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# 1 Introduction

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The purpose of this introductory chapter is to provide the reader with a brief background and understanding of the topic at hand. Therefore, an overall view of the current situation for Chinese social media platform Renren.com will be introduced, followed by the development of Chinese social media platform trend. Furthermore, a problem discussion will address Renren.com losing of most of users. Lastly, the research purpose and questions of this paper will be presented.

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## 1.1 Background

Social networking sites are becoming integrated platforms for interactive applications on the Internet connected by interpersonal relationships. Social networking platforms are pushing users to maximize the value of interpersonal communication. Some social networking sites have achieved breakthrough development, rapidly gathering and driving numerous users. By the end of 2013, the number of users of social networking websites in China had reached 288 million, 12.95 million more than that at the end of 2012 and an increase of 4.7%. Renren.com also has a different meaning for contemporary college students. So far, it has become an important medium for college students to socialize and contact the society and others. College students have become an important part of using social media. As a group, more and more college information departments will apply these social media extending to the university normalization construction. (CNNIC.2014) In the past, Renren.com was labeled "Chinese Facebook" social networking website. When it was established, Renren.com regarded college students as target users and developed quickly. Renren is becoming one of the largest and most influential social networking sites in China. It represents having transformed an era of the Chinese internet. Initially targeting college students, Renren opened up 3,000 domestic universities and 1,500 overseas universities on the basis of the real-name system, monopolized more than 80 percent of the market share

of Chinese college students. As the main platform of social network for college students, Renren is deeply favored by the majority of users with its unique way of making friends, resource-sharing mode and various derivative game and entertainment programs. Renren therefore has a different meaning for college students and has become an important medium for them to socialize, contact the society and make friends (CNNIC.2009) However, with the advent of Web 3.0, the social networking has a new change. Some new social media application such as weibo QQ and Wechat bring a big challenge to Renren.com. As these online social application, instant messaging continues to rise among Internet users, reaching 90.6% percent (CNNIC.2014) The user's replacement of social products is not only the emergence of new technologies, but also the tiredness of use. From the emergence of social products to the acceptance adaptation of users. Until these products no longer used by users. This change from joining to quitting is the process by users are tired of using the social product. It's the process of user churning of social networks. (Yimeng,2019) Renren.com responded by activating existing users to digging deeper into social relationships. Renren tried to make use of Renren game and Renren broadcast. But it all failed to open up market. My thesis work will further investigate the reason of user churning in social networks such as the failure case of Renren.com

## **1.2 Problem Discussion**

On one hand, almost everyone used Renren.com during the 2006 to 2012. Many people are new to college and look forward to adjusting to school life as soon as possible. At this time, Renren.com a real-name social networking website can help us integrate with our classmate as soon as possible. During the 4 years of college, the students have close relation with their schoolmates when they have use Renren.com to share their school activities, photos, homework, emotional life,etc. After graduating from college, Renren.com is one of the ways for people to know the status of their classmates. The photos and messages posted on Renren.com record the memories in high school or University. Much of the

previous research carried out regarding the influence of Renren network social platform. Most of them are analyzed the reasons why Renren.com is ignored by users. From the perspectives of communication, as a strong relationship between social networks (Zhao,2016). Regarding the existing research on Renren.com, I find most of them only focusing on the influence of Renren Internet website on college students' character (Xiong,2015), The application of Renren in University library (Liu,2015), and Problems in the interaction between friends on Renren(Zhu,2014).

On the other hand, the rapid development of social networks led to the loss of users on many social websites, which has led to the decline of the website. According to the Poyal Pingdom, the Swedish Internet research company, the popular social website Myspace has seen the users of websites drop from more than 20 million to 2 million in the past 3 years, losing more than 90% of users (The social drop-off,2012). These cases show that many social websites cannot avoid user churning problem.

### **1.3 Purpose and Research Questions**

Above, considering the user churning behavior in social networks, especially from Renren.com. The purpose of this study is to get to know the reason of user churning from specialized social media platform. Which is defined as:

**"Understand user churning behavior in social networks while using Renren.com as a case"**

Supporting this purpose, research questions have been formulated below:

RQ1: From the UX perspective, what are the reason that social networks lose their users?

