Members of the same group expect the same type of interaction from one another (Barakat 1993).

- **Family:** The family is the basic unit of social organization in traditional and contemporary Arab society through which persons and groups inherit their religious, class, and cultural affiliations. It also provides security and support in times of individual and societal stress. Arab society is the family generalized or enlarged, and the family is society in miniature; Both act on and react to one another. Arabs experience a strong sense of belonging through sustained commitments and loyalties to family, community, and friends. Arabs honor and respect their families and highly value friendships. Relatives generally remain closely interlocked in a web of intimate relationships that leaves limited room for independence and privacy (Barakat 1993). In the Arab World, households are typically stratified by gender and age, where the older person has control over the younger one (Barakat 1993, Doan and Bisharat 1990). The availability of help within the household is justified because support is more likely to materialize as a result of the daily interactions between household members (Doan and Bisharat 1990).
- **Emotion:** Arabs are in general active, emotional, and sometimes aggressive. They tend to avoid ambiguous situations and expect structure in organizations, institutions, and relationships, which helps make events clearly interpretable and predictable (Marcus and Gould 2000, Rohm Jr. 2010). Moreover, Arabs tend to express themselves spontaneously and freely in several areas of life, particularly in those related to human emotions and the arts (Barakat 1993). They express their likes and dislikes, joy and sadness, hope and despair, satisfaction and discontent, congeniality and aggression. In short, Arabs tend to be emotional rather than rational or calculating (Barakat 1993).
- **Behavior:** Individual Arabs behave as committed members of a group, e.g., family, tribe, friends, neighborhood, community, village, etc. Every member of the family (or group) may be held responsible for the acts of every other member. One of the main factors that pressure Arabs to behave in an honorable manner is shame, i.e., the psychological drive to escape or prevent negative judgment by others. This factor is typically expressed in the question “What will people say?” that is one of the main reasons Arabs fear nonconformity (Barakat 1993).
- **Honor:** Honor is very important amongst Arabs, where it is protected and defended at all costs. Shame (especially in front of the family) is avoided at all costs. Arabs take insults and criticism very seriously. Family for Arabs is the center of honor, loyalty, and reputation. Honor has two aspects: It is the value of a person in his/her

own eyes and in the eyes of his/her society. It represents the estimation of his/her own worth (Wikan 1982).

It is worth mentioning that not all Arabs are Muslims and not all Muslims are Arabs. For Instance, Iran and Turkey are Islamic but non-Arab countries, whereas Egypt and Lebanon are Arab countries with many Christians (Findlay 1994, Zubaida 2009). Furthermore, common cultural elements are not specifically Islamic (Zubaida 2009).

3.3 Religion in the Arab World

According to Geertz (1973), religion is a “system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic”.

The Arab World is the home of three religions: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. The Middle East has been preeminently the land of Islam, the geographical and spiritual center of the Islamic world, where the Muslim faith was born and the civilization of Islam received its first, classical formulations (Lewis 1994). Islam is the monotheistic religion articulated by the Qur’an (the Islamic holy book) and by the teachings and normative examples of Prophet Muhammad, who is considered by Muslims to be the last prophet of God. An adherent of Islam is called a Muslim. The most important belief for Muslims is the oneness of God, a strict monotheism that is preached in the Qur’an, the set of revelations made to the Prophet Muhammad (Torstrick and Faier 2009). The total Muslim population exceeds 1.5 billion people worldwide (as of 2010) (Otto 2010). Islam is by no means limited to the Middle East (Lewis 1994).

When Islam is considered, it is very important to clarify that Islam is different of the Arab culture. When Arab people behave in a certain way, it does not mean for certain that this is based on Islamic beliefs. Orientalism plays an important role in Arab culture (Piela 2012). Arabs and Islam are highly coupled, because Arabic is the official and the original language of the Qur’an. On the other hand, it must be clear that not all Muslim countries speak Arabic, and not all Arabic speakers are Muslims, i.e., Islam is not equal to Arab countries (Piela 2012). The Muslim civilization is divided into two worlds: the Arab World and the non-Arab Muslim World (Lane and Redissi 2004). Nevertheless, Islam has influenced virtually every aspect of Arab culture in terms of its impact on art, morals, law, customs, social behavior, and the structure on knowledge itself (Findlay 1994).

3.3. RELIGION IN THE ARAB WORLD

Religion and family tend to be mutually supportive and complementary (Barakat 1993). One continues to be socialized into a secure religious identity in the family. Religion may be considered as constitutive of the basis of family. Complementarily, the family is reinforced and rendered sacred by religion, which adopted many of its roles and values as its own and labeled these as dictated by God. In as much as the family shaped religion in its own image, religion in turn reinforced and strengthened the family in its original forms. In this way, each serves as an instrument of the other.

Sharia is the Islamic law (Otto 2010) or the body of laws that govern all aspects of a Muslim's life (Torstrick and Faier 2009). The rules of *Sharia* are based on the revelation by God of his plan for man-kind to the Prophet Muhammad until his death in 632. Religion constitutes the most significant force shaping Middle Eastern societies (Barakat 1993). For instance, in most Muslim countries Islamic law has a particularly strong impact on family and inheritance law (Otto 2010). The structure of legal systems of Muslim countries reveals layers and fragmentation. Among others, these layers and fragmentation deriving from Islamic law, civil law, and customary law. One law (e.g., civil law) may apply in one place, for one group, or for particular topic, while elsewhere, for other parties or a different topic, other laws (e.g., Islamic law) may apply instead (Otto 2010).

The Islamic judge, or the judicial authority, which delivers the consultations, handle each conflict case by case (Lane and Redissi 2004). For instance, marriage in all Arab countries continues to be religious (Barakat 1993). Throughout the twentieth century different views were held across the Muslim world about what should be the relationship between *Sharia* and national law. They ranged from Saudi Arabia's preservation of classical *Sharia* to Turkey's strict secularism (Otto 2010).

With respect to women, Islam gives them a special rank as mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, etc. Piela (2012) states that "Muslim women believe that since the death of the Prophet Muhammad, who was a supporter and defender of women, their Islamic rights have been unlawfully claimed by men". Orientalism has been used to control women because of oppressive men. They have been represented as silent, backward and subjugated.

Three types of feminism are introduced by Piela (2012): Secular, Muslim, and Islamist. Secular feminists, who articulate their feminism outside of the religious discourse. Women in this type reject Islam completely. Muslim feminists, who argue equality, call for re-reading and re-evaluation of the Islamic sources, and sometimes reject the weak sources. Islamist feminists, who reject the western debates on the equality of the genders and work within an Islamic framework which they conductor as not requiring re-reading or re-interpreting. Islamist feminists call for recognition of "gender complementarity", a

concept which is based on the belief that gender differences are constructed naturally and socially, and that men and women's roles are complementary and together constitute a totality. Traditionalists believe that women's education and professional work are accepted as long as they do not conflict with the interest of family. They argue that women are not created to function in leadership roles. There is a distinction between "pure Islam" and "cultural Islam". Culture in these reflections is understood as a set of pre-Islamic or non-Islamic customs which have been illegitimately incorporated into interpretations of Islam. This has resulted in the emergence of a code of behavior "branded as Islam" that in reality is a deviation from Islam (Piela 2012).

The expansion of the Internet has affected the way people practice and experience religion. Nowadays, it is common to find religious social networks on the virtual space (Piela 2012). Focused studies are required to understand these types of networks, because they mix both traditional (e.g., culture) and non-traditional (e.g., SNSs) worlds together.

Chapter 4

Theoretical Background

In this chapter, we introduce the required theoretical background upon which we build this thesis. In Section 4.1 we give an overview on key research directions in the community to identify relevant research models. Then, we introduce the research model upon which we build our thesis 4.2.

4.1 Literature Review

Analyzing the behavior of users on Social Network Sites (SNSs) has been a fruitful research area, where researchers have proposed several research models to understand the user participation on such sites. One of the common research models in this field is the Privacy Calculus Model introduced by [Dinev and Hart \(2006\)](#), where they account for the willingness of individuals to provide personal information with respect to Internet transactions. This model defines several benefits and costs (or risks) accompanied with self disclosing on SNS (which reflects the amount of information a user provides in the process of participation on SNS) ([Culnan and Bies 2003](#), [Dinev and Hart 2006](#), [Krasnova and Veltri 2010](#)). For instance, self interest in online networks is one of the main benefits of self disclosure, whereas privacy concerns represent one of its main costs. [Culnan and Bies \(2003\)](#) show that users typically continue disclosing personal information as long as they believe that they receive benefits that *exceed* the current or future risks of disclosure. In other words, a positive net outcome of self disclosure means that people are more likely to accept the loss of privacy that accompanies any disclosure of personal information as long

as the level of risk which accompanies the benefits of this disclosure is acceptable (Culnan and Bies 2003).

