What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post

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Abstract

Purpose: This research aims at investigating the main factors that affect micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post (WFBP). In this research issues related to forwarding, such as motivations for forwarding and the relation between forwarding and demographic factors are explored.

Method: An online questionnaire was issued to micro-bloggers to address four research questions: i) what are the main motivations for micro-bloggers to forward a blog post? ii) Does forwarding have a significant relation with demographic factors? iii) What are the main factors that affect micro-bloggers’ WFBP? iv) What are the main purposes for micro-bloggers to forward blog posts that contain misinformation? Collected data was analyzed using MS excel and IBM SPSS statistics.

Results: The research found that factors that affect WFBP include: 1) the source of the information- respondents are more willing to forward information from celebrities rather than from friends and people they know in life; 2) the validity of information in a blog - the willingness of parties to check the validity of blog posts before forwarding them is significantly affected by their education level; 3) the type of content- posts with pictures or video, and hot topics are perfected for forwarding. The willingness to forward posts with pictures or video is also significantly affected by gender; 4) the popularity of the original micro-bloggers; 5) the potential impact of the blog post on society, 6) their agreement with the viewpoint of the original blog post. Also micro-bloggers’ experience with forwarding misinformation has a significant impact on their WFBP.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Research

Micro-blogging is an important new type of online media that has won the favour of users since its birth in 2006. As computer technology and business on the Internet have developed, social media including micro-blogging have brought profound changes to the content, forms, communication mechanisms, and management mechanisms of information dissemination. They have also greatly promoted the formation and propagation of micro content on the Internet. Micro-blogging is a web 2.0 style network social service which is integrated, open and in the spotlight. It has been actively welcomed by users since its birth because it provides a new forum for public speech. In micro-blogging, users can share information and discuss public affairs in real time on the Internet. It enables a large number of informed and opinionated users to engage passionately in public discussion and enlarges the scope of the public sphere. The significant impact on information dissemination in the public sphere, providing ready access to statistics has stimulated research into micro-blogging.

Micro-blogging is a platform for information sharing, communication, and information acquisition that is based on interaction among many users. It allows users to post short text messages (upto 140 characters) in real time via cellphones, Instant Messaging (IM) software (such as MSN, QQ, Skype, Gtalk) and external Application Programming Interfaces (API), etc. The high availability and shortness of messages reduce the barriers for users to use micro-blogs. Users can also easily post text, photos, or videos through a computer or cellphone and their followers can immediately check the information and comment on it. In micro-blogs, everybody can become both a message sender and a receiver. Micro-blogging is an information communication tool that gets a high involvement of users from the start. Micro-blogging also offers ordinary users the opportunity to communicate with celebrities. The features and resource superiority of micro-blogging make it popular among users.

Forwarding is one of the main functions of micro-blogging. It allows users to pass on and comment on information posted by others in a micro-blog. It not only brings change to the communication model of information dissemination, but also offers
businesses an opportunity to better implement marketing activities such as word-of-mouth communication. This type of referral by communication from person to person tends to rely heavily upon the credibility of the source of that information or the product, service, or company being referred to. The convenience and usefulness of forwarding makes it one of the most important services in micro-blogging. In order to understand behavior better regarding forwarding in micro-blogging, it would be useful to investigate the main motivations for users to forward a blog post and the factors that impact on micro-bloggers’ WFBP. The present research is conducted for this purpose to illuminate the role of forwarding in micro-blogging.

1.2 Significance of the research

As the influence of micro-blogging widens and deepens, a major change in communication ecology is taking place. The emergence of micro-blogging has caused communication patterns to evolve. And made it into a research topic that is worthy of further research. Micro-blogging is an emerging new medium in the recent decade that is already receiving increased scholarly attention; however, more research is needed on the forwarding function of micro-blogging. The present research attempts to fill this gap by investigating the main factors which affect micro-blogger’s WFBP. In the last few years, micro-blogging has become one of the most popular forms of information dissemination across the world and has been applied in a wide range of fields, including politics and economics. The present research should partly help to understand the popularity of micro-blogging at a global level by revealing the main motivations for users to forward blog posts.

Additionally, the findings of the present research are also expected to have implications for both businesses and policy makers to make better use of micro-blogging and be more effective in managing it. By investigating the main factors that affect micro-blogger’s WFBP, opportunities will be identified for businesses to implement word-of-mouth communication through micro-blogging. It is significant for improving the effectiveness of marketing activities. For policy makers, the communication model of micro-blogging challenges traditional media theory and the management of information dissemination. Therefore, there is a need to research users’ behaviour regarding forwarding in micro-blogging. The main factors that affect a micro-blogger’s WFBP have implications for both enterprises and policy makers in
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seeking to influence what is forwarded. The rapid development of micro-blogging in recent years also suggests more studies are needed on information dissemination in order to guide its healthy development.

1.3 Research Aim and objectives

The overall aim of the present research is to investigate the main factors that affect micro-blogger’s WFBP. Based on this, the research will pursue the following research objectives:

i) Explore the main reasons why micro-bloggers forward a blog post;

ii) Examine the relationship between demographic factors and user behaviour regarding forwarding a blog post;

iii) Explore the factors that impact on micro-bloggers’ WFBP.

iv) Investigate the reasons for propagation of misinformation in micro-blogs.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

This chapter reviews the literature related to the present research topic to establish its context and collect secondary data for the present study. It starts off by explaining micro blogging services in China and defines forwarding. It then explores the influence of opinion leaders to understand how forwarding is involved in people’s communication. After that, the motivations for forwarding a post are also identified. Finally the causes of propagation of misinformation are addressed.

2.2 Micro-blog and Sina

Micro blogs are important platforms for users to build interpersonal relationships. It allows users to conduct dynamic and real-time communication in less than 140 characters with their friends or families through customized modules such as WEB or WAP (Wright, 2009). Recently, Micro blogging has enjoyed considerable popularity among netizens and even in the social lives of many individuals. People have adopted micro-blogging for many purposes, such as to share breaking news, to promote political views, to implement marketing activities, and to track real-time events. Armentano et al. (2013, p 1116) argue that more and more people nowadays keep up with the news through the information stream that comes from real-time micro-blogs activity provided by micro-blogging services. Further, considering consumer usage, aligning micro-blogging with enterprise environments has been investigated by operators. Erdoğanuş and Çiçek (2012) find that when a brand offers applications on social media, the brand loyalties of customers are positively affected.

Twitter is the most representative micro blogging service, and the term has become synonymous with its name. Twitter was founded by Evan Williams in 2006 and became popular throughout the world in only 2 years. Users can get updates on tweets and statuses by following others. Once a tweet has been posted, it will be delivered to their followers immediately. On a reader’s webpage, recent tweets from his followers are presented in reverse chronological order, and all gathered tweets are updated in real-time (Hofer and Aubert, 2013). On Twitter, hundreds of thousands of users are updating their status at any one time, ranging from their personal lives to news and interesting findings. On Twitter such updates are
displayed on the homepage of the individuals account. Users can gain information from Twitter by following others and reviewing their posts.

Chinese micro-blogging originated in 2010 and has rapidly developed since then. Although a variety of micro-blogging services have emerged, Sina micro-blogging, which is a Twitter-like online service, has become the most widely used application in China. Indeed, the Sina micro-blogging service is more than a simple copycat version (Zhao and Rosson, 2008). It is more like a combination of Facebook and Twitter, and offers a general-purpose Social Networking Site (SNS). Various types of information (pictures, video, music, and short-URL service) can be embedded in a post in Sina micro-blogging, which makes posting or forwarding easier and less of a hassle (Wang, 2010). So the Sina micro-blogging service is more broad based and better meets the requirements of Chinese users. It is not only used by individuals for interpersonal communication, but has also been used by business organizations for commercial purposes. According to the statistics released by DCCI, 2,500 firms had acquired logins in the Sina micro-blogging service by October, 2010. Such firms covered more than 30 industries, including food, automobiles, Internet, tourism, and so on. This indicates that Sina micro-blogging has become a major tool used for business purposes.

2.3 Forwarding

Along with the development of the Sina micro-blogging service, a variety of functions have been provided for users to meet individual and organizational requirements (Guan et al, 2013). Among them, forwarding is a major function, users can easily forward a blog post in which they are interested to their own accounts by clicking a single button. When users forward a blog post, the content of the original blog post is preserved in order to avoid manipulation. Users are allowed to add their comment on the original blog post when forwarding it. The forwarding function contributes to speeding up information dissemination. It has been widely used by both individuals and organizations. For individuals, the forwarding function allows them to share information and comment on hot issues. For organizations, the forwarding function enables them to implement word-of-mouth communication.