## 1.4 Delimitations

There are some specific delimitations in regard to this study, which need to be considered. First, the focus of this study will be fully assigned to the real users' experience from social networks. Second, the scope of this study is limited to the Chinese market, which is characterized with specific culture and context of social media development. Third, the company type that this study case will concentrate on is only the Renren.com company, thus the result cannot contribute to local social media platform or multinational company.

## 1.5 Thesis Outline

### Figure 1: Outline for this thesis

① Introduction → ② Frame of reference → ③ design and research methodology →  
④ Empirical Finding → ⑤ Data Analysis → ⑥ Conclusion

## 2 Theoretical Background

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The theoretical framework for this thesis will be presented in this chapter. First of all, the general concept of social media will be introduced. Secondly, the research for user churn on the social networking sites will be presented in the second section. Lastly, based on the research question will be illustrated.

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### 2.1 Social media developments

Social media are widely believed that it was originally defined in 2007 by American scholar Antony Mayfield's book called what is social media. He believes that social media is a general term for a series of online media that are characterized by participation, openness, communication, dialogue, community and connectivity. Allowing everyone to create and content of communication. It has two characteristics of social media, one is the combination of content production and socialization, that means the social relationship and content production are integrated with each other. The other one is the protagonist of social media platform is users, not the operator of the website. The definition of social media is different at present, but it has a common connotation. The large number of people and spontaneous communication are the two major elements that constitute social media. (Peng Lan, 2012).

In 1969, the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), the research department of the United States department of defense, implemented the earliest computer interconnection but the ARPA network was closed. In response to this situation, a decentralized discussion system called Netnews was set up and later renamed to Usnet (Tan,2017). Allowing everyone to post or reply to existing messages in any newsgroup. BBS became very popular in the 1980s, it's an early computer – based information exchange platform.

China's Internet access in 1994, the National Intelligent Computer Research and Development Center opened the Shuguang BBS station. The earliest social media platform came out (History of Internet development, Huang). BBS is a forum based on topic discussion. It allows netizens to communicate without mass media for the first time. In addition to one-way mass communication mode, there is a space for two – way interactive communication. Internet social awareness has accumulated since then. (Pan,2007)

In the late 1990s, weblog appeared. From August 19, 2002. Fang Xingdong, Wang Junxiu and Sun Jianhua created blog China (Xingdong,2017) . It's a new stage of China's network communication. (Xingdong,2008) The blog conveys the concept of personal page. Netizens can create their own homepages where they can post content and communicate with each other. From this moment on, netizens not only receive and discuss information, but also start mass production and dissemination of information. Users gradually get rid of the one-way audience role in the long-term mass communication environment. It achieved a mass-wide spread that maybe dominated by themselves for the first time, and the audience has begun to move toward 'Users'. (Xingdong,2008)

In theory, the openness of the Internet means that everyone can post information, but only a minority of people would do that. For the most people, create a blog, posting regularly and have some loyal readership requires a lot of effort. Users prefer to have a platform to share information with friends and family. That's why SNS (social networking sites) have emerged on the Internet. (Xingdong,2008)

In 1997, based on the theory of Six Degrees of Separation, the six degrees website (John Guare,1992) first started to focus on the individuals. The concept of "Following Individuals" allow users to create a list of friends online, view friend profiles and send messages (Xiangwei,2009). From 2004, Mark Zuckerberg of Harvard University created Facebook and developed into the world largest social media platform. There are some social and political factors on Facebook's failure in China, but the QQ space developed by



Tencent was popular in china from 2005. (Gao,2015) Since then, Renren.com which has more content appeared on the Chinese marketing. The concept of SNS was finally summarized as Web2.0. (Internet revolution, Tang) Web 2.0 pays more attention to the Internet mode of user interaction. The users are both the visitors of the website and the maker of the content of website. The rise of SNS has brought about the popularization of day-to-day social interactions. Regarding topics there is no limitation and more inclined to the sharing of personal daily life. It's significant to the Internet transition. (Research on SNS, Chen)

### **2.1.2 The characteristic of Web 2.0**

In the Web2.0 era, the output of content on the Internet is mainly by users, each user can share whatever they want to post on the website and all content is created by users on the Internet. The concept of UGC (User Generated Content) originated from the Internet field. Users show their original content or provide content to other users through the Internet platform. (Passivity and initiative of media in the UGC era, 2015) User avatars have become a necessary part of registration, changing avatars regularly has become a spontaneous behavior of the user. This phenomenon fully reflects the human-oriented humanistic regression under the web2.0 concept. The UI design of a series of products, including personal homepage, comment, recent visitors, friends and group member list...etc. These all promote the organization of user-oriented information.