The privacy calculus of Dinev and Hart (2006) identifies three main factors that are strongly related to the willingness of individuals to provide personal information: Internet privacy concerns, Internet trust, and personal Internet interest. However, researchers have observed that other factors and aspects affect self disclosure on SNSs. Therefore, this model has been extended by several researchers to incorporate such additional factors and aspects. In this chapter, we mention a couple of main extended models upon which we derive our research model used in this thesis.

Krasnova and Veltri (2010) introduce a fine-grained model in which additional constructs to both benefits and risks of self disclosure are included, e.g., enjoyment, relationship maintenance, control, awareness, etc. Furthermore, several researchers find that using SNSs has impact on users' social capital (Ellison et al. 2011, Koroleva et al. 2011, Valenzuela et al. 2009). Social capital refers to "the value arising from individual's relationships with others" (Koroleva et al. 2011), i.e. it is the resources available to people through their social interactions (Valenzuela et al. 2009). People with a large and diverse network of contacts have more social capital than people with smaller, less diverse networks. By using SNSs, users seek to maintain and increase their network of contacts, in order to increase their social capital. Measuring social capital in the context of SNSs is still a research topic. Koroleva et al. (2011) introduce new scales to measure social capital in the context of SNS, where they claim that research traditionally concentrates only on studying the benefits of social capital. However, the authors study the sources of social capital (which lies in the structure of the network and qualities of relationships between its individuals), the traditional benefits of social capital (e.g., enjoyment, relationship maintenance), in addition to some new suggested benefits (e.g., emotional support that user gets from using SNS), and the actions of the users while participating on SNSs (e.g posting some information or reacting on others actions). In this thesis, we incorporate three benefits of social capital adopted from Koroleva et al. (2011), namely, emotional support, offline participation, and networking value, into the benefits of self disclosure and the other constructs adopted from Krasnova and Veltri (2010) and Krasnova et al. (2011).

Krasnova et al. (2010a) and Krasnova et al. (2011) introduce another extended model that incorporates justice perspectives to provide a useful framework for analyzing consumer privacy concerns and the willingness to disclose personal information. Three types of justice are incorporated in this extension: Distributive, informational, and interpersonal (Krasnova et al. 2010a, 2011). Violating any of these justice factors, the privacy concerns are assumed to be increasing, which has a negative impacts on self disclosure (Culnan and Bies 2003).

In our study of self disclosure among Arab Facebook users, we apply a selected group of constructs from the aforementioned models, because they are widely accepted in the community. Nevertheless, these models have been thoroughly studied in conjunction with *cultural* differences, but only with respect to a subset of constructs. For instance, [Krasnova and Veltri \(2010\)](#) and [Veltri et al. \(2011\)](#) have applied this model using empirical studies to investigate cultural differences in Germany, USA, and Morocco. In this thesis, we extend their work by considering the Arab World. The justice constructs have not been widely investigated in conjunction with cultural differences, and we therefore would like to explore this relationship for Arab culture only.

4.2 Research Model

Our research model depicted in [Figure 4.1](#) includes the following constructs:

4.2.1 Enjoyment

Enjoyment is defined by [Rosen and Sherman \(2006\)](#) as “the extent to which the activity of using the computer is perceived to be enjoyable in its own right, apart from any performance consequences that may be anticipated”. With respect to SNS, enjoyment is defined as “the value users derive from having pleasant and enjoyable experience on online social networks” ([Krasnova et al. 2010b](#)).

Enjoyment is expected to increase the level of self disclosure on social networks ([Krasnova et al. 2009](#)). The more site users perceive it to be enjoyable, the more likely they continue using that site ([Rosen and Sherman 2006](#)). For instance, online games on Facebook represent a key factor of attracting new users and creating much fun on Facebook, e.g., FarmVille, CityVille, etc. FarmVille (a social game on Facebook in which players create and manage virtual farms) is the largest and fastest growing social game in history with more than 11 million daily active users (as of 2009) ([Wire 2009](#)). The key element of success in FarmVille are players’ friends, therefore Facebook users tend to increase the size of their friend lists. Mark Pincus, founder and CEO of Zynga that developed FarmVille, said “By combining the best elements of social gaming, with people’s instinct to nurture, we’ve created an incredibly fun, wholesome and rewarding experience” ([Wire 2009](#)).

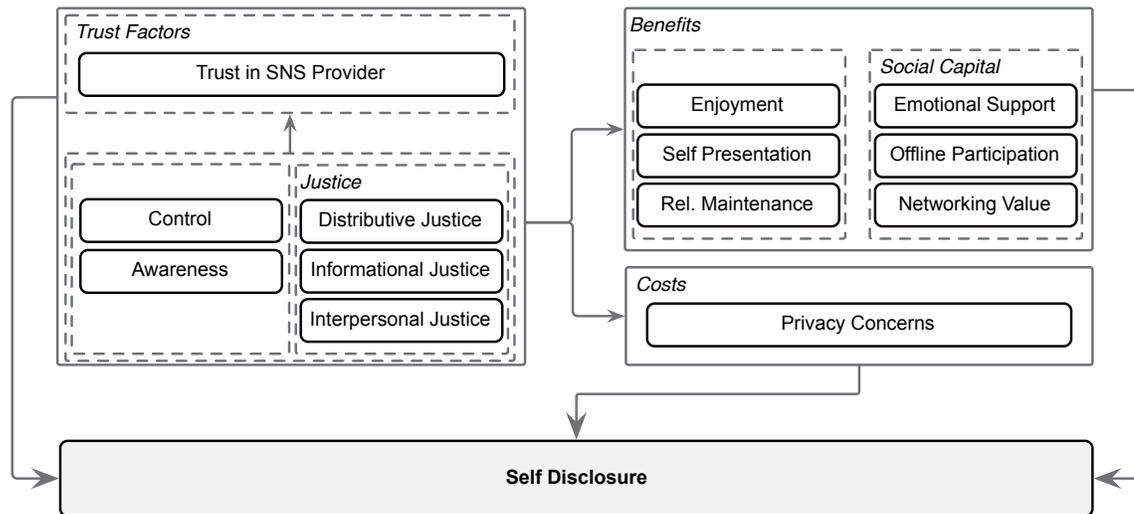


Figure 4.1: Research Model

4.2.2 Self Presentation

Self Presentation is defined by Zhao and Jiang (2011) as “the process by which people convey to others that they are a certain kind of person or possess certain characteristics”. On SNS, self presentation refers to the “value users derive from being able to improve their self concept in relation to others using online social networks” (Krasnova et al. 2010b). Self presentation is considered to be the basis of participation on social networks, and is one of the most important factors that build social networks (Zhao and Jiang 2011).

Online profiles are typically used by SNS users to represent themselves. Such online profiles tend to contain a repository of positive information about SNS users, e.g., self-description (demographics and others), list of friends and social connections, favorable photographs, wall posts, list of social activities and various interests, etc. Toma (2010) shows that there are positive effects of self presentation on SNS on the users’ online- and offline-side. On the online-side, building the desire for online “self-enhancement” may draw users towards SNS, which means more participation on SNS. On the offline-side, it is expected that users experience more positive feelings, both self-directed (feeling loved, supported, connected) and other-directed (feeling loving and grateful) (Toma 2010).

4.2.3 Relationship Maintenance

Relationship Maintenance is one of the main benefits of social networks that enables maintenance of social ties between individuals at a low cost (Krasnova and Veltri 2010). This benefit is considered to be one of the main reasons of participation in social networks and self disclose (Krasnova and Veltri 2010, Veltri et al. 2011). However, it is still debatable whether online networks can maintain offline relationships between users or not, or whether the ties sustained online are strong “real” as opposed to weak online relations. Williams (2006) argues that social networks are very useful for forming and maintaining relationships, and supporting community building, in particular considering that online interaction may bring together very different people with diverse backgrounds, cultures, religions, and age groups.

In case of Facebook, Ellison et al. (2011) point out that Facebook supports a wide spectrum of possible connections, ranging from those who share an offline connection, to completely strangers, who find one another through a variety of features such as groups, networks, fan pages, social games and applications, photographs, interest-based profile fields, status updates, and Friend networks. Adding new friends in order to receive more benefits from playing FarmVille, is an example of how Facebook helps in building relationships between strangers with no previous offline connection. Moreover, the new recently introduced by Facebook “smart lists”, are based on the information regarding education, work, and current city provided by users via their profiles, show that Facebook is used to articulating existing relationships and trying to facilitate its maintenance [facebook.com].

4.2.4 Emotional Support

Emotional Support on SNS refers to “the emotional comfort by people in one’s network” (Koroleva et al. 2011). SNSs enable giving and receiving emotional support through one’s friends network (Ellison et al. 2011). Valenzuela et al. (2009) argue that Facebook provides great benefits for its users who have low self-esteem and low life satisfaction. People who belong to a wide network of trusted members are expected to receive more emotional support in times of personal crisis (Valenzuela et al. 2009). For instance, by updating the status on a user’s illness he/she expects to receive many supportive comment and advice from his/her friends who provide him/her with emotional support.