Forwarding draws a new audience to a particular thread, calling them to join without directly addressing them. This feature enables users to achieve the goal of drawing
attention from others, similar to forwarding something you receive in an email. The micro-blog forwarding feature allows users to re-post other people's posts, so that their followers can also read them. The syntax of inviting someone to join a conversation starts with @ followed by the receivers' name (@username) and then writes the content as a comment. To assist their forwarding experience, if users don't know the name of the receiver, a list of user name will be offered in the micro-blog service webpage. This process of forwarding is described by the following steps:

1) Hover over the post you want to share and click “Forward”
2) A pop-up window will appear. Click “Forwarding” to confirm. A comment can be made at the same time.

Fig 2.3.2: Confirm to forward a post with comment

3) The post with comment goes to the top of your webpage to confirm that it's been forwarded by you.
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4) The post now appears in your followers' timelines with your username attached.

5) Some users like to raise or introduce someone to join a conversation by forwarding. To do this, just add a comment by including @ and their username (for example, @平行线的天空 2011) or select a name from the user list.
As previously mentioned, micro-bloggers forward a message with various motivations such as to share updated news, to promote political views, to do marketing, and to track real-time events. Whatever their motivation for their forwarding, micro-bloggers usually augment the original messages by adding their own comment. Forwarding is not simply to spread information, but also to diffuse conversation (Pelusi et al., 2006). It has become so popular that micro-blogs aim to spread information and diffuse conversations. So, researching the propagation characteristics of micro-blog may help us to find out more about the reasons why users are willing to forward a post.

2.4 The influence of opinion leader in micro-blogging

The propagation characteristics of micro-blogging, including timeliness, fragmentation, instantaneity, interactivity and popularization make micro-blogs able to summarise and guide Internet public opinion. In the “opinion field” of micro-blogging, the dissemination of information has strong timeliness, the construction of public opinions is fast, and the forms of information dissemination are diversified. Additionally, the “social field” of micro-blogging is much more complex. The randomness and diversity of topics and the diversification of positions and attitudes are the basic propagation characteristics of micro-blogs.
In the presence of fragmented information, Micro-blogging has become a focal point of public opinion. The propagation of public opinion in micro-blogs promotes the propagation of diversified information (Mohamed and Ahmad, 2012; Chen, 2013). Meanwhile, its humanization and individualisation character deepens the degree of penetration of news information, and the capability of self-purification is helpful to improve the reliability and credibility of micro-blogging opinion propagation (Junco, 2012). This indicates that factors involved in humanization, individualisation, as well as the authenticity of information would probably impact on a user's WFBP.

Opinion leaders refer to the “activists” who usually provide information for others in interpersonal communication networks. They play important intermediation and filtration roles in the forming process in mass communication. They are the ones who diffuse information to audiences. In both the theory of two-step flow and the theory of multiple-step flow, opinion leaders are those who are initially or more exposed to disseminated information and diffuse the information to others through processing. In the virtual community of the Internet, the netizen structure and the characteristics of information transmission expand and extend the feature and role of opinion leaders. Previous researchers have proposed several metrics to study opinion leaders in Social Networking Services, including activeness, influence, numbers of friends, number and frequency of posting, and so on (Ma and Liu, 2013; Li et al, 2013). This indicates that forwarding is an important aspect to identify and measure opinion leaders in micro-blogging. This study attempts to explore whether user intentions to become an opinion leader and to follow opinion leaders are factors that impact on their WFBP.

2.5 How personality impacts forwarding

Personality is a popular and long studied research topic in both popular and scholarly media. Questions of how personality shapes culture and how personality influences behaviour are the traditional issues for psychologists (McCrae & Costa, 1997). Interpersonal communication was effectively implemented on the Internet, even before micro-blogging opened up a new “we media” age. Therefore, studies about how personality influences behaviour apply to a micro-blogging context as well.
Correa et al (2010) suggest that users’ personality traits are important factors that lead them to engage in user-generated web. This indicates the need to examine the relation between forwarding behaviour in micro-blogging and users’ personality traits. The relationship between personality traits and behaviours in micro-blogging has been tested and confirmed by various previous studies (Seidman; 2013; Hughes et al, 2012; Ortigosa, et al 2014; Zhong et al, 2011). The present research tests the association between frequency of forwarding and personality to explore whether users’ personality traits are crucial factors that affect their WFBP in micro-blogging.

Furthermore, micro-blogs offer a valuable opportunity to investigate personality expression in this context. Specifically, some people express their humour, justice, or just show off through forwarding posts. Some users even forward posts which they believe to contain misinformation, to show their friendly, social, or distinctive character. In addition, different personalities have different perceptions of the hazards of forwarding a post. For example, realistic people may show more sensitivity to the potential hazards of forwarding posts, such as spending too much time blogging, spreading misinformation, lose followers, having their account blocked. And perceptions of those hazards can directly affect the frequency with which posts are forwarded. Therefore, whether a user’s personality impacts on their behaviour in micro-blogging is worthy of further study.

2.6 Forwarding motivation of Micro-blog

According to a processing model of social information, the application of communication technology should be regarded as the combined action of four aspects, the objective nature of the medium, previous knowledge and experience, individual preferences, and social information (Honeycutt and Herring, 2009). Therefore, the use of micro-blogs as an approach to information communication is greatly affected by individual preferences and social information. This indicates that it is necessary to study the forwarding motivations of micro-bloggers to understand the factors that affect a user’s WFBP.

Motivation is a psychological concept that emphasizes the reasons that lead to certain behaviours under the combined action of internal causes (such as people’s instincts, drives, and needs) and external causes (such as goals, stimuli, and rewards). In general, users use micro-blogs as an approach to information
communication with certain goals and motivations. In order to analyze better the goals and motivations for users to use micro-blogs in different situations, it is essential to relate the analysis of forwarding motivations to blog posts.

One motivation when forwarding blog posts is the social influence motive (including safeguarding credibility of enterprises, post official statement, publish authoritative declaration, and become an opinion leader). Micro-blogging is transforming how organizations communicate. According to CNN Money website’s investigation in 2012, 85% of companies utilize micro-blogging for news distribution. In the first instance, the government and organizations also issue press releases via micro-blogs, to minimize or avoid public speculation and inaccurate news media reports, and thus grasp the initiative in public opinion. Another authority in micro-blogging would seem to be opinion leaders. These people are active in the discussion of social events and often provide insightful opinions which are supported and agreed by others on the events (Li et al, 2013). Therefore, the social influence motivation is a major driving factor for these authoritative organizations and individuals or for those who want to lead opinion.

A second forwarding motivation is the informational motive (namely sharing knowledge and information). The informational motive refers to the need of users to use micro-blog to acquire, teach, and share information and knowledge. Users can share information and experience (including making a comment, giving practical tips, supplying a solution) easily by forwarding a post. Micro-blogging is widely seen as a new medium because of its distinctive media features, such as viral transmission, have been reflected in many events in recent years (Din et al, 2012). For example, the news of the death of Michael Jackson was first released by a micro-blog. Moreover, micro-blogging has also played a positive role in disaster relief for its timely notification and instantaneous transmission.

A third forwarding motivation is the interpersonal communication motive (including showing support, expressing disagreement, putting down or humiliating others, and joining a conversation). Micro-bloggers generally use micro-blogs to seek, broader and deeper social interaction. Users can conveniently search for other people and become their friends in this sphere through showing support for the original micro-blogger by forwarding. Another way is to express disagreement. Those people, who
have the same opinions with you, are likely to become friends. Some people also attract attention by putting down or humiliating others. Additionally, micro-blogging gives a chance to ordinary people to communicate with celebrities even a president, as they can join the conversation by forwarding their posts. In general, interpersonal communication and conversation expand a users’ social circle.

A fourth forwarding motivation is the expressive motive (including emotional release, stress relief, loneliness relief, and entertaining others). Many users regard micro-blogging as their companion in their Internet life through which they release their emotions, stress and feelings of isolation. Micro-blogging has been widely used for entertaining and expressing emotions since its birth. It is easier for people to express both positive and negative emotions in an Internet context, because it is not face to face. Micro-bloggers are free to express happiness, anger, sadness, feeling abandoned or hate by forwarding a post. Some people like to shock people, engage in practical jokes or show off to entertain their audience.

Moreover, a moderating motivation plays an important role in forwarding a post. The rapid development of micro-blogging not only speeds up the dissemination of information, but also increases rumour spreading. Within this context, when a rumour is spread via a micro-blog, users who know the truth can forward such information and reveal the truth behind the information. For example, massive human collaboration (human-flesh searchers) has been widely used in micro-blogging for sniffing star gossip. Additionally, as some so-called celebrities and experts are bogus, people have a duty to put them in their place, stopping them from constantly misleading the public or teenagers. Therefore, a moderating motivation should not be underestimated.

