

# Adopting Online Social Networks for Commercial Friendship

**Sabine Matook**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Online social networks (OSN) have attracted considerable interest from research and practice. Individuals use OSNs to establish and maintain relationships with friends, family, and close colleagues. While these relationships are typically personal in nature, the current study introduces commercial friendship between an OSN user and a firm representative as an approach to utilize OSN as part of a customer relationship strategy. A commercial friendship emerges when a firm representative is given access to the customer's personal network. We build on relationship theory and friendship theory to examine factors that impact the willingness of OSN users to engage in relationships with firm representatives. Preliminary findings from an open-ended survey with 60 participants and interviews with 35 OSN users suggest that a positive relationship outcome (i.e. relationship benefits outweigh relationship costs) and the level of perceived friendship impact the willingness-to-add decision. Theoretical contributions, practical implications, and the subsequent testing of the factors in an experiment are presented.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Sabine Matook is a Senior Lecturer in Information Systems at the Business School, at the University of Queensland, Australia. She received her doctoral degree from the Technical University of Dresden, Germany. Her research interests are in the area of IT strategy, IS use and adoption, and electronic business. Her work has appeared in the *Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, and *Decision Support Systems*. Dr. Matook has presented research papers at a variety of international conferences, including the 2008 International Conference on Information Systems and the International Conference on Electronic Commerce.