4.2.5 Offline Participation

Offline Participation refers to the process of engaging Facebook users in more offline events, getting more invitations, and arranging offline meetings with friends (Koroleva et al. 2011). Valenzuela et al. (2009) argue that using Facebook helps its users maintain their offline relations, especially if they have strong ties with their friends on Facebook. Additionally, Dwyer et al. (2007) show that Facebook members use Facebook to manage relationships initiated offline. For instance, college students maintain contact with their high school friends and get to know new classmates better through Facebook.

Koroleva et al. (2011) conclude that using Facebook leads to increased participation and involvement in offline social activities due to the easiness of making arguments through the Facebook. Before the widespread of the Internet, computer users used to spend their free time mainly playing Solitaire and Minesweeper. The revolution of the Internet and social networks made users spend their time connecting with friends and relatives as well as making new friends in order to enrich their social network.

4.2.6 Networking Value

Networking Value is defined by Koroleva et al. (2011) as “the tangible value that individuals can obtain from the access to the resources contained in the networks of others”. Facebook enables its users to get benefits from their Facebook friends, by getting advice, useful information, job opportunities and internships, asking for a favor, assistance, help, etc. For instance, Facebook is widely used for job hunting. Sundberg (2010) states that “the most obvious way to use Facebook for a job hunt is to update your status with your current situation and what you are looking for. Friends, family, old colleagues, long-time-no-speak acquaintances are all there to help you. People want to help others, it’s in human nature”. According to Online (2011), “one in six” workers use social media to get hired. The more social people are, the more likely they are to find a job on a social media site. “Super social” is defined as having more than 150 contacts on a social media site. “One in four” *super social* job seekers find their job using social media (Facebook being the most popular). 50% of job hunters last year used Facebook to look for a job (Online 2011).

Additionally, Facebook has become a common platform in the educational sector. Students and teachers connect with each other on Facebook to share course-content questions and other related information. Venable (2009) proposes 100 different ways on how Facebook should be utilized for class projects, enhancing communication, and engaging students in

a manner that might not be entirely possible in traditional classroom settings. Yang Su (2011) shows that students build important bonds when they connect with school friends on social networking sites. Additionally, students perform better with social media, because they feel that they belong to the school community. Facebook has been aware of such benefits. Therefore it has published a guide for educators on how to use the social network to enhance learning (Yang Su 2011).

4.2.7 Privacy Concerns

Privacy Concerns is defined by Son and Kim (2008) as the “degree to which an Internet user is concerned about online companies’ practices related to the collection and use of his/her personal information”. Users with high privacy concerns are expected to be more conscious with respect to their self-communication (Krasnova and Veltri 2010). Higher levels of privacy risk beliefs imply that users resist to the disclosure of personal information (Dinev and Hart 2006). In Facebook, privacy concerns reflect individual assessment of what happens to users’ information once it is disclosed (Dinev and Hart 2006).

Since SNSs are managed virtually, these sites need explicit policies and data protection mechanisms in order to deliver an acceptable level of social privacy so that self disclosure is motivated (Dinev and Hart 2006). While Facebook users are typically very much concerned that their personal information not being misused (such as insider disclosure or unauthorized access and theft) (Dinev and Hart 2006), there is still a belief that Facebook is providing personal information to third parties, especially for advertising companies (Helmbreck 2010). Some Facebook users apply their own ways to protect their privacy by providing incorrect information on their profiles (Boyd and Ellison 2008).

4.2.8 Trust

Trust in SNS Provider is expected to increase the likelihood that users continue a relationship with the network (Culnan and Bies 2003). In general, *online trust* can be viewed as “a set of specific beliefs which include integrity, benevolence and ability of the online vendor, . . . which reduce the fear of opportunism and mitigate concerns about disclosure of personal information” (Zaoui 2008). *Trust in SNS provider* refers to “beliefs about one’s ability to prevent undesired events on SNS using privacy control options and privacy policies” (Krasnova et al. 2010b). Dwyer et al. (2007) report that Facebook members in US expressed a high trust level in Facebook, which is higher than the level expressed by members of other online networks.

Trust is a “precondition for self disclosure, because it reduces perceived risks involved in revealing private information”. For instance, Facebook has recently introduced the “Facebook Timeline” feature, which will become mandatory for all users in few weeks (Perez 2012). The Facebook Timeline enables users to view all statuses, posts, photos, news, events, etc. from their day of birth to the present day. Users can even add events from the past – before the date of launching Facebook – such as birth, graduation, marriage, etc. (Perez 2012). The enforcement of this new feature enables Facebook users to look through timelines of others and view events, which owners might prefer to hide. Facebook will give its users only one week to either cleanup their profiles, or change their privacy settings by preventing selected friends from viewing specific information on their profiles (Perez 2012). If the user is not aware of this one week period, his/her timeline profile will be suddenly accessible by all friends.

More importantly, all information of Facebook users will be stored in a form of full stories in one place: Facebook Database. This storage form increases the possibility for privacy violation if Facebook gives its users’ information to third parties, or if Facebook gets hacked or loses control over it. As a matter of fact, the enforcement of such feature and change in storage policies are expected to impact trust levels in Facebook considerably, which might result in Facebook users eventually quitting Facebook. For instance, after the “Quit Facebook Day” in 2010, 33,000 users quit the site (Kiss 2010).

4.2.9 Control

Control over Personal Information (also know as Procedural Justice) is defined by Son and Kim (2008) as the “degree to which an Internet user perceives that online companies give him or her procedures for control of information privacy and make him/her aware of the procedures”. Culnan and Bies (2003) add to this “and how these procedures work”.

An important concern regarding information control is the fact that SNS users can control what appears on their profiles, but not what appears on their friends’ profile (Ellison et al. 2011). For instance, if an employee sends a friendship request to his manager, who published private photos on a friend’s wall, it might be embarrassing for the manager if his employee were to see them. This situation could have a negative affect on users’ self disclosure on SNSs. Facebook proposes a solution to such situations, by allowing its users to specify who is allowed to see which posts on their profile. However, if the manager and his employee have a common friend, and this friend does not restrict the posts on his profile, then the employee might be able to see the photos published by the common friend and the manager (who might be in these photos) does not have control over them.

4.2.10 Awareness

Awareness is defined as the “degree to which an Internet user perceives of online companies as honest and trustworthy in complying with their promises related to information privacy” (Son and Kim 2008). Culnan and Bies (2003) argue that the methods used in gathering information from consumers, and how consumers are treated interpersonally, can shape their reactions.

Measuring the awareness in Facebook is aiming at capturing users’ perceptions of Facebook transparency with respect to its procedures of handling users’ information (Krasnova and Veltri 2010). Cluley (2011) claims that Facebook seems to be sharing personal information by default and without users’ permission, because the default privacy is “opt-out”. He suggests that the default setting should be “opted-in”, where users choose either to share information or stay in a not-sharing state (Cluley 2011).

4.2.11 Distributive Justice

Distributive Justice is the “degree to which Internet users perceive as fair the benefits he or she receives from online companies in return for the release of personal information” (Son and Kim 2008). Analyzing distributive justice, means analyzing the costs and benefits of what one gives up in terms of personal information compared with what one receives in return. This includes a comparison of benefits users receive from different SNSs for providing the same personal information (Culnan and Bies 2003).

In the context of Facebook, we also examine clearness and fairness of the price that users have to pay in terms of their information in comparison with the benefits they receive from participating on Facebook (Krasnova et al. 2011). For instance, the feature of “check-in” in Facebook enables users to indicate their current locations using GPS explicitly. This feature gives users several benefits, e.g., self presentation, keeping friends updated, receiving hints and advice from friends, etc. On the other hand, this explicit disclosure of location enables Facebook to display sponsored ads for the user that are tweaked towards the current location probably with relevant services, e.g., hotels, car rental, popular restaurants in the new location, etc.

Generally speaking, Facebook and other SNSs should put much effort in developing new, valuable, and enhanced benefits so that their users perceive positive outcomes with respect to distributive justice and continue providing their personal information.

4.2.12 Informational Justice

Informational Justice refers to providing explanations to people to communicate information about why certain procedures were used or why outcomes were distributed in a certain way (Roberson and Stewart 2006). In other words, informational justice may be sought by providing knowledge about procedures that demonstrate respect for users' concerns (Greenberg 1993). This should include the commitment from Facebook to inform its users about any changes in procedures of privacy settings.

Cluley (2011) argues that Facebook has changed its settings without giving users any notice, when Facebook launched the ability to tag friends in photos. The default setting was that anyone can tag his/her friends in own photos, without a permission from the tagged user. Moreover, Facebook does not give the user any chance to pre-approve his/her tags. Instead, the user should go to the photo and untag himself/herself from it. However, Facebook provides its users with the possibility to change the settings to prevent friends from tagging him/her in any photos.

4.2.13 Interpersonal Justice

Interpersonal Justice refers to showing concern for individuals regarding the distributive outcomes they received. It focuses on the consequences of those outcomes directly, and not on the knowledge of the procedures leading to outcomes (Greenberg 1993). Most Facebook users still do not know how to set their privacy options safely (Cluley 2011). Therefore, it is fair that Facebook warns its users of any potential threats on the platform and provides them with protection methods against any abuse of their information.