2.7 The causes of the propagation of misinformation

As has been mentioned above, humiliation could be an important motivation for some users to forward blog posts and cause a negative impact on society. Therefore, attention should be paid to the propagation of misinformation in micro-blogging. According to Cass R. Sunstein (1995), rumours are generally produced by disseminators who have clear self-awareness and act intentionally. He divides such disseminators into four types: i) disseminators who seek self-interest; ii) generalized egotists who produce and spread rumours for eye-catching purposes; iii)
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disseminators who seek political interest; and iv) scandalisers. Among them, a great proportion of rumours in micro-blogs are produced by the second type of disseminator, namely generalized egotists who produce and spread rumours for eye-catching reasons.

In general, there are three main causes of the generation and propagation of false information in micro-blogging. First, “micro relation” has replaced information accuracy to become the basis to forward information in a micro-blog (Sobkowicz et al, 2012). Due to the change in goalposts and the large number of users in micro-blogs, the objective risks in the propagation of micro-blogs increase significantly. Most micro-bloggers do not have the awareness or skills to judge the accuracy of information which they forward (Zhao et al, 2013). Moreover, the continuous forwarding of information in micro-blogs strips the relationship between forwarders, recipients, and the origins of information. Forwarders often have no idea of the accuracy of the information that they forward. They forward information for the “micro relation” instead of the accuracy of information. Since the accuracy of information is ignored by users, the propagation of false information is speeded up.

Second, opinion leaders and forwarders promote the propagation of false information in micro-blogs. Opinion leaders have a significant impact in a micro-blogs and play an important role in the generation of public opinions. The participation of celebrity users in forwarding micro-blogs can also promote the propagation of false information due to the great number of followers who might further forward the information (Han et al, 2014). Additionally, in the propagation mechanism of micro-blogs, followers, comments, and private messages are all quantized. The quantitative statistics generate an internal psychological incentive on users. It encourages users to increase their followers by forwarding information and enhance their interactions with others to obtain achievement in virtual interpersonal communication (Zhao et al, 2011). The visible statistics on followers, comments, and private messages also increase the likelihood of further forwarding.

Third, the fragmentation of topics leads to the overlooking of false information in micro-blogs. The fragmentation of topics in a micro-blog is expressed as i) quick transfer of topics, ii) uncertainty about the transfer of topics; iii) multiple public opinion fields; and iv) significant differences in concerns. Under these conditions,
when false information receives attention, the attention to such information has been reduced significantly. Therefore, false information may not be further questioned.

Based on these causes of the generation and propagation of false information in micro-blogs, several potential solutions have been proposed to reduce and manage the propagation of misinformation. First of all, forwarders, particularly celebrity users, should act more responsibly when forwarding. Once a message is shown to contain misinformation, users must delete the message. Secondly, traditional media should be used to manage the propagation of misinformation. For example, when misinformation regarding a public event is spread via micro-blogging services, traditional media such as TV and Radio could be used to release accurate information spreading the truth amongst a wider public.
Chapter 3: Methodology and research design

3.1 Overview

The present research uses an online survey to explore users’ behaviour and preferences with regard to forwarding micro-blogs and tests the potential factors that affect micro-bloggers’ WFBP. The online questionnaire aims to reveal which contents micro-bloggers are more willing to forward, the motivations for users to forward a blog, and the factors that affect their WFBP. Additionally, the survey collects basic information about users and their habits. This chapter first outlines the research questions based on the research purpose and then hypotheses are formed in the light of the research questions. After that, the process of conducting an online survey is presented. This is followed by a justification for the selection of the data analysis methods. Finally, ethical issues involved in the present research are also.

3.2 Research questions and hypotheses formation

To accomplish the purpose of this research, the following six research questions are addressed by the collected questionnaire data:

RQ1: What are the main motivations for micro-bloggers to forward a blog post?

Motivations are the underlying causes for users to forward a blog post. Previous scholars have confirmed the significance of research into motivations to understand people’s behaviour (Yeung et al., 2013; Graves et al., 2013). Therefore, there is a need to investigate the main motivations for micro-bloggers to forward a blog post in order to understand their behaviour while doing so. This research questionnaire attempts to explore these motivations by straightforwardly asking them why they want to forward a micro-blogging post.
RQ2: Whether forwarding behaviour has a significant relation to demographic factors?

The relation between people’s behaviours and demographic factors has been investigated by various studies. Arndt et al (2001) examined the relation between health behaviour and demographic factors, and confirmed a close relationship between behaviour and certain socio-demographic factors. Yang (2007) addressed the significant impact of individual features on Internet use behaviour. Based on this, the current research investigates whether forwarding behaviour has a significant relationship to demographic factors. For this purpose, the following hypotheses have been formulated for testing with the collected questionnaire data:

H1: The willingness to forward blog posts with picture or video has a close relation to education level, age, and gender.

H2: The willingness to forward blog posts from those a user knows in life has a significant relation to the forwarder’s gender.

H3: The willingness to check the validity of blog posts before forwarding them has a significant relation to education level, age, and gender.

RQ3: What are the factors that affect micro-bloggers’ WFBP?

Investigating the factors that affect micro-bloggers’ WFBP is the focus of this research and the online questionnaire is aimed mainly to address this issue. Factors that affect users’ WFBP are explored with a multiple-choice question, question 16 in the questionnaire. Additionally, the frequency with which users’ forward posts in micro-blogs is also seen as an expression of their WFBP. Based on this, factors that affect the frequency of forwarding are also potential factors that affect their WFBP. To explore such factors, the following hypotheses were formulated for testing:

H4: The frequency of forwarding has a significant relation to potential risks.

H5: The frequency of forwarding has a significant relation to personality.

H6: The frequency of forwarding has a significant relation to the length of experience of micro-bloggers.

RQ4: What are the main purposes for micro-bloggers to forward a blog post
What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post that contains misinformation?

The information that micro-bloggers forward is obviously not posted by them, but comes from others. Therefore, the accuracy of the information is often not checked by the forwarder. However, there are also some micro-bloggers, who intentionally forward blog posts that they recognise contain misinformation, while treating it as if it was true. The forwarding of the blog posts that contain misinformation has a negative impact on others and on information dissemination. For this reason, the underlying purposes why micro-bloggers are willing to forward such blog posts need to be researched.

3.3 Methodology

Questionnaires are one of the main quantitative research approaches for researchers to collect primary data from participants to test their attitudes, beliefs and behaviour (Fink, 2003). They have high efficiency in terms of cost and time. Furthermore, questionnaires also provide a major research method that allows researchers to collect primary data to test hypotheses and examine the relations among different variables. The advantages are the reasons why I have chosen to use a questionnaire for this study. For instance, the main reasons for micro-bloggers to forward a blog post and the contents that they prefer to forward could be directly tested by questionnaire. Moreover, the relations between the contents that micro-bloggers forward and the type of people that they follow can also be tested by collecting questionnaire data. Questionnaires can be delivered either face to face or by self-completion with the assistance of the Internet. To select a suitable delivery method for a questionnaire requires consideration of the availability of participants and which research questions are necessary and important (Hansen et al., 1998: 234). The present research delivers the questionnaire to participants on line. This delivery method not only helps to ensure the accuracy and completion of the collected questionnaire data by checking the answers, but also offers the opportunity to participants to complete the questionnaire anytime in the given period.

3.3.1 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire contains 22 questions. Questions 1 to 6 are designed to collect basic information (including age, gender, education level, job position, personality, and email) about the participants who complete the questionnaire. Furthermore,
these six questions are also designed to address the second research question RQ2 (whether the motivations for forwarding are significantly affected by demographic factors).

Questions 7 to 10 are designed to explore user behaviours and preferences in microblogging. In question 7 (Which Micro blogging services do you use? Multiple choices), the main micro blogging services which participants use are investigated. Question 8 (how long have you been micro blogging?) is about the respondent’s depth of experience of micro blogging. Question 10 is about the frequency of forwarding, these two questions 8 and 10 help to test Hypothesis 6 (the frequency of forwarding has a significant relation to the length of experience of micro-bloggers). Question 9 is designed to discover more about the types of people that participants follow in micro-blogs.

Question 11 (What are your most common reasons for forwarding? Multiple choices) is designed to ascertain the main reasons why participants forward a blog post. The reasons why participants forward a blog post are also assumed to be their motivations to forward a blog post in this study. Question 12 (What kinds of content do you forward? Multiple choices) explores which contents participants are more willing to forward.

