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Social Networking Websites as a Platform for Disseminating Social Marketing Interventions: An Exploratory Pilot Study

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Abstract

Social networking websites (SNSs) focus on building online social networks or communities of people who share interests and activities and provide ways for users to interact with each other online. Our exploratory pilot study gauged users' receptivity to receiving health information via the SNSs they use. We presented several hypothetical scenarios and explored respondents' reactions to each of them. Consistent with other research, we found that most respondents reported using SNSs to interact with people they already know as opposed to using SNSs to meet new people. Overall, respondents were generally receptive to the scenarios we explored. Spending more time on the Internet, spending a higher percentage of one's Internet time on SNSs, and currently participating in online discussion groups were significantly associated with receptivity across several of the scenarios. These reactions suggest an association between heavier Internet use and receptivity to getting health information through this channel. The rapid growth of SNSs presents a significant opportunity to reach individuals with health communication and social marketing messages.