The privacy settings page on Facebook states “Remember: the people you share with can always share your information with others, including apps”. This is a clear warning to Facebook users that undesired sharing of the information might happen.

4.2.14 Self Disclosure

Self Disclosure is the communication of information about yourself to others (Bobkowski 2008). Self disclosure on Facebook means revealing private information by participating on Facebook (Krasnova et al. 2010b). The increasing use of SNS services require people to make fine-grained judgments regarding the balance between the need to disclose per-

sonal information and the correlated risks to this disclosure.

Although self disclosure has considerable benefits for SNS users (e.g., enjoyment, self presentation, relationship maintenance), it has meanwhile some negative consequences (e.g., privacy costs). On the other hand, SNS providers aim at increasing the level of self disclosure by their users, e.g., by rising trust levels in SNS providers. Additionally, serious efforts by SNS providers to make their users aware of potential threats or misuse of personal information are expected to increase the level of self disclosure as well. Furthermore, SNS providers should enable their users to control their disclosed information, and users should also be keen on taking control over it.

Empirical Study

In this chapter, we describe the methodology we use to gather relevant information from Facebook users by means of online surveys in Section 5.1. Then, we report on the demographics of our sample of participants in Section 5.2. After that, we analyze the answers provided by our respondents of Arab Facebook users and compare them with the answers provided by German users in Section 5.3. In Section 5.4, we present several key discussion aspects. We use *t*-test (significance vs. non-significance) to investigate the mean differences of responses between Arab World and German users. It is worth mentioning that participation in the survey was voluntary.

5.1 Survey Instrument

The goal of this thesis is to investigate the effect of cultural differences on the usage of Facebook by Arab users and compare this effect with its counterpart among German Facebook users. We gather relevant information from Facebook users by means of online surveys that we have compiled and distributed among a random sample of Arab Facebook users. The values of German users are based on the raw data provided by Dr. Hanna Krasnova from the online surveys, which were distributed among German Facebook users. The questions of the surveys are borrowed from (Koroleva et al. 2011, Krasnova et al. 2011, Krasnova and Veltri 2010). We translated all survey items carefully into Arabic, reviewed them rigorously, and tested their clarity by sharing them with more than ten native Arabic speakers from different countries and backgrounds.

There is a wealth of research models that have been proposed in the community to capture differences among cultures and societies (See Chapter 4). In our surveys we investigate 13 different cultural constructs, which we introduced in Section 4.2. Each construct is measured reflectively with several questions on a 7-point scale. In most cases, Likert scale is used: 1=Strongly Disagree (SD); 2=Disagree; 3=Slightly Disagree; 4=Neutral; 5=Slightly Agree; 6=Agree; 7=Strongly Agree (SA). Measuring these constructs includes around 90 corresponding questions. Creating a single survey with these questions is expected to affect the answers of the participants, because taking such a survey is tedious and takes long time and effort. Therefore, we divide these questions among two surveys. Each survey includes around 60 (non-distinct) questions in addition to the demographics questions. We use Qualtrics (<http://www.qualtrics.com>) to create, publish, run, and analyze our surveys.

Distributing our surveys among Arab Facebook users is not an easy task, because we conduct this research in Germany lacking cooperation with Arab universities. We collect our participants using four ways. First, through a new Facebook account that we created for the sake of this research. We added random friends whose friend lists are large, so that they share our surveys with their friends. We have over 100 friends in this Facebook account. Second, by publishing surveys' links on random Arab Facebook pages and groups with general interests, such as countries' pages and news. Third, by posting surveys' links on Arab groups on LinkedIn and other forums. Finally, by contacting several professors and researchers from different fields in Arab universities and asking them to forward our request to their students and colleagues.

5.2 Demographics

We gathered 363 subjects in the first survey, among which 269 provide *valid* participations. In the second survey, we gathered 231 subjects, among which 164 are *valid* participations. We consider participations that answer less than half of the entire survey as *invalid*. In the sequel, we provide demographic statistics on our sample.

Among the 433 valid participations in both surveys, male participants represent 55% whereas female participants represent 45% of the entire sample. Our sample includes participants from the age of 14 to 63. The average age is 27 years, where the dominant age group is the one between 20 and 35. Single participants represent 55% and married participants represent 43% of our sample. The dominant religion of our sample is Islam with 95%. The majority of our participants (66%) are graduates, post-graduates, or hold

a college degree. Our participants live in 16 different Arab countries and represent 12 different nationalities. The dominant nationality is Palestinian (57.5%). Most of our participants (44.8%) also live in Palestine. 72% live in their original countries, and only 7% have lived abroad for more than 10 years.

Facebook represents the primary social network (86%) in our sample followed by MSN and forums. 82% have been using Facebook for more than a year. Friend lists of our participants vary from 10 to 4500 with average size of 257 friends. On average, our participants visit Facebook 10 times daily and spend around 140 minutes daily. 55% of our participants restrict access to their Facebook pages to their friends only, 17% customize privacy settings of their profiles, 14% do not use any privacy restrictions and their pages are public. Although Facebook does not allow users to create multiple accounts, 27% of our participants have two or more Facebook accounts. The reasons behind this observation are having different interests and other purposes, mainly playing games (49%); separating two groups, such as family and work or family and friends (48%); and separating between genders (3%). Table 5.1 includes an overview of some of the dimensions included in demographics section in our surveys, and statistics on these dimensions.

Table 5.1: Demographics

Dimension	Statistic
Gender	Male 55%
	Female 45%
Age Group	≤ 19 9.3%
	20 – 35 79.1%
	36 – 49 9.3%
	≥ 50 2.3%
Religion	Islam 95%
	Christianity 4%
	Others 1%
Education	Less than high school 4%
	Finished high school 7%
	Student/Some college 19%
	College graduate 46%
	Post-graduate/professional degree/MBA 20%
	Others 2%
Country of Residence	Palestine 45%
	Jordan 18%
	Egypt 9%
	Saudi Arabia 7%
	Yemen 7%
	Others 14%
Nationality	Palestine 50%
	Jordan 19%
	Yemen 9%
	Egypt 8%
	Saudi Arabia 4%
	Others 10%
Marital Status	Single 55%
	Married 43%
	Others 2%
Number of Accounts	One account 73%
	Two accounts 21%
	More than two accounts 6%

5.3 Results

In this section, we analyze the answers provided by our respondents of Arab Facebook users and compare them with the answers provided by German users. We apply our research model with 13 constructs to perform this comparison. We use *t*-test (significance vs. non-significance) to investigate the mean differences of responses between Arab and German users. We compare the mean responses of two samples. In most cases we found significant differences (at 0.05 level or below) between the two countries, unless specified otherwise. Items for which differences were *insignificant* are italicized in the tables below.

5.3.1 Enjoyment

To measure the degree of *enjoyment* that users experience on Facebook, we use three questions in our survey as shown in Table 5.2. By analyzing the answers of our respondents with respect to enjoyment, we observe that both Arabs and Germans perceive an above-average enjoyment level on Facebook. However, German users tend to find Facebook *less* enjoyable than Arab users. Germany is a low LTO country, where leisure time is very important (Hofstede 2001). Furthermore, other social networking sites that are based in Germany appear to be more popular than Facebook among Germans, such as StudiVZ and Wer-Kennt-Wen. Therefore, Germans may perceive Facebook to be less enjoyable as it may be more entertaining to look through the photos of close friends on StudiVZ or Wer-Kennt-Wen as opposed to distant acquaintances from abroad on Facebook (Krasnova and Veltri 2010).

Arab Facebook users answered the questions: “*I find using Facebook enjoyable*”, and “*Using Facebook is entertaining*” with more than 75% of different types of agreement (*Strongly Agree, Agree, Slightly Agree*). The results provided by our respondents show that Arab users consider Facebook to be an entertaining and enjoyable site. Fauad (2009) shows that 60% of Arab Facebook users use Facebook for entertainment and fun. For instance, he shows that 80% of Arab Facebook users mainly use “Just-for-fun” applications (Fauad 2009). One of the main aspects of enjoyment and entrainment of Facebook among Arab users is games. Our survey results show that 27% of our respondents have more than one Facebook account (two or more), mainly for the purpose of playing games on Facebook. Games on Facebook, such as FarmVille and CityVille, represent a key factor, which attracts users to join Facebook. A key element that makes playing such games interesting is the number of friends. Having more than one Facebook account helps users

Table 5.2: Enjoyment

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Mean AW	Mean GER	T-Value: AW/GER
I find using Facebook enjoyable	5.13	4.66	0.00
I have fun using Facebook	4.67	4.96	0.00
Using Facebook is entertaining	5.07	5.24	0.03

to protect their “real” accounts that are mainly used for personal relations with trusted friends. Yet, they enjoy playing games using specific accounts with huge lists of ‘unknown’ friends.