Questions 13 to 18 are designed to explore forwarding of blog posts that contain misinformation. Whether the experience of forwarding such blog posts would affect their WFBP is tested in this part. Question 17 (Do you forward blog posts which you believe to contain misinformation?) and question 18 (If so, what is your purpose in forwarding it?) tests the main purposes that micro-bloggers forward blog posts which they suspect or know contain misinformation.

Question 19 (Please indicate your response to the following statements) and question 20 (What are the hazards of forwarding information?) are the questions framed to be answered on a Likert scale. Participants are asked to what extent that they agreed with the given statements under these two questions. These two questions solicit supplementary information about a bloggers’ forwarding behaviour.

The last two questions 21 and 22 are open questions which are designed to explore (21) the factors that participants believe make a message worth forwarding and (22) their perceptions of the hazards of forwarding such information. They are there to
allow respondents to draw the experimenter's attention to issues in forwarding that may have been neglected earlier on.

### 3.3.2 Data collection

The questionnaire data was collected between October 15th and November 30th. During these six weeks, respondents could complete the questionnaire anytime and anywhere as long as they could access the Internet. The questionnaire was posted on the website ([http://www.diaochapai.com/survey760290](http://www.diaochapai.com/survey760290)) on October 15th. Diaochapai is a popular website that supplies a free questionnaire service. So far it has run 362,877 questionnaires, and 36,330,073 respondents participated in those surveys. It also supports translation between Chinese and English.

![Image](image.png)

**Fig 3.3.2.1: The homepage of questionnaire service**

### 3.3.3 Data analysis method

Collected data was analyzed with IBM SPSS statistics 19.0 and MS Excel. The answers given by participants to both single-choice and multiple-choice questions in the online questionnaire were initially analyzed using MS Excel. It provided an overview of the results of the online questionnaire. After that, IBM SPSS statistics 19.0 was used to test the relation between different variables in order to better understand forwarding behaviour in micro-blogs.

### 3.4 Ethical issues

Ethical issues involving the protection of the human rights of participants were raised
What factors influence micro-bloggers' willingness to forward a blog post by their taking part in the survey. So attention was paid to protecting their privacy. Collected questionnaire data was made confidential by making it anonymous. The link to the questionnaire only allows participants to review the questions and complete the questionnaire. The results are not disclosed to any participants on the website. There is one question (question 6) that requests the email address of participants. Participants who provide their email address will be sent the overall results of the questionnaire, but detailed answers provided by specific participants are not disclosed.
Chapter 4: Sample Profile and Findings

4.1 Sample Profile

4.1.1 Sample analysis

An open online questionnaire was developed to collect primary data for the present study. It assumes that a micro-blogger who has previous experience of forwarding messages in micro-blogs would be capable of providing insightful information for the research. Based on this assumption, the following samples are considered invalid:

1) Incomplete responses which answer less than half the total number of questions.

2) Responses that did not answer the seventh question (7. Which micro blogging services do you use?).

3) Responses from users with less than one month’s experience of micro-blogging. Such respondents chose the first option (less than 1 month) in answer to the eighth question (8. How long have you been micro blogging?).

4) Responses that skip Q11 (11. What are your most common reasons for forwarding?), which is the main research question.

After 162 responses were gathered, invalid samples as defined above were discarded. Overall, 140 valid questionnaires were used for the analysis. Sources analysis shows that 162 respondents come from 156 unique IP addresses. The average time to complete the questionnaire was about 16 minutes, which slightly exceeded our expectation of 15 minutes. Among the 162 respondents, 60% finished the survey by directly visiting the questionnaire services, 18.6% got their questionnaire through Facebook, and a few people visited via other SNS. But the sources analysis presents that the completion rate by people who finished the questionnaire through Facebook is much higher than via other SNS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Visits</th>
<th>Unique IP</th>
<th>Completion rate</th>
<th>Average time taken</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>162</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>60.45%</td>
<td>00:16:25</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.2 Data validation

According to the results of the survey, Sina, Facebook, WeiXin, Sohu are the main micro-blogging services used by respondents, as shown in Fig 4.1.1. This result is in line with viewing the Sina micro-blogging service as a primary research object. Additionally, Fig 4.1.2 reports that only 8 out of the respondents have used micro-blogging services for less than one month and 62% of the respondents have been micro-blogging for more than one year. This shows that in the main the respondents to the online questionnaire have a long experience with using micro-blogs. Therefore, data provided by the respondents in the questionnaire seems likely to be informative for the present research. This helps to provide assurance about the reliability of the research results.

![Fig 2.3.1: Sources analysis](image-url)
What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post

Fig 4.1.1: sources of respondents/ main types of micro-blogging services

How long have you been micro blogging?

Fig 4.1.2: The length of time respondents have been micro-blogging

Sample selection for the online questionnaire in this study also attempted to reduce the impact of gender bias. Since the research investigates whether the motivations for forwarding vary significantly between male and female, it sought to obtain
responses from similar numbers of male and female respondents. Fig 4.1.3 below demonstrates that 46% of the respondents were female users of micro-blogging services, and 54% were male. The proportional difference between female and male is acceptable and did not affect the research results.

**What is your gender?**

![Pie chart showing gender distribution: Male: 54%, Female: 46%](image)

Fig 4.1.3: Ration between female respondents and male respondents

The reliability of the collected data was assured by cross-checking the results of different questions in the questionnaire. Fig 4.1.4 below shows that 14 out of the respondents are less than 18 years old. It is assumed that these respondents must be attending primary or secondary school. Fig 4.1.5 projects that the number of respondents with the education level of primary or secondary school is 16, which is close to the number of respondents below 18 years old. These two results are partly consistent with each other. Actually, it is possible that respondents over 18 years old have an education level lower than secondary school. However, the number of such respondents should be low due to the popularity of school education and its compulsory nature worldwide in recent decades. Within this context, the approximate consistency between the number of respondents below 18 years old and the number of those with an education level of primary or secondary school is assumed to be reliable.
What factors influence micro-bloggers' willingness to forward a blog post

4.2 Findings Analysis and Discussion

The online questionnaire aims at collecting primary data from respondents who have previous experience of forwarding messages in micro-blogs to address the research questions and test the hypotheses that were developed for the research questions. The results of the questionnaire address four research questions by taking...
advantage of the questionnaire as a tool for simple data compilation (Burns & Bush, 2010). The following sections respond to the research questions by analyzing the primary data collected from responses to the questionnaire.

4.2.1 Motivations for micro-bloggers to forward a blog post

The questionnaire explores the main and most common reasons for respondents to forward messages in micro-blogs with a multiple-choice question. The result from this question shows the top five motivations for micro-blogging include: 1) to share information; 2) to show support to the original micro-blogger; 3) to make a comment on the original message; 4) to make the poster more well-known; and 5) to become an opinion leader (Fig 4.2.1). This result is partly confirmed by the findings of previous studies. Information sharing is the most important and original function of micro-blogging services. Armentano et al (2013, p 1116) suggest that a poster/follower social network structure is a key manner in which information is shared in micro-blogs. This indicates that the intention to share information interprets well the forwarding behaviour between poster and followers in micro-blogs. Cho et al (2012) defines opinion leaders as the people who have the greatest impact on others in social networks. The impact that a user produces on others in micro-blogs is mainly achieved through the opinions and information that they post. Therefore, it is easy to understand that micro-bloggers may choose to become opinion leaders by forwarding messages. However, there is a limitation here due to the lack of further investigation into the deep factors that affect the motivations for forwarding. For instance, Lee et al (2013) report that expected benefit and expected risk are both factors that impact on users’ intention to share information in social networks. Such factors are not explored by this research.
What factors influence micro-bloggers' willingness to forward a blog post to sell goods or services?

Other (please specify):
- To show off
- To put down or humiliate others
- To give practical tips
- To express humour
- To shock people
- To present personal experience
- To reveal the truth behind the information
- To express my disagreement with or ridicule it
- To express my emotions
- To solve a problem
- To keep it for personal access in the future
- To become an opinion leader
- To make the post more well known
- To make a comment on original message
- To show my support for original micro-blogger
- To share information
- To make a comment on original message
- To make the post more well known
- To become an opinion leader
- To keep it for personal access in the future
- To express my disagreement with or ridicule it
- To express my emotions
- To solve a problem
- To keep it for personal access in the future
- To become an opinion leader
- To make the post more well known
- To make a comment on original message
- To show my support for original micro-blogger
- To share information
- To make a comment on original message
- To make the post more well known
- To become an opinion leader
- To keep it for personal access in the future
- To express my disagreement with or ridicule it
- To express my emotions
- To solve a problem
- To keep it for personal access in the future
- To become an opinion leader
- To make the post more well known
- To make a comment on original message
- To show my support for original micro-blogger
- To share information

Fig 4.2.1: The main motivations for forwarding

It is surprising that the choice of selling goods or services is only selected by 13 respondents. This apparently contradicts previous studies which report that word-of-mouth recommendation is a key issue that is involved in information forwarding in social networks. They allege that micro-blogs are widely used for marketing as word-of-mouth recommendations can be generated by continuous forwarding of positive messages on goods and services (Yap et al, 2013; Lee, 2012). This indicates that the intention to sell goods or services could be an important issue to interpret forwarding behaviour.