### **2.2 Mobile Internet and social media**

With the advent of the mobile Internet, the Internet has changed from a webpage hyperlink to the network of human relationships. In 2006, Twitter was created. Twitter established a discussion forum based on virtual relational network (Twitter,2014). The media attribute of social applications is increased by the initiative spread of users. Although

Twitter failed in China marketing, due to the popularity of smartphones and the development of mobile Internet, Sina Weibo was created in 2009 and developed rapidly (Michelle, 2011). With the development of social media, the concept of social has become more and more popular. Many media companies access to have social features, not only new media but also traditional media, have produced more different social forms at the same time. (Chunying, 2018)

The development of social media is not only the advancement of technology, but also the liberation of people. (Cai&Wang, 2016) Liberating people from one – way mass communication when we have BBS. We start personal website on blog. Then, highlight the value of individual in the SNS era, move to the mobile social media to build their own social network. Individuals are not passive recipient, they become the subject of communication. Social media also builds new social networks and social models. (Lin, 2018)

## **2.3 User Churn Research**

All kind of products have different definition of user churn. Social applications are usually defined by the time since from the last login, while e-commerce applications are defined by the time of the last purchase. In general, social platform Facebook, Instagram. Users did not login for one or two months, ever if we still have social application installed on the phone. In this case, it can be considered that users have been lost. The value of social application is solving the problem of communication. (Qiu&Li,2014)

### **2.3.1 The reason of user churn**

In the process of developing new users, enterprises often ignore the loss of existing customers. There is a situation that new customers are constantly increasing. On the other hand, many pervious customers are gradually losing. (liao,2017) There are many reasons

for the losing of customers in social networking website. The following will analyze the reason for the comparison.

### (1) Privacy protection

With the development of information system, there have been various incidents of leaking user's private data. On June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017. Two internal employees of Zhilian company were accused by prosecutors of using company's loopholes to sell more than 155,000 personal resume information to other company. They suspected of invasion of citizens' personal information. (sohu.2016) The part of reason for users reduce their time or leave "unfollow someone on Facebook" is that privacy issues were threatened. (Gigaom,2013) Privacy issues have always been a grey area between social networking website and users. Once users feel that social networking unable to protect their privacy or reveal their information. This situation will lead to the loss of users on social networking website.

### (2) Information overloads

Information overloads refers to the situation that social information exceeds the range that individuals or systems can be accepted, processed or used and result in faults. (Gao,2010) Orrin E. Klapp (1986) argues that information overload is a phenomenon of information deterioration, due to interference or excess with the original information. Tuedoff (2001) believe that information overload is due to the huge amount of information too large that cannot be handled by individual cognition. The overload of information on social networking website is due to the large-scale recommendation of friends in the initial stage of website operation. In order to enhance users' activity and keep users get sticky with social media. Many third-party applications and public homepages have caused problems with the overload of social networking website. The recommendation of friends makes the number of users more and more. The public homepage and third-party applications make the social networking website overactive and generate a lot of information. The information is posted by user on the public homepage covered the friend's information

which user concerned with. Deviated from the original intention of social networking website. That make users leave social networking site.