5.3.2 Self Presentation

To measure the degree of *self presentation* that users experience on Facebook, we use four questions in our survey as shown in Table 5.3. By analyzing the answers of our respondents, we find that Arabs perceive a *higher* level of self presentation on Facebook. Germans, as a high IDV culture, tend to experience higher individualized self-image “I”, and therefore perceive less value in presenting the self to others. German users have a feeling of self-respect regardless the point of view of others. Arab users experience a higher collectivized self-image “we”, and therefore put much value in making impressions on others. Arab users usually feel guilty and ashamed if others know about their mistakes and they tend to present themselves in a good and favorable way to others (Hofstede 2001).

Our survey results show that around 70% of our Arab respondents agree that Facebook helps them to “*impress other*”, and “*present things I am proud of to others*”. Arab Facebook users tend to present and impress themselves in different ways. One way is to add photos on Facebook that include special moments and situations. Fauad (2009) shows that 50% of the contents of photo applications used by Arab Facebook users are personal contents.

Additionally, Arabs are generally more talkative than others in their communication (El Louadi and Everard 2004). They share each others everything and anything, e.g., joys and sorrows, achievements and failure, victories and defeats, even on the professional side, they share information about meetings, sessions planning, decisions making, preparing the social festivities for work colleagues, etc. (Barakat 1993, Rohm Jr. 2010). Therefore,

Table 5.3: *Self Presentation*

Facebook helps me to:	Mean AW	Mean GER	T-Value: AW/GER
... present things I am proud of to others	4.75	3.61	0.00
... impress others	5.12	2.88	0.00
... attract attention of others	4.53	3.19	0.00
... appear more interesting to others	4.56	3.10	0.00

they try to attract attention of others by updating statuses and posting different stuff on Facebook. More than 55% of our respondents showed different agreement levels on that Facebook helps them to “*attract attention of others*” as shown in Table 5.3.

5.3.3 Relationship Maintenance

To measure the degree to which Facebook enables its users to *maintain their relationships*, we use four questions in our survey as shown in Table 5.4. By analyzing the answers of our respondents with respect to relationship maintenance, we find that Arab and German users show similar levels of perceiving Facebook as a tool of maintaining relationships. However, with a slight difference towards stronger relationships maintenance by Arabs. German users may have fewer “offline” friends on Facebook, which in turn, diminishes its value in maintaining social ties. While German users may prefer StudiVZ over Facebook to communicate with their close local friends, Facebook is often used to stay in touch with acquaintances from abroad (Krasnova and Veltri 2010). Our results show that there is no significant difference between the answers of Arabs and Germans in question “*I stay in touch with others*”. However, more than 90% of Arab Facebook users show different kinds of agreement to this question.

Arabs live in collectivism societies, in which relationships between individuals are highly maintained and appreciated (Hofstede 2001). Moreover, Arabs experience a strong sense of belonging through sustained commitments to friends, as they highly value friendships (Barakat 1993). Fauad (2009) shows that Arab Facebook users interact considerably with cultural applications, with activities related to these applications of 50% of users’ overall use of all applications. Our results show that around 90% of our respondents agree that using Facebook they “*learn more about others*”, and “*stay updated about others*”.

Table 5.4: *Relationship Maintenance*

Using Facebook,	Mean AW	Mean GER	T-Value: AW/GER
... I learn more about others	5.62	4.92	0.00
... I maintain relationships with others	5.57	4.55	0.00
... <i>I stay in touch with others*</i>	5.71	5.76	0.42
... I stay updated about others	5.67	5.49	0.01

**Difference is not significant*

In our study, we find that friend lists of more than 70% of Arab Facebook users mainly consist of close friends. Therefore, Arab Facebook users receive much benefits from Facebook in maintaining their friendships with close friends. This is shown in the 85% of our respondents who agreed with the question “*I maintain relationships with others*”.

5.3.4 Emotional Support

To measure the degree of *emotional support* that users receive from their Facebook friends, we use four questions in our survey as shown in Table 5.5. By analyzing the answers of our respondents with respect to emotional support, we observe that Arab Facebook users receive *more* emotional support from using Facebook than their German counterparts. Germany is a high IDV country where people prefer living in a loosely-knit social framework (Hofstede 2001). This cultural aspect implies that German Facebook users are not generally interested in sharing their bad feelings or loneliness with their Facebook contacts.

On the contrary, the Arab World has a high level of collectivism where individuals expect others to look after them and support them (Hofstede 2001). Therefore, Arabs develop large social relations in real life, so that they receive the required support they need during hard times (Doan and Bisharat 1990). Our results reveal that Arabs bring this cultural aspect to Facebook as well. Arab Facebook users usually share their feelings, troubles, or bad moods with their Facebook friends expecting to receive emotional support from them. This kind of interaction and expressing the emotions is common by Arabs, as they live in a group-oriented society. Moreover, they expect the same type of interaction and sharing the emotions from others (Barakat 1993).

Table 5.5: *Emotional Support*

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Mean AW	Mean GER	T-Value: AW/GER
When I have a bad day & my Facebook friends are there for me	3.93	2.58	0.00
I can count on my Facebook friends when things go wrong	3.90	2.67	0.00
My Facebook friends provide me with emotional support	4.10	2.81	0.00
When I feel lonely & my Facebook friends cheer me up	4.17	2.86	0.00

One of the aspects of collectivism is the extended family system that is very common in the Arab world (Hofstede 2001). Doan and Bisharat (1990) show that living in such extended families is typically helpful for people who get great emotional support resulting from the daily interactions between family members. Moreover, Rohm Jr. (2010) shows that Arabs are less likely to act independently or allow themselves to stand out from others. These concepts of extended families and interacting with others train people in showing emotional support to their Facebook friends and make it natural to expect the support of friends. Therefore, Arab users typically interact with emotional posts made by their friends to show their support.

Additionally, the Arab World has a high UAI value (Hofstede 2001). High UAI cultures are expressive, and show emotions (Marcus and Gould 2000). For instance, Arabs are generally more talkative than others in their communication (El Louadi and Everard 2004). Moreover, Arabs tend to express their emotions in several areas of life, e.g., likes and dislikes, joy and sadness, hope and despair, satisfaction and discontent, etc. (Barakat 1993). On Facebook, this attitude is reflected in continuous status updates expressing their emotions and mood changes. Yet, Arab Facebook users expect their friends to interact with such statuses as a sort of emotional support. In our study, more than 50% of our respondents show their agreement with the questions “*My Facebook friends provide me with emotional support*” and “*When I feel lonely, my Facebook friends cheer me up*”.

5.3.5 Offline Participation

To measure the degree of *offline participation* that users experience on Facebook, we use three questions in our survey as shown in Table 5.6. By analyzing the answers of our respondents with respect to offline participation, we find that Arab Facebook users perceive *more* offline participation on Facebook than German users. Germans, as a high

Table 5.6: Offline Participation

Using Facebook,	Mean AW	Mean GER	T-Value: AW/GER
... I take part in more social events (e.g. parties, concerts, etc.)	4.03	3.55	0.00
... My social activities become more diverse	4.38	3.17	0.00
... I undertake more activities with people in my friends list	4.50	3.34	0.00

UAI culture, tend to experience higher social anxiety and have lower subjective well-being (Krasnova and Veltri 2010). Therefore German users perceive less value in participating in offline social events through Facebook.

Arabs are less likely to stand out from others, where they share everything in groups, especially social festivities (Rohm Jr. 2010). According to Marcus and Gould (2000), Arab people seem to be active and expect structure in relationships. Consequently, they make use of the relations management system offered by Facebook. They appreciate that Facebook gives them the chance to diversify their social activities and undertake more activities with their Facebook friends. Over 50% of our Arab Facebook respondents show different levels of agreement with questions “*My social activities become more diverse*”, and “*I undertake more activities with people in y friends list*” as shown in Table 5.6.

5.3.6 Networking Value

To measure the degree of *networking value* that users experience on Facebook, we use two sets of six questions in our survey as shown in Table 5.7. By analyzing the answers of our respondents with respect to networking value, we find that Arab users perceive *more* networking values on Facebook than German. As a high IDV culture, Germans learn to reach their goals individually, where they grow up learning to think as a stand-alone identity; “I” (Hofstede 2001). For instance, they prefer searching for specialists they need by their own rather than asking somebody else. This attitude is supported by the wealth of services provided on the Internet that make their life easier.