One of the potential reasons for this result i.e. the intention to sell goods or services was selected by so few respondents. Is that respondents who participated in the questionnaire are general users of various micro-blogging services, whereas the use of forwarding for marketing practices is mainly witnessed in the business world? In other words, the intention to sell goods and services could be a major motivation for forwarding for marketing personnel; however, it is not the main motivation for general users such as students.
What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post

The questionnaire also finds that 14 respondents have selected the choice of “others” to the question “what are your most common reasons for forwarding?” Respondents who selected this choice were further requested to specify the main motivation for them to forward a blog post. 2 respondents suggest that they forward messages to keep their micro blogging accounts updated continuously in order to obtain continuous attention from their followers. 5 out of the 14 respondents point out that they forward blog posts to influence/convince others using the opinions of celebrities (original micro-bloggers). Additionally, 2 of them suggest that they attempt to improve their standing in interpersonal networks with forwarding as it shows they have similar opinions with celebrities (original micro-bloggers). One respondent said that he forwards blog posts to share with others if he thinks it will have a positive influence.

4.2.2 The relation between forwarding behaviour and demographic factors

4.2.2.1 Forwarding behaviour

Five statements regarding forwarding behaviour were devised for the online questionnaire using Likert scales. Respondents are requested to select one from seven choices which reflect the degree to which respondents agree with the statements. The five statements were formulated to explore the types of messages that respondents prefer to forward, what sources of messages they are more willing to forward, and the willingness of respondents to check the validity of blog posts before forwarding them. Fig 4.2.2 below demonstrates that up to 60% of the respondents agree (including agree slightly, agree moderately, and agree strongly) that they like to forward messages with pictures or video compared with text messages. This suggests that messages with pictures or video are preferred by respondents when forwarding. Respondents who disagree with the statement (including disagree slightly, disagree moderately, and disagree strongly) account for about 26% of the total respondents. 19 out of the 140 respondents (13.6%) selected a neutral response to the statement.
What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post

Compared with text messages, I like to forward messages with picture or video

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree Strongly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree Moderately</td>
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<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree Slightly</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>13.6</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Slightly</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>61.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Moderately</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Strongly</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the source of message that respondents are willing to forward, Fig 4.2.3 suggests that about 45.7% of the respondents totally disagree with the statement that they tend to forward friends’ messages, and 40.8% of them agree with this statement. The number of people who prefer to forward friends’ messages is close to the number of those who do not prefer such messages. This indicates that friends’ messages are not particularly preferred by respondents to forward in micro-blogs. Also, this result is similar to the result of the willingness to forward blog posts from those whom they know in life (Fig 4.2.3). Respondents who suggest a willingness to forward blog posts from those whom they know in life (agree with the statement) account for 33.8% of the total respondents, and those who are not willing to forward such posts (disagree with the statement) account for 42.9%. The similarity between the results of the two questions not only confirms the reliability of collected data, but
also reveals that respondents in general do not particularly prefer to forward messages from people whom they actually know in life. In other words, the source of messages is not a significant factor that respondents consider when forwarding messages in micro-blogs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I tend to forward friends messages</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Disagree Strongly</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid Disagree Moderately</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>16.4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid Disagree Slightly</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid Neutral</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid Agree Slightly</td>
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<td>19.3</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>78.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid Agree Moderately</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>92.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid Agree Strongly</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 4.2.3: the preference of forwarding friends messages
What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post

I am more willing to forward blog posts from those I know in life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree Strongly</td>
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<td>12.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree Moderately</td>
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<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree Slightly</td>
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<td>17.8</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Slightly</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Moderately</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Strongly</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 4.2.4: the preference of forwarding messages from those I know in life.

However, the online questionnaire finds that more than 65% of the respondents agree that they tend to forward hot topics in micro-blogging (Fig 4.2.5). Only 21.4% of the respondents disagree (disagree strongly, moderately, and slightly) with the statement that “I tend to forward hot topics in micro-blogging”. The other 13.6% select neutral as the answer to the statement. This reveals that hot topics are more preferred by respondents to forward in micro-blogging. Linking the result to the finding of Fig 4.2.4 above, it could be concluded that respondents tend to pay more attention to the content of messages rather than the sources in regard to forwarding.
A majority of respondents (55%) in the survey report that they check the validity of blog posts before forwarding (Fig 4.2.6). It suggests that even though hot topics are more preferred by respondents, validity is still an important issue that affects forwarding. However, it is also found that about 22% of the respondents in the survey have selected the neutral response to the statement that “I check the validity of blog posts before forwarding”. It could be interpreted that this group of respondents do not pay particular attention to checking the validity of blog posts or they might check the validity of blog posts occasionally before forwarding. The other 22.8% of the respondents report that they do not check the validity of blog posts.
What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I check the validity of blog posts before forwarding</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Disagree Strongly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree Moderately</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree Slightly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Slightly</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>84.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Moderately</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>94.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Strongly</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 4.2.6: Validity checking

**4.2.2.2 Hypotheses testing**

**H1**: The willingness to forward messages with picture or video has a close relation with education level, age, and gender.

Testing the above hypothesis using the data collected by the questionnaire to examine the relation between message types and demographic factors using both Independent-Samples T test and One-Way ANOVA analysis of IBM SPSS statistics 19.0, the results show that willingness to forward messages with picture or video has no significant relation to gender (Fig 4.2.7). According to the result of Independent-Samples T test on the relation between the preference of forwarding messages with picture or video and gender, the means of the agreement with the statement that
What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post

“compared with text messages, I like to forward messages with picture or video” are not significantly different between males (M=4.57) and females (M=4.84). $t$ (139)=-.96. Therefore, there is no significant difference between them regarding forwarding messages with picture or video. This result rejects that hypothesis that willingness to forward messages with picture or video has a significant relation with gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compared with text messages, I like to forward messages with picture or video</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>1.746</td>
<td>1.673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
<td>.200</td>
<td>.209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Testing the association between willingness to forward messages with picture or video and education level with a One-Way ANOVA analysis of IBM SPSS statistics 19.0, the result also rejects the hypothesis that there is a significant relation between willingness to forward messages with picture or video and education level. The descriptive table (Fig 4.2.8) reveals that agreement with the statement that “compared with text messages, I like to forward messages with picture or video” is not significantly different across respondents with different education level (F (5, 134) =.270>.05). However, respondents with the education level of primary school are
What factors influence micro-bloggers' willingness to forward a blog post more likely to agree with the statement that “compared with text messages, I like to forward messages with picture or video” (M=5.40). Respondents with the education level of PhD are less likely to agree with the statement (M=3.67).

### Descriptives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Upper Bound</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Minimum</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1.532</td>
<td>.249</td>
<td>4.26</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>1.966</td>
<td>.803</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.60</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.713</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>4.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>4.98</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>18.783</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.757</td>
<td>1.294</td>
<td>.270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>389.010</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>2.903</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>407.793</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is your highest education level?
Examining the relation between willingness to forward messages with picture or video and age also use the One-Way ANOVA analysis of IBM SPSS statistics 19.0, the result (Fig 4.2.9) also rejects the hypothesis that willingness has a significant relation with age. The result of the One-Way ANOVA analysis of the relation between forwarding messages with pictures or video and age, F (4, 135) = .444, which is greater than .05. This suggests that there is no significant relation between willingness to forward messages with picture or video and age. The agreement with the statement that "compared with text messages, I like to forward messages with picture or video" is not significantly different across respondents who are aged below 18 (M=5.43), aged between 18 and 24 (M=4.6), aged between 25 and 34 (M=4.45), aged between 35 and 54 (M=4.74), and aged above 55 (M=5.00). However, the agreement of respondents with the statement who are aged below 18 years old is much higher than with other groups.