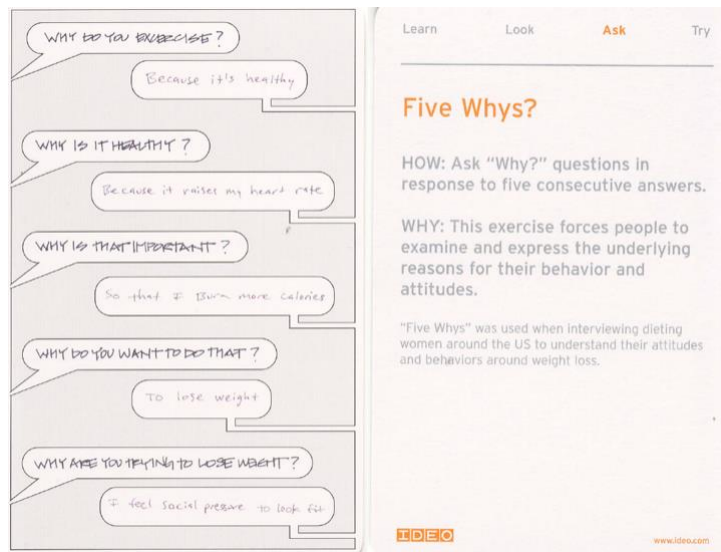
### (3) Lack of innovation

The innovation of social networking sites must have excellent R&D team and a large number of funds. Real-time innovation for social networking sites is key to retaining customers for long term. From the user's point of view, the cost of registering a new social networking site is low. Due to information overload, information costs and social relationship costs cannot be trouble for users to move to the new social networking sites. (Qian, 2010)

### (4) Other reasons

The poor user experiences of social networking sites also have a greater impact on the loss of users. The specific performance is that the layout of social networking is confusing and the information is complex and users cannot obtain the information they need in a short Time. This situation increasing the time cost of users on social networking sites, it caused user losing. (Zhanggen,2014)

The reasons of users churn on the social networking sites is complicated. Other reasons can through by ask the user five questions to get in depth answers. This method could make the user's opinions and reasons effectively.



Resource: Adapt from Tencent CDC

## 2.4 User Churn of Renren.com

The literature regarding the user churn of Renren.com from some existing research show that they focus on:

- (1) Real-name system limited the number of users

At the early stage, Renren.com was only open to students who study in Junior high school or Universities. All registered users are required to use their real name and avatars. After being approved as a star user, all the functions can be used and verified by the school IP. (Zhao,2016) Although there is no limited in the later period, the users' friends are all classmate or friends and the most common information sharing between them is emotional communication. Once Users graduated from high school or Universities, users will adjust to the new environment and reduce their connection with previous classmates. This shows that if a user starts not using Renren.com, it will bring a chain reaction of others estranged Renren.com. (Gu,2008)

## (2) Inappropriate revision

Due to the pressure from competitors, Renren.com made some corresponding revisions to retain users. They focus on developing games and live broadcasts. On the one hand, they are guided by user needs. On the other hand, they have their own profit pressure. Games and live broadcasts can bring benefits for the site quickly. When the game and live broadcasts are going online on Renren.com, the stability of their user group would face a big flow. (Zhao, 2016)

## 2.5 Conclusion

In this charter, I have introduced the development of Internet and social media from 1969 to web 2.0. And the development of mobile Internet and social media platform in recent years. Also, I have done the research of user churning behavior and presented the several reasons of user churn. The literature regarding the user churn of Renren.com from some existing research show that they focus on other perspectives. My research will be investigating the user churn on user experience perspectives.

### **3 Research Methodology**

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This chapter explains the research process, which consists of research methodology, including the research method, mixed-methods research. Then it follows a detail instruction of data collection and data analysis. Generally, this chapter will give an understanding of the whole research process for this thesis.

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#### **3.1 The link between research questions and methods**

Both of interview and questionnaires were chosen as the methods for the research study to provide a better understand of my research problem. By collecting data through questionnaires with closed ended questions and conduct an interview directly with participants who has used Renren.com. The reason I chosen mixed methods is that I get to know participants by asking some closed-ended questions to get some basic information and user preference. Then I chose to use interview with the opened-ended questions that I can gain deeper knowledge into the participant's thoughts to be further analysed for research question and topic.