Arab countries do not depend on online services so much, alternatively, they depend on social relations. Aljazeera (2012) reports that Arab region is continuously behind the trends of new technologies with respect to the Internet. “Most of Arab countries are pursuing a method of wait-and-observe, while rest of the world is improving its presence on the Inter-

Table 5.7: *Networking Value*

I turn to my Facebook friends when I need:	Mean AW	Mean GER	T-Value: AW/GER
... a small favor	4.53	3.55	0.00
... some assistance	4.41	3.03	0.00
... help with finding a specialist (e.g. doctor, lawyer)	3.56	2.44	0.00
Using Facebook makes it easier to:	Mean AW	Mean GER	T-Value: AW/GER
... hear about new job opportunities	3.95	2.76	0.00
... ask others for a place to stay during travels	4.34	4.03	0.05
... ask others for help with finding a job / internship	4.20	3.04	0.00

net and digital sphere” (Aljazeera 2012) (Translated by the author). Moreover, Khushman et al. (2009) argue that collectivist nature of Arab countries leads to a limited use of the Internet. As a result, it is not easy to search for a specific service on the Internet, e.g., doctors, job opportunities, internships, etc . There fore, Arabs used to take the “word of mouth” of their relations. On Facebook, this attitude is reflected by the desire of Arab users to ask their friends for specific information or advice.

Moreover, Arabs are generally helpful at all times with friends and personal acquaintances (Nydehl 2006). An important issue in friendship is the duty of a friend to give help and do favors to the best of his/her ability (Nydehl 2006). It is also common that when Arab Facebook users offer their help to others, they expect others to help them back when they need help or assistance. Additionally, Marcus and Gould (2000) show that Arab people shun ambiguous situations and expect structure in everything to help make events clearly interpretable and predictable. Therefore, they prefer to ask friends about something guaranteed than searching for something new.

Furthermore, around 47% of our respondents show different agreement levels that using Facebook makes it easier to “ask others for a place to stay during travels”. Accordingly, Facebook users prefer to stay with other relations when they travel, instead of being alone, especially because then they can engage in lively conversations with (close) company (Barakat 1993).

5.3.7 Privacy Concerns

To measure the degree of *privacy concerns* that users show on Facebook, we use eight questions in our survey as shown in Table 5.8. Each question can be answered with a value from 1 (*Absolutely Unconcerned*) to 7 (*Very Much Concerned*). The answers that we gathered from our respondents show that both Arab and German users show relatively high level of privacy concerns on Facebook.

In six of the eight questions, German users show higher concerns in privacy than Arabs. The high level of IDV makes German users focused on their personal success and be concerned that information they disclose could be used against them and to the advantage of someone (Hofstede 2001, Krasnova and Veltri 2010). This finding shows that German users tend to question Facebook competence in dealing with privacy violations and hence might be less trustful when it comes to providing their information on the platform. Additionally, the high level of MAS in Germany makes people extremely fearful of competitors using their information to their detriment (Krasnova and Veltri 2010).

The collectivist cultures as in the Arab World value emotional control and moderation and are more concerned about the consequences of their actions (Hofstede 2001, Krasnova and Veltri 2010). Moreover, honor is very important amongst Arabs, which includes protecting the value of a person in his/her own eyes and in the eyes of the society (Wikan 1982). Arab users are more concerned about the negative outcomes and opinions of their families and people around them (Barakat 1993), and are strongly concerned about preserving their face (Veltri et al. 2011). Therefore, there is a pressure on Arab individuals to behave in an honorable manner and avoid all kinds of acts that could be shameful to prevent negative judgment by others (Barakat 1993, Wikan 1982). As a result, and because every member of the family is responsible for the acts of every other member (Barakat 1993), Arab users avoid undesired disclosure of their information on Facebook so that no inappropriate consequences affect their families and could bring them shame.

Furthermore, Arab Facebook users tend to be concerned about sharing their information with other parties, e.g., employers, state, and family. For instance, Gosling et al. (2007) argue that many employers now use social networks to check out (prospective) employees. As a result, Arab users try to hide their personal data from (potential) employers in order to avoid any unexpected disadvantages.

Nydell (2006) argues that Arab people place a distinct boundary between friends and strangers. Such boundaries are reflected on Facebook by applying different privacy customizations to personal profiles. Our results show that 27% of Arab Facebook users have more than one Facebook account, where 48% among which are driven by separating

Table 5.8: Privacy Concerns

Imagine you decide whether or not to share something on Facebook. How much in this situation are you typically concerned that your information:	Mean AW	Mean GER	T-Value: AW/GER
... can be shared with other parties (e.g. advertisers, employer, state)	4.13	4.91	0.00
... can be used for commercial purposes (e.g. personalized ads)	3.91	4.81	0.00
... can be collected and stored by Facebook	4.44	5.21	0.00
... can be used to display personalized advertising to you	4.03	4.76	0.00
... can be used in a way you did not foresee	4.57	4.99	0.00
... can be used against you by someone	4.46	4.17	0.02
... <i>can get into wrong hands*</i>	4.52	4.69	0.18
... may get you in trouble in the future	4.60	4.10	0.00

**Difference is not significant*

between different groups; family and friends, family and work, friends and work. For instance, a snapshot of a status update by an Arab Facebook user has been shared widely between Arab Facebook users, where a schoolboy updated his status saying “This lesson is very boring. I hope it ends soon!”. His father (who is a friend of him on Facebook) commented on his son’s status: “Are you on Facebook during the class? You will be punished when you get back home!!!”. This situation is a classical case where separation between different groups is a necessity. Moreover, our results show that Arab users are more concerned than German users that their information “*can be used against you by someone*”, “*can get into wrong hands*”, and “*may get you in trouble in the future*”. Although the difference is not significant concerning the issue that their information can get into wrong hands, our finding shows that it is significantly important for Arab Facebook users to control their information of Facebook when it comes to possible troubles and possible misuse of the information by others.

Our results show that Arab Facebook users are much relaxed regarding their privacy when it comes to commercial purposes, e.g., advertisements. In general, Arabs ignore online advertisements, because they do not get much benefit from them. This might be due to the limited Internet services in the Arab region and the higher rates of internet access in wealthier countries (Aljazeera 2012, ResearchCenter 2011), which influences the utilization of commercials and personalized advertising in Arab countries. Additionally, Khushman et al. (2009) argue that Arab users are less interested in using online websites for

purchasing goods or services. They tend to consider online shopping to be more risky than physically investigating and inspecting the product, meeting the buyer face to face, and possessing the bought product (Khushman et al. 2009).

Furthermore, Arab users are typically impressed by the high respect exhibited for privacy by Facebook, especially that youth's privacy is usually violated in the Arab region, by family, friends, or governments (Barakat 1993, Fauad 2009, Ghannam 2011). As a high PDI culture, Arabs learn to respect others back, especially the more powerful parties and trust their ability to deal with different situations (Hofstede 2001). Therefore, Arab users respect that Facebook will treat their information in an appropriate way, even when it comes to commercial usage.

5.3.8 Trust in Facebook

To measure the degree of *trust* that users have in Facebook, we use five questions in our survey as shown in Table 5.9. The answers that we collected from our respondents with respect to trust in Facebook show that Arab users, unexpectedly, have *more* trust in Facebook than German users. As high UAI cultures, Arab and German users are expected to have more pessimistic perspectives on the incentives of companies (Hofstede 2001). German users show their pessimistic perspectives with respect to Facebook, where they develop a suspicious and less trustful attitude towards Facebook. They do not have clear understanding about Facebook incentives due to geographical and cultural remoteness as well as unclarity of the applicability of German laws within Facebook (Krasnova and Veltri 2010). Generally, they are less trustful in companies based outside their Germany (Veltri et al. 2011).

Table 5.9: *Trust Facebook*

In general, Facebook:	Mean AW	Mean GER	T-Value: AW/GER
... is open and receptive to the needs of its users	4.90	3.35	0.00
... makes good-faith efforts to address most user concerns	4.88	3.23	0.00
... is honest in its dealings with users	4.12	2.80	0.00
... keeps its commitments to users	4.29	3.19	0.00
... is trustworthy	3.47	2.64	0.00

Nevertheless, more than 65% of our Arab respondents show different agreement levels with questions Facebook “*is open and receptive to the needs of its users*”, and “*makes good-faith efforts to address most users concerns*”. Many of Arab social media users show their trust in networks supported by American organizations (Ghannam 2011). This trust might be a reaction to the lack of freedom in Arab social media and the international movements lead by USA to give freedom for Arab media. For instance, Barack Obama’s Cairo speech in June 2009 and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s Internet Freedom speech in January 2010 (Ghannam 2011). Such movements give Arabs the impression that social media in the USA have complete freedom and independence. Therefore, Arabs tend to trust Facebook as it is “a free organization in a free country”.

5.3.9 Awareness

To measure the degree of *awareness* that users experience on Facebook, we use five questions in our survey as shown in Table 5.10. By analyzing the answers of our respondents with respect to awareness, we observe that German users perceive *less* awareness on Facebook than Arab users. Levels of perceived awareness by Arab users are slightly above average. Our results indicate that Arab and German users are skeptical about Facebook openness, although German users are more skeptical.