### Descriptives

Compared with text messages, I like to forward messages with picture or video

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 18 years old</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>1.742</td>
<td>.465</td>
<td>4.42 to 6.43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24 years old</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>1.884</td>
<td>.266</td>
<td>4.06 to 5.14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 years old</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>1.622</td>
<td>.263</td>
<td>3.91 to 4.98</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-54 years old</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>1.548</td>
<td>.278</td>
<td>4.17 to 5.31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 55 years old</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.528</td>
<td>.577</td>
<td>3.59 to 6.41</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.713</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>4.41 to 4.98</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ANOVA

Compared with text messages, I like to forward messages with picture or video

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>11.034</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.759</td>
<td>.939</td>
<td>.444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>396.759</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>2.939</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>407.793</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, the above results reject hypothesis 1 that willingness to forward messages with picture or video has a close relation with education level, age, and gender. The willingness has no significant relation to the three demographic factors of education level, age, and gender.

**H2**: The willingness to forward blog posts from those whom users know in life has a
significant relation to gender.

The association between willingness to forward blog posts from people who they know in life and gender was also tested with the collected questionnaire data using the One-Way ANOVA analysis. The result shows that agreement with the statement that “I am more willing to forward blog posts from those I know in life” is significantly different between male (M=2.88) and female (M=5.22) (Fig 4.2.10). The association between the willingness to forward blog posts from people who they know in life and gender is marked (F (1, 138) =.000<.05). Female respondents in the online questionnaire report higher willingness to forward blog posts from acquaintances than do male respondents. Hypothesis 2 that the willingness to forward blog posts from those whom users know in life has a significant relation to gender has been confirmed by the results of the questionnaire.

### Descriptives

I am more willing to forward blog posts from those I know in life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.478</td>
<td>.170</td>
<td>2.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>1.374</td>
<td>.172</td>
<td>4.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.844</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ANOVA

I am more willing to forward blog posts from those I know in life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>189.778</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>189.778</td>
<td>92.584</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>282.872</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>2.050</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>472.650</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
H3: The willingness to check the validity of blog posts before forwarding them has a significant relation to education level, age, and gender.

Whether the willingness to check the validity of blog posts before forwarding them is significantly affected by education level, age and gender is also explored with the online questionnaire. The relation between the willingness to check the validity of blog posts before forwarding and education level is examined using the One-Way ANOVA analysis of IBM SPSS Statistics. It found that agreement with the statement that “I check the validity of blog posts before forwarding” is significantly different across respondents with different education levels (F (5, 134) =.000<.05, Fig 4.2.11). The relation between the willingness to check the validity of blog posts before forwarding and education level is marked. Respondents with a higher education level are more willing to check the validity of blog posts before forwarding them.
What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post

Descriptives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.643</td>
<td>.735</td>
<td>2.04 - 3.56</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.804</td>
<td>.544</td>
<td>2.04 - 3.24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.346</td>
<td>.218</td>
<td>3.40 - 4.28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>1.142</td>
<td>.136</td>
<td>4.31 - 4.85</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>1.333</td>
<td>.444</td>
<td>4.42 - 6.47</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>.516</td>
<td>.211</td>
<td>6.12 - 7.21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>1.512</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td>4.05 - 4.56</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>100.515</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20.103</td>
<td>12.398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>217.278</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1.621</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>317.793</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 4.2.11: relation between the willingness to check the validity of blog posts before forwarding and education level (Note: 1=disagree strongly, 2=disagree moderately, 3=disagree slightly, 4=neutral, 5=agree slightly, 6=agree moderately, 7=agree strongly)

The association between willingness to check the validity of blog posts before forwarding and age is also tested with the collected questionnaire data using One-Way ANOVA analysis. The result rejects the hypothesis that the willingness to check
the validity of blog posts before forwarding has a significant relation with age ($F (4, 135) = .347 > .05$, Fig 4.2.12). The agreement with the statement that “I check the validity of blog posts before forwarding” is not significantly different across respondents in different age groups. There is no significant association between the willingness and age.
What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post

Descriptives

I check the validity of blog posts before forwarding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 18 years old</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>2.134</td>
<td>.570</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24 years old</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>1.328</td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 years old</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.394</td>
<td>.226</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-54 years old</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>1.427</td>
<td>.256</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 55 years old</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>2.193</td>
<td>.829</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>1.512</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ANOVA

I check the validity of blog posts before forwarding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>10.250</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.562</td>
<td>1.125</td>
<td>.347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>307.543</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>2.278</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>317.793</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 4.2.12: association between the willingness to check the validity of blog posts before forwarding and age

Testing the relation between willingness to check the validity of blog posts before forwarding and gender using the Independent-Samples T test of IBM SPSS Statistics, the result demonstrates that agreement with the statement that “I check the validity of blog posts before forwarding” is not significantly different between male (M=4.29) and female (M=4.33) (Fig 4.2.13). This rejects the hypothesis that willingness to check the validity of blog posts before forwarding has a significant relation with gender. The agreement with the statement of both male and female respondents was close to 4, which is the neutral response to the agreement.
The online questionnaire investigates potential factors that affect micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post with a multiple-choice question (question 16). The answer to this question shows that 84 out of the 140 respondents (60%) select the popularity of the original micro-bloggers as a major factor that affects their WFBP (Fig 4.2.14). This result to some extent goes in line with the result that respondents do not particularly prefer to forward messages from their friends or people who they know in life (Fig 4.2.3 and Fig4.2.4). This indicates that respondents are more willing to forward messages from opinion leaders in micro-blogging. Fig 4.2.14 also shows that the potential impact of the blog post on society is ranked as the second most important factor that affects their WFBP. Also, the validity of the blog post is selected by 63 respondents as the main factor that affects WFBP and is closely followed by agreement with the viewpoint of the original blog post (selected by 52 respondents). The result that validity of the blog post is an important factor that affects the willingness to forward a blog post confirms the result that validity is an important
issue that affects forwarding (Fig 4.2.6). Additionally, 11 out of the 140 respondents selected “other” to this question. These respondents were requested to specify detailed factors that affect their willingness to forward a blog post. 4 of the 11 respondents report that the freshness of the original blog post is a factor that affects their WFBP. 3 respondents specify that whether a blog post could be read in mainstream media is also a factor that affects their WFBP.

**What factors influence micro-bloggers' willingness to forward a blog post?**

As shown in Fig 4.2.14 the validity of the blog post is an important factor that affects users’ WFBP. The questionnaire also tests whether the experience of forwarding a blog post, which afterwards is proven to contain misinformation, would significantly affect the WFBP in future. The result shows that 58 out of the 140 respondents (42%) acknowledge that they have previously forwarded blog posts, which afterwards were proven to contain misinformation. Among them, 23 out of the 58 respondents (40%) suggest that such experience would affect their WFBP in future (Fig 4.2.15).
What factors influence micro-bloggers' willingness to forward a blog post

Have you ever forwarded blog posts which afterwards were proven to contain misinformation?

- Yes: 42%
- No: 58%

If yes, did such experiences affect your willingness to forward blog posts afterwards?

- Yes: 40%
- No: 60%

**Fig 4.2.15: The impact of previous experience of forwarding misinformation on the WFBP**

In order to further explore potential factors that affect the WFBP, the following three hypotheses H4, 5 and 6 were developed to be tested with the collected questionnaire data in this research. The hypotheses were developed to investigate (a) whether the potential hazards in forwarding information, (b) personality type, and (c) the length of experience of micro-blogger would significantly affect their frequency of forwarding.
**H4**: The frequency of forwarding has a significant relation with the potential hazards.

The questionnaire contains four statements (question 20) to test potential hazard in using micro-blogging by respondents' agreement to these statements. The results to these four statements show that the perceived potential hazards in forwarding information is not very high (Fig 4.2.16). It suggests that in general, respondents are not sensitive to the potential hazards regarding forwarding information when micro-blogging.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>1.550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.405</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig 4.2.16**: Potential hazards in forwarding information

Note: 1=disagree strongly, 2=disagree moderately, 3=disagree slightly, 4=neutral, 5=agree slightly, 6=agree moderately, 7=agree strongly

Testing the association between the frequency of forwarding and the potential hazard of time occupation using the One-Way ANOVA analysis, the result rejects that there is significant relation between the frequency of forwarding and the hazards of time occupation regarding forwarding information (F (6, 133) =.747>.05). The frequency of forwarding does not vary significantly across respondents who have different attitudes towards the hazards of time occupation (Fig 4.2.17). Therefore, the relation between the frequency of forwarding and hazard of time occupation is not significant. One of the potential reasons to interpret this result is that forwarding does not take users too much time when micro-blogging. This is confirmed by the result of the questionnaire that the respondents generally tend to disagree that forwarding information occupies much of their time. Fig 4.2.16 shows that the mean of the agreement with the statement that forwarding information occupies much time is 2.84, which is close to 3 (namely disagree slightly). This can be easily understood as a result of the fact that messages can be forwarded by clicking only one button. However, this, to some extent, contradicts another result of the questionnaire that 55% of the respondents in the questionnaire suggest that they would check the validity of blog posts before forwarding (Fig 4.2.6) as checking the validity could
What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post occupy considerable time. As the present research does not further explore how users check the validity of messages before forwarding, whether validity checking occupies much time is not further tested in this research. This is a limitation of the present research.