Arab and German cultures are characterized by a high level of UAI (Hofstede 2001). German users are more demanding regarding the transparency of data-handling procedures and hence feel more dissatisfied with its current level (Krasnova and Veltri 2010). Both Arab and German groups of users experience low levels of awareness about possible commercial recipients of their information. They desire more specifics on how their informa-

Table 5.10: *Awareness*

Overall, Facebook clearly explains:	Mean AW	Mean GER	T-Value: AW/GER
... how information users provide can be used	4.13	2.54	0.00
... what information it can collect	4.11	2.35	0.00
... how it utilizes user information for advertising on its platform	3.79	2.43	0.00
... the reasons for using member information for advertising	3.67	2.44	0.00
... why certain changes in privacy settings / policy have been made	4.34	2.48	0.00

tion is shared with third parties and what kind of third parties get this information. Given that Arabs are also extremely concerned about opinions of others and preserving their reputation (Barakat 1993, Veltri et al. 2011), and that they avoid ambiguity and try to make situations clearly interpretable and predictable (Marcus and Gould 2000), they are more interested in knowing how their information is processed and showed on Facebook.

5.3.10 Control

To measure the degree of *control* that users observe on Facebook, we use four questions in our survey as shown in Table 5.11. The answers that we collected from our respondents show that German users perceive having *less* control on information provided to Facebook. Germany has a high UAI value, i.e. Germans have a pressing need to have means to address their privacy-related anxiety and hence have higher expectations regarding control possibilities (Hofstede 2001, Krasnova and Veltri 2010). Lacking adequate control mechanisms to mitigate uncertainty, German respondents are more likely to take a measure of last resort: Anonymize their Facebook profiles (Krasnova and Veltri 2010).

On the contrary, Arab users perceive having high level of control over information provided to Facebook. The answers we collected show that more than 75% of Arab users believe that (on Facebook) they have control over “*who can view information they share*” and over “*what others get to know about them*”. In the Arab region, governments often block completely or censor areas of popular applications, such as widespread social networking sites, citing as their justification that the sites violate norms and customs of local culture (Torstrick and Faier 2009). As a result, Arab users are not used in general to express themselves and their thoughts freely, and they are used to a restricted and government-controlled media, where in some cases the legal system is used as an instrument of control (Kent 2004). For instance, Harb (2011) emphasizes that Arab media world is not free of the political and economic influence of its governments, its owners or the various political parties struggling for control. Ghannam (2011) shows that media environment is generally constrained by extremely harsh laws concerning libel and defamation, the insult of monarchs and public figures, and emergency rule, thus, governments tried to exert control over the digital space. He further argues that along with technical capacities the Arab governments are developing for greater Internet connectivity, come increasing efforts to monitor, filter, and block websites (Ghannam 2011). Therefore, Arab users find Facebook both as the window to the free media and free digital space and as a channel, through which they express their ideas and thoughts without (much) control or surveillance from their governments. Even having a social site where they decide what, when, and where to share gives them the feeling that they have control over everything they disclose on Facebook.

Table 5.11: Control

On Facebook, users have control over:	Mean AW	Mean GER	T-Value: AW/GER
... what happens with the information they provide	4.25	2.67	0.00
... who can view information they share	5.13	4.46	0.00
... what others get to know about them	5.20	4.06	0.00
... how their information can be used	4.71	2.74	0.00

From the cultural perspective, the Arab World has a very high PDI level (Hofstede 2001). This PDI level implies that Arabs respect positions of power and people in authority. For instance, managers and teachers are typically treated with unique respect in the Arab World. Leaders are also seen as knowledgeable and strong, where they are (completely) trusted in making decisions on their own (Rohm Jr. 2010). This attitude can be extended to Facebook as well, where Facebook users respect the fact that Facebook is in charge of managing their profile information. This respect incurs giving Facebook the right to control the information they disclose on Facebook.

5.3.11 Distributive Justice

Due to the lack of sufficient discussion on cultural differences among Germans with respect to the Distributive Justice, we summarize the statistics of our survey and discuss the effect of Arab culture only. Nevertheless, we show t-values and German means for the sake of further research.

To measure the degree of *distributive justice* on Facebook, we use three questions in our survey as shown in Table 5.12. By analyzing the answers of our respondents, we observe that Arab users perceive relatively *low* level of distributive justice on Facebook.

Facebook provides its users with a chance to share information and model their social networks online. However, there is the risk that Facebook could share this disclosed information with third party. Govani and Pashley (2005) report that Arab Facebook users generally feel comfortable sharing their personal information, even after they know that Facebook can collect and use users data as stated in its privacy policy. On the other hand, Facebook is a company that needs to make revenues (Helmbreck 2010). For this purpose, Facebook share personal information with advertisers who want to market their products.

Table 5.12: Distributive Justice

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Mean AW	Mean GER	T-Value: AW/GER
I find it is fair that some of user information can be used for advertising in exchange for free social networking services	2.95	3.37	0.00
<i>The benefits users receive from Facebook are attractive enough to let Facebook collect some of user information*</i>	3.58	3.38	0.15
Given the potential for privacy abuse, the benefits users receive are fair	3.80	3.11	0.00

**Difference is not significant*

Even though individuals express their concerns and awareness about Internet privacy and risks, they are still willing to engage in risky online activities in order to receive benefits from such engagement (Govani and Pashley 2005). Currently, Facebook is set to begin showing advertisements on mobile applications to increase its revenues¹.

Govani and Pashley (2005) argue that Arab Facebook users may be informed about what the benefits and risks are to an extent, but they could still be influenced to join and use Facebook based on peer pressure and because everyone else is doing it. They further argue that “along with the benefits of making it easier to keep in touch and find out about others more easily, there are risks and concerns with sharing information with large amounts of people” (Govani and Pashley 2005). While Doan and Bisharat (1990) state that decisions are likely to be affected by the tension created from lack of privacy, Govani and Pashley (2005) report that Arab Facebook users’ decision to join Facebook is based on information about what the site can actually be used for. This means, Arab users believe that the benefit of sharing information outweighs the cost of a loss in privacy. This attitude is reflected in our results, where the agreement to the question “*Given the potential for privacy abuse, the benefits users receive are fair*” is above average, as shown in Table 5.12.

Compared to other social networks, Facebook has the largest market share world wide², as well as in the Arab region (Morrison 2010). During the “Arab Spring”, Facebook has become the main online channel of communication in the region. A key factor behind this increasing usage is user-created content compared to (governmental) media. For instance, uploading videos to Facebook by users has been increasing its usage because many other video-sharing sites had been blocked by the governments (Madrigal 2001).

¹Feb. 2012: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a0bd164c-500c-11e1-a3ac-00144feabdc0.html>

²Nov. 2011: <http://www.incharm.co.uk/our-services/digital-marketing/social-media>

5.3.12 Informational Justice

Due to the lack of sufficient discussion on cultural differences among Germans with respect to the Informational Justice, we summarize the statistics of our survey and discuss the effect of Arab culture only. Nevertheless, we show t-values and German means for the sake of further research.

To measure the degree of *informational justice* that users experience on Facebook, we use four questions in our survey as shown in Table 5.13. By analyzing the answers of our respondents with respect to informational justice, we observe that Arab users perceive relatively *high* level of informational justice on Facebook.

Arab Facebook users believe that Facebook “*emphasizes the importance of guarding user privacy*” in its public statements and that Facebook “*is respectful of privacy needs of its members*”. Govani and Pashley (2005) report that 80% of Arab Facebook users surveyed in their study have not even read the privacy policy. Therefore, Arab Facebook users tend to have limited information about the policies of Facebook concerning their information, or maybe they have not considered how information on their profiles can be used against them (Govani and Pashley 2005).

Table 5.13: *Informational Justice*

In its communications with users (e.g. on the platform & in public statements):	Mean AW	Mean GER	T-Value: AW/GER
... privacy interests of users are treated with concern by Facebook	4.11	2.78	0.00
... Facebook emphasizes the importance of guarding user privacy	4.30	3.01	0.00
... Facebook is respectful of privacy needs of its members	4.27	2.94	0.00
... Facebook appears sensitive to the privacy concerns its users have	4.07	2.75	0.00

5.3.13 Interpersonal Justice

Due to the lack of sufficient discussion on cultural differences among Germans with respect to the Interpersonal Justice, we summarize the statistics of our survey and discuss the effect of Arab culture only. Nevertheless, we show t-values and German means for the sake of further research.

Table 5.14: *Interpersonal Justice*

Overall, Facebook clearly explains:	Mean AW	Mean GER	T-Value: AW/GER
... how privacy settings can best be used to protect one's privacy	4.73	3.18	0.00
... how users can protect their information against abuse	4.36	2.67	0.00
... how user information can be misused	4.01	2.28	0.00
... what privacy threats exist on the platform	4.02	2.28	0.00

To measure the degree of *interpersonal justice* that users receive on Facebook, we use four questions in our survey as shown in Table 5.14. By analyzing the answers of our respondents with respect to interpersonal justice, we observe that Arab users perceive relatively *high* level of interpersonal justice on Facebook.

Although the use of Facebook is increasing dramatically, many users are not properly informed about the risks associated with using it. Understanding these risks and challenges should be addressed by Facebook to its users to avoid potential loss of private and personal information (Vorakulpipat et al. 2011). Facebook has multiple privacy settings which allow users to customize how much of their profiles they want to be visible, both to their friends and general public (Lee 2007). Arab Facebook users believe that Facebook is successful in making its users aware of privacy settings to protect their privacy and avoid possible threats on Facebook. Our results show that more than 60% of our respondents show different levels of agreement to the question “*how privacy settings can best be used to protect one's privacy*”, as shown in Table 5.14.

Facebook enables its users to restrict their profile visibility to certain networks, friends only, friends of friends, etc. For instance, Facebook introduces the limited profile option, which allows users to display only certain parts of their profiles to selected parties. The limited profile allows users to still be Facebook friends with someone while limiting the information that person has access to (Lee 2007). Govani and Pashley (2005) report that Arab users are aware of the ability of restricting the information they provide on Facebook and are knowledgeable about different options within Facebook to protect their privacy. Our results show that 82% of our respondents use different types of profile restrictions on Facebook, among which 55% are restricting their profiles to FRIENDS ONLY.

5.4 Discussion

Our results revealed a couple of relative similarities, several clear differences, and other border-lines. Both Arab and German respondents showed relatively similar attitudes in terms of enjoyment, and relationship maintenance. However, they showed clear differences in terms of self presentation, emotional support, awareness, control, and trust in Facebook. Additionally, the differences between the attitudes of Arab and German Facebook users were not so clear in terms of offline participation, networking value, and privacy concerns on Facebook. We believe that additional research is required to clarify these dimensions.

In the context of our research, we identify the following discussion points:

No “one” Arab culture or society: It must be emphasized that there is no “one” Arab culture or society. The Arab World is full of rich and diverse communities, groups and cultures. Differences exist not only among countries, but within countries as well. However, Arab World is typically considered in Literature as one entity, not separated or spliced countries (Barakat 1993). For instance, different Arab countries in Hofstede’s survey have different values for the same dimensions. Therefore, we suggest classifying the Arab World, e.g., based on the geographical location, into Fertile Crescent (Levant, Iraq and Egypt), Gulf, the Maghreb, and Horn of Africa. This division extends the classification into Mashriq (Arab east) and Maghrib (Arab west) that is introduced in (Barakat 1993).

Lack of research on Facebook use by the Arabs: Despite the wide usage of Facebook in the Arab World, there is not sufficient studies that target this topic. Arab Facebook users are not used to surveys that consider their usage of Facebook. They suppose that such surveys are used for other purposes, but not for research purposes. For instance, one respondent left a comment in the comments field of our survey: “I feel that this survey is done for an investigation agency!”. This observation reveals the urgent need for additional research on this topic.

The effect of religion: It is not clear if religion has an effect on Arab-Muslim Facebook users. For instance, around 10% of our respondents reject friendship requests from their opposite gender due to religious reasons as Islam separates between genders. Another example is profile pictures, especially for girls. In general, they avoid using “tempting” pictures for religious reasons as well. Therefore, we believe that it is worth investigating what effects might religion have on Facebook usage, especially that one religion (Islam) is dominant in the Arab region.

Inconsistency between empirical results and literature: The results of Arab Facebook users sometimes contradicts with relevant literature. One potential explanation for this observation might be new trends, attitudes, or cultures in Arab countries that affect their view towards the cyber world. This reveals the necessity to restudy the Arab culture and update relevant information about this region, especially that one of the most significant characteristic features of contemporary Arab culture is its transitional nature (Barakat 1993). Another potential explanation for this observation might be lack of users knowledge about Facebook including its benefits, associated risks, and privacy violation's consequences. This reveals the necessity to inform Arab Facebook users about Facebook, its privacy policies, their right to protect themselves, etc. For instance, Govani and Pashley (2005) believe that it will take an unfortunate incident, such as a victim of identity theft or stalking, to shock Arab Facebook users into being more selective about the information that they make available to other users. If users have experienced identity theft or stalking, or know somebody who has, they may be less likely to share their personal information (Govani and Pashley 2005).

Summary and Outlook

In this chapter, we summarize the main contributions and findings of this thesis in Section 6.1, and show potential future research directions in Section 6.2.

6.1 Summary

The unique and ever increasing popularity and widespread of Social Network Sites, in particular, Facebook, has been raising non-traditional research questions, such as the relation between users' culture and their profiles and activities on Facebook. Although such questions represent a fruitful research area, there is inadequate research about the impact of specific cultures on Facebook usage of their members, such as the Arab culture. In this thesis, we investigated the usage of Facebook by Arab users. Our investigation involves the effect of culture and a comparison between the effect of Arab culture and German culture on the behavior of Facebook users in both regions.

We used mainly the cultural model introduced by Hofstede to describe both Arab and German cultures. This model is mainly composed of five cultural dimensions, namely, *Power Distance*, *Uncertainty Avoidance*, *Individualism and Collectivism*, *Masculinity and Femininity*, and *Long- Versus Short-Term Orientation*. We used these indexes to explain the behavior of Facebook users in both regions. Compared to German culture, Arab culture has several specialties. Therefore, we introduced the main characteristics of this culture based on a wide spectrum of scientific books and articles that describe Arab culture. We showed the huge effect of Islam on the Arab culture, for instance, on the marriage and

inheritance systems. The expansion of the Internet has affected the way people practice and experience religion. Focused studies are required to understand these types of networks, because they mix both traditional (e.g., culture) and non-traditional (e.g., SNSs) worlds together.

We identified a set of 13 constructs that we investigated in the context of Facebook, namely, *enjoyment, self presentation, relationship maintenance, emotional support, offline participation, networking value, awareness, control, trust in Facebook, privacy concerns, distributive justice, informational justice, and interpersonal justice*. To measure the effect of culture on these constructs, we created two surveys with around 90 distinct questions in total. We translated these surveys carefully into Arabic to avoid any bias in results (i.e., no specific language knowledge was assumed) and published them among Arab Facebook users through multiple channels, e.g., Facebook, universities' mailing lists, personal messages, etc. We were able to gather 433 valid participations in both surveys. A valid participation is given by a subject that answered at least half of the questions in the survey. The answers that we gathered are almost equally-distributed in terms of gender and marital status. However, the majority of our respondents were Muslims, young (20 – 35), and college degree holders.

Our results showed that most of our respondents find Facebook enjoyable and entertaining, especially due to available games on Facebook. We found also that Facebook is typically used by Arab users to impress others and present things they are proud of to others. The majority of our respondents (90%) expressed that Facebook helps them maintain their relationships. Additionally, our results showed that Arab users get the required emotional support from their Facebook friends and using Facebook increases their offline participation. Furthermore, our results showed that Arab Facebook users experience high networking value. Moreover, Arab Facebook users believe that Facebook puts much effort to increase the awareness levels of its users in terms of information processing and usage. Additionally, they perceive having a high level of control over their information on Facebook and therefore, they showed a higher trust level in Facebook than German users. Our results showed that Arab Facebook users are much relaxed regarding their privacy when it comes to commercial purposes, e.g., advertisements. By analyzing the answers of our respondents with respect to justice, we observe that Arab users perceive relatively low level of distributive justice, relatively high level of informational justice, and relatively high level of interpersonal justice on Facebook.

Our results revealed a couple of relative similarities, several clear differences, and other border-lines. Both Arab and German respondents showed relatively similar attitudes in terms of enjoyment, and relationship maintenance. However, they showed clear differences in terms of self presentation, emotional support, awareness, control, and trust in

Facebook. Additionally, the differences between the attitudes of Arab and German Facebook users were not so clear in terms of offline participation, networking value, and privacy concerns on Facebook. We believe that additional research is required to clarify these dimensions.

6.2 Outlook

Due to the lack of sufficient studies on Facebook usage by Arab users, our research can be extended in several directions as follows:

Further research: Understanding the behavior of more than 30 million Arab Facebook users requires additional and more comprehensive studies that target wider spectrums of Arab Facebook users.

Country-specific research: Due to the cultural differences between Arab countries, we believe that country-specific studies are necessary. For instance, we expect huge differences between Facebook users in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia.

Religion: The results of our surveys showed that religion might have effect on Arab Facebook users. However, the answers of our respondents cannot approve or disapprove this effect. Therefore, we suggest focused studies that concentrate on this factor among Arab Facebook users.

Women: Investigating differences between the behavior of male and female Arab users on Facebook is another interesting future research direction. For instance, women in Saudi Arabia are normally not allowed to communicate with men in real life. However, they can do this communication on Facebook.

The impact of Western culture: As Facebook is originated in the Western civilization, it is expected to bring some aspects of the western culture to its users. We believe that the impact of this Western culture on Arab Facebook users is worth investigation as well. For instance, its effect on their taste of movies and music.

The impact of the Arab Spring: Number of Arab Facebook users has doubled last year, mainly due to the Arab Spring¹. We believe that this effect is worth investigation, in particular the role of Facebook in the Arab Spring and the usage of Facebook in countries where revolutions have already ended, e.g., Tunisia.

¹<http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/21733.aspx>

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