### Descriptives

It occupies too much of my time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree Strongly</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>1.259</td>
<td>.242</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree Moderately</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1.135</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree Slightly</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.107</td>
<td>.196</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.124</td>
<td>.251</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Slightly</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Moderately</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.577</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Strongly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.707</td>
<td>.500</td>
<td>-2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>140</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.119</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ANOVA

How often do you forward a message?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>4.422</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.737</td>
<td>.578</td>
<td>.747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>169.549</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1.275</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>173.971</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 4.2.17: association between frequency of forwarding and the hazard of time occupation

Testing the association between the frequency of forwarding and the hazard of misinformation spreading in forwarding using One-Way ANOVA analysis, the result suggests that the association between the frequency of forwarding and the hazard of misinformation spreading is significant (F (6, 133) = .015<.05, Fig 4.2.18). It is found that respondents who perceive a higher hazard in general tend to forward blog posts more frequently. This result is quite complicated as although it is a general trend that the frequency of forwarding among respondents who have a higher hazard perception of misinformation spreading is high, respondents who agree moderately with the statement that “some messages may spread misinformation” forward messages less frequently. Moreover, it is also an interesting result that respondents who have a higher hazard perception forward blog posts more frequently as hazard perception be generally assumed to be a factor that would discourage them from
forwarding a message.

### Descriptives

Some messages may spread misinformation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree Strongly</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>.535</td>
<td>.202</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>13</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>.961</td>
<td>.266</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree Slightly</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.230</td>
<td>.217</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>2.78</td>
<td>1.242</td>
<td>.259</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Slightly</td>
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<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.075</td>
<td>.170</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Moderately</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>.632</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Strongly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.080</td>
<td>.342</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.119</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>19.192</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.199</td>
<td>2.749</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>154.779</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1.164</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>173.971</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 4.2.18: association between frequency of forwarding and the hazard of misinformation spreading

Regarding the association between the frequency of forwarding and the potential hazards of losing followers, and their account being blocked, the results of the questionnaire (Fig 4.2.19) reject the hypothesis that the frequency of forwarding has significant relation with the potential hazard of losing followers (F (6, 133)= .779), and their account being blocked (F (6, 133)= .236). In other words, the potential hazard of losing followers and account blocking does not significantly affect the frequency of forwarding blog posts.
What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post

Descriptives

Forwarding disagreeable messages may lose me followers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree Strongly</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.240</td>
<td>.331</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>3.72</td>
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<td>Disagree Moderately</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree Slightly</td>
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<td>.186</td>
<td>2.81</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>1.109</td>
<td>.277</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Slightly</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>.950</td>
<td>.203</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>3.38</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Moderately</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.708</td>
<td>.854</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>5.97</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Strongly</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>.894</td>
<td>.400</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.119</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ANOVA

How often do you forward a message?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>4.118</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.686</td>
<td>.537</td>
<td>.779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>169.854</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1.277</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>173.971</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptives

Some messages I forward may result in my account being blocked.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree Strongly</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.364</td>
<td>.455</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>4.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree Moderately</td>
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<td>3.41</td>
<td>1.141</td>
<td>.243</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree Slightly</td>
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<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.111</td>
<td>.193</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>.959</td>
<td>.175</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>3.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree Slightly</td>
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<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.066</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>3.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree Moderately</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.342</td>
<td>.405</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Strongly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.119</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ANOVA

How often do you forward a message?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>10.053</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.676</td>
<td>1.359</td>
<td>.236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>163.918</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1.232</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>173.971</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 4.2.19: association between the frequency of forwarding and the potential hazard of losing followers, and account blocked

H5: The frequency of forwarding has a significant relation with personality.
What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post

Testing the relation between the frequency of forwarding and personality, the result shows that the mean frequency of forwarding is not significantly different across respondents with different personality types (F (5, 134) = .129>.05, Fig 4.2.20). This rejects the hypothesis that the frequency of forwarding has a significant relation with personality. Respondents who see themselves as realistic (M=3.33) and enterprising (M=3.21) forward micro-blogging posts more frequently. This result could be partly interpreted with personality trait theory. It is suggested that people with a realistic personality are practical minded, and people with an enterprising personality like to lead and persuade people (Prediger and Vansickle, 1992). Therefore, respondents with a realistic personality might forward messages to pursue the truth behind messages, and respondents with an enterprising personality might forward messages to persuade others.

Descriptives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I see myself as someone who is...</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
<td>Upper Bound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Artistic</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.00</td>
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<td>.268</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>3.57</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>.261</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td>Enterprising</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.062</td>
<td>.217</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td>Investigative</td>
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<td>1.190</td>
<td>.210</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.038</td>
<td>.200</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>.938</td>
<td>.221</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.119</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ANOVA

<table>
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<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
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<td>2.124</td>
<td>1.743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>163.349</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1.219</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>173.971</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 4.2.20: association between frequency of forwarding and personality

H6: The frequency of forwarding has a significant relation with the length of experience of micro-bloggers

The hypothesis that the frequency of forwarding has a significant relation with the
What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post

length of experience of micro-bloggers is also rejected by the result of the questionnaire. Fig 4.2.21 shows that the association between the frequency of forwarding and the length of experience of micro-bloggers is not significant (F (5, 134) = .637>.05).

Descriptives

How long have you been micro blogging?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>.862</td>
<td>.209</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-6 months</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.065</td>
<td>.227</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-11 months</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.044</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.282</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years or more</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.071</td>
<td>.202</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.119</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ANOVA

How often do you forward a message?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>4.322</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.864</td>
<td>.683</td>
<td>.637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>169.649</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1.266</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>173.971</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 4.2.21: association between the frequency of forwarding and the length of experience of micro-bloggers

4.2.4 Propagation of misinformation

According to the results of the survey, 58 out of the 140 respondents who have experience of forwarding blog posts, which afterwards were proven to contain misinformation, point out that entertainment news is the main type of misinformation that they forward (Fig 4.2.22), and 60% of respondents aren’t affected by such experience. Advertising is reported as the second main type of misinformation that respondents previously forwarded. Moreover, 3 out of the 58 respondents have selected the choice of “other” regarding the type of misinformation that they forward.
What factors influence micro-bloggers' willingness to forward a blog post

Surprising, 52 out of the 140 respondents in the questionnaire report that they would forward blog posts which they believe to contain misinformation. 37 of 140 respondents selected “It depends” to this question. In other words, 38% of the respondents tend to forward misinformation intentionally and 27% of respondents may continue spread misinformation. Among them, drawing attention from friends is selected by 29% respondents as the purpose of forwarding misinformation. 10% suggest that they would forward misinformation just for fun (Fig 4.2.23). Additionally, to publicly support someone, the intention to increase the prominence of their micro-blogging and participation in a conversation are also reported as the main purposes of forwarding misinformation. 2 respondents specify that they forward misinformation are for sale goods.

Fig 4.2.22: Main type of misinformation that respondents previously forward
What factors influence micro-bloggers' willingness to forward a blog post

Do you forward blog posts which you believe to contain misinformation?

Yes: 35%
No: 27%

If so, what is your purpose in forwarding it? (multiple choices)

- To draw my friends attention to it: 29%
- To increase the prominence of my microblog: 18%
- To publicly support someone: 25%
- To participate in a diffuse conversation: 15%
- Just for fun: 10%
- Other (please specify): 3%

Fig 4.2.23: Purposes of forwarding misinformation

The questionnaire further investigated how micro blogging services keep down the spreading of misinformation. Several respondents believe that the spread of misinformation in micro-blogging is normal and there is no need to make a particular effort to keep down the spread of misinformation. Regarding the suggestions given by respondents, two main solutions have been provided. The first one is to educate users in micro-blogging to increase their attempts to identify misinformation, and the second is to use technologies to limit the spread of misinformation.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Future Recommendations

5.1 Summary

Forwarding blog posts has become an important type of information dissemination along with the popularity of micro-blogging in recent years. In order to better understand the behaviour of forwarding in micro-blogging, it is useful to explore the factors that affect users' WFBP. This research was conducted to accomplish this purpose. The research is mainly based on an online survey. 140 valid questionnaire forms were obtained during one and a half months from the opening time.

Collected questionnaire data in this research was analyzed using MS excel and IBM SPSS statistics. By analyzing the collected data in the light of the research questions, this research finds that 1) information sharing, showing support for the original micro-blogger, making the post more well-known, making a comment on original messages, and the intention to become an opinion leader are reported as the top five motivations for forwarding; 2) respondents were found to be more willing to forward messages with pictures or video, and forward information from celebrities rather than friends or people who they know in life. Respondents also report a high willingness to forward hot topics and check the validity of message before forwarding. 3) Gender is significantly associated with the willingness to forward blog posts from those whom users know in life, but has no significant association with the preference of forwarding messages with picture or video, nor with the willingness to check the validity of blog posts before forwarding. The preference of forwarding messages with picture or video is found to have no significant relation with age or education level. The willingness to check the validity of blog posts before forwarding is significantly related with education level but is not significantly related with age. 4) The popularity of the original micro-bloggers, the potential impact of the blog post on society, the validity of the blog post and agreement with the viewpoint of the original blog post are the four most important factors that affect the WFBP; also, experience of forwarding a blog post which afterwards is proven to contain misinformation has a significant impact on the WFBP. 5) The frequency of forwarding, which represents the WFBP, has no significant relation with most potential hazards (bar misinformation spreading with personality, or the length of experience of micro-bloggers. 6) the reason a great number of respondents are willing to forward...
misinformation intentionally is to draw attention from friends, or for fun, or to participate in a conversation.

5.2 Limitations and Recommendations for further Research

The present research has several limitations. First of all, the research tests the association between the frequency of forwarding and perceived risks. However, the results are not further explored in this research. For instance, it finds the frequency of forwarding has a significant relation with the hazard of misinformation spreading. This indicates that respondents, who have a higher perception of hazard, forward messages more frequently. The research does not explain why this potential hazard does not reduce the frequency of forwarding. Secondly, the research explores factors that affect the WFBP, but it does not further explore how these factors affect that willingness. For example, it found that the potential impact of the blog post on society is an important factor that affects the WFBP, but whether respondents are more WFBP with positive impact on the society or those with negative impact is not tested. Thirdly, factors which affect the WFBP could be complicated and diversified. The use of a questionnaire in this study might have neglected some potential factors as respondents are mainly requested to select factors from the given ones.

Based on the limitations of the research, the following recommendations are provided for further research. First, due to the limitations of the questionnaire, a mixed research method of qualitative research method (questionnaire) and quantitative research method (interview) should be used for further research. The mixed research method not only would include more influencing factors on the WFBP to be taken into consideration, but also help to re-examine the findings of the questionnaire. Secondly, further research should focus on a particular group such as university students in order to better understand factors that impact on their WFBP as potential influencing factors on forwarding could vary across different groups. Additionally, further research is also suggested to explore whether the main factors that affect the willingness to forward different types of contents are also different. For example, whether the factors that affect the willingness to forward celebrity gossip and news are different should be examined in order to better understand the behaviour of forwarding.
References


What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post


What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post


Appendix A: Questionnaire

Why do Micro bloggers Forward Messages?
You are invited to participate in a questionnaire to discover why users of Twitter and Sina forward messages. It aims to discover the factors influencing micro bloggers’ willingness to forward a micro blogging message. It will take approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

In return for you taking time to complete this survey, I will be happy to send you the final results of this study by e-mail.

Please answer all questions if you can. Your survey responses will be treated confidentially and not passed to any third party and data obtained from this research will be anonymised before being reported on.

1. What is your age?
   - Under 18
   - 18-24
   - 25-34
   - 35-54
   - 55+
2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

3. Highest education Level:

- Primary school
- Secondary school
- Further education
- Bachelor
- Master
- PhD

4. Current Job Position:

- Architecture or Engineering
- Art, Design, Entertainment, Media or Sports
- Buildings or Grounds Maintenance
- Business or Marketing
- Community or Social service
- Computer or Mathematical
What factors influence micro-bloggers' willingness to forward a blog post

- Construction
- Farming or Forestry
- Food Preparation or Service
- Installation, Maintenance or Repair
- Legal
- Military, Police, Security guard
- Personal Care or Service
- Sales
- Unemployed, looking for work

Education & Library
- Financial
- Health
- Management
- Life, Physical or Social Sciences
- Official or Administrative
- Production
- Transportation or Logistics
- Other (please specify):

5. I see myself as someone who is...

- Artistic
- Conventional
- Enterprising
- Investigative
- Realistic
- Social
6. Email (If you want the survey results to be sent to you)

7. Which Micro blogging services do you use?
   - Facebook
   - Google buzz
   - Identi.ca
   - Jiwai
   - Meemi
   - Neteast weibo
   - People’s weibo
   - Sina
   - Sohu
   - Spotjots
   - Tianya weibo
   - Tencent
   - Tumblr plurk
   - Twitter
   - Wei Xin
   - Other (please specify): __________

8. How long have you been micro blogging?
   - Less than 1 month
   - 1 month
   - 2-6 months
   - 7-11 months
   - 1-2 years
   - 3 years or more

9. In micro-blogs, who do your follow?
   - Celebrities
   - Colleagues and classmates
   - Family
   - Experts in a particular field
What factors influence micro-bloggers' willingness to forward a blog post?

10. How often do you forward a message?
   - Less than 1 per month
   - Less than 10 per month
   - Less than 10 per week
   - Less than 5 per day
   - 5 or more per day

11. What are your most common reasons for forwarding?
   - To share information
What factors influence micro-bloggers' willingness to forward a blog post

- To keep it for personal access in the future
- To make a comment on original message
- To show my support for original micro-blogger
- To express my emotions
- To present personal experience
- To express humour
- To solve a problem
- To give practical tips
- To shock people
- To sell goods or services
- To make the post more well known
- To become an opinion leader
What factors influence micro-bloggers’ willingness to forward a blog post

- To reveal the truth behind the information
- To express my disagreement with or ridicule it
- To put down or humiliate others
- To show off

Other (please specify): ________________

12. What kinds of content do you forward?

- Celebrity Gossip
- Comics and Animation
- Education
- Fashion
- Film
- Financial
- Food
- Gossip of acquaintance
- Health
- Hobbies
- Jokes and Humour
- Horoscopes
- Music
- Personal tips
- Pets
- Popular Culture
- Popular Psychology & self Help
- Sales ads
- Science & Technology
- Social events
- Sports
- Travel
- Witty remarks
- Work place

Other (please specify): ____________
13. Have you ever forwarded blog posts which afterwards were proven to contain misinformation?

- Yes
- No

14. If yes, did such experiences affect your willingness to forward blog posts afterwards?

- Yes
- No

15. In the misinformation that you forwarded, what type of information had the highest proportion?

- Entertainment news
- Advertisement
- Disaster reporting
- Current affairs
- Others
16. What factors affect your willingness to forward a blog post?

- The popularity of the original micro-bloggers
- The validity of the blog post
- The potential impact of the blog post on society
- How interesting or entertaining the blog post is
- If I agree with a blog post
- Other (please specify): ____________________

17. Do you forward blog posts which you believe to contain misinformation?

- Yes
- No
- It depends

18. If so, what is your purpose in forwarding it?

- To draw my friends attention to it
What factors influence micro-bloggers' willingness to forward a blog post

1. To increase the prominence of my micro-blog

2. To publicly support someone

3. To participate in a conversation

4. Just for fun

5. Other (please specify): ________________

19. Please indicate your response to the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Disagree Strongly</th>
<th>Disagree Moderately</th>
<th>Disagree Slightly</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree Slightly</th>
<th>Agree Moderately</th>
<th>Agree Strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compared with text messages, I like to forward messages with picture or video.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tend to forward friends messages.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am more willing to forward blog posts from those I know in life.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I check the validity of blog posts before forwarding.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tend to forward hot topics in micro blogging</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. What are the hazards of forwarding information?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hazard</th>
<th>Disagree Strongly</th>
<th>Disagree Moderately</th>
<th>Disagree Slightly</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree Slightly</th>
<th>Agree Moderately</th>
<th>Agree Strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It occupies too much of my time.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some messages may spread misinformation.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Forwarding disagreeable messages may lose me followers.

Some messages I forward may result in my account being blocked.

21. What makes a message worth forwarding?

22. How can Micro blogging services keep down the spread of misinformation?

Thank you for your cooperation!

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