#### **3.2 Research method**

Research design related to the overall strategy that you involve a method of translating research questions into a research project. Research design can provide a general plan for answering research questions and study in a coherent and logical way. (De Vaus,2001)

There are two primary dissertation research methods, qualitative research and quantitative research. Qualitative research is a scientific method to focus on the cultural phenomena, human behavior or belief systems. (L.M.,2008) Quantitative research involves the empirical investigation of observable and measurable variables. Quantitative data is organized in a non-numeric form such as statistics, percentages, etc. (Goertzen,2017). A mixed methods research is a procedure for collecting, analyzing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research

question. (Creswell, 2012). Base on my research purpose and research question, I decide to use mixed methods with both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a better understand of my research problem.

### **3.2.1 Survey**

Survey is a method of gathering information from a pre-defined group of respondents. The usual questions for survey are closed – end questions, which are followed by response options. (Julie Ponto,2015) Surveys are one of the most commonly used research tools and the most important use is collect data. They provide researchers with a way to collect large amounts of information in easy and relatively quick way. A large number of responses can be obtained quickly, allowing researchers to work with a lot of data. (Wu, 2012) The benefit of using surveys is that they allow researchers to collect large quantity of data relatively quickly. Surveys are cheaper than many other data collection techniques. (Kendra, 2018). I have collected the data from 46 people, who is studying in University or just graduated from school for 1-5 years. They are spread into 5 provinces respectively in China and overseas: Shanghai, Beijing, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Guangdong and the other region out of China. The survey including closed-ended, use multiple choice-answer where respondent can choose one or several options. (Appendix1)

### **3.2.2 Interview Design**

Following the literature review process, the qualitative method is conducted by using the semi-structured interviews. I have selected 10 users from 46 people who have used Renren.com for 2-5 years.

The Interview guide helps interviewees to understand the most relevant information about my thesis subjects. The questions of interview are created to support the research purpose and research questions (Appendix 2). The interview questions comprised of three parts:



web experience, website function and user churning. Overall, interview guide is to help collect the accurate data to fulfill research purpose and research questions.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

The choice of the data collection is implication of data analysis. The types of data can be distinguished into primary data and secondary data. Primary data is collected by researcher himself/herself. Primary data is originality, suitability and expensive and time consuming. By contrast, secondary data collected by someone other than the user, such as customer, product or supplier...etc. In general, secondary data helps to complement primary data. (J Grad, 2016)

The interview can be structured in 3 different way, structured interviews, unstructured interview and semi-structured interviews. (Edwards,2013) Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2003) highlighted that semi-structured interviews are widely used in qualitative research. This type of Interview is helpful to conduct exploratory. Hence, to fulfil my research purpose, semi-structured interview will be used to collect research data.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Statistical analysis is the use of statistical methods and relevant knowledge of the object, from the quantitative research. Statistical analysis can integrate with data, situation, problems, recommendations...etc. (Tencent, 2013) Statistical methods can be generally divided into descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics refers to adding descriptions to objects by group related charts and statistical indicators after obtaining data. Inferential statistics is based on sample data obtained by sampling survey. Inferential statistics based on probability theory and mathematical statistics, scientific inference of the overall situation. (Chen,2017)

In this thesis, I drew the result of 46 people through the statistical chart and filter the data according to specific conditions for analysis.

Narrative analysis is applied in this paper for analyzing interview data I have collected. Narrative analysis is a method of interviewing data to understand how and why people describe their lives as a story. (N.Gilbert,2008). The reason for this method choice is that narrative analysis aims to identify the kinds of stories told about the researched phenomenon, the participants answered interview questions is a way to tell their user stories. I believe that this method would be a good fit for my analysis.

In this thesis, I firstly go through all the data from entire interview and assign text to my data. The text is a brief description of what is being said in the Interview. Due to the fact that all interviewees are users of Renren.com from China. It made more sense to conduct interviews in the mother language of interviewees. I recorded and transcribed all the interview data in Chinese, and then translated the transcription into English. Furthermore, I have sent the both original version and English version to the interviewees to review separately in order to avoid the ethical issues.

## 4 Empirical Findings

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This chapter presents the empirical finds of our data collection. These findings are based on our survey and interview for users. For providing a better overview, the general information of user background will be introduced first. Then, the details of each questions regarding our research questions and perspective of users will be followed one by one.

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### 4.1 User Background

I have collected the data from 46 people who is age from 15-20 accounted for 7.7%, 64.1 percent of people are from 20 to 25, between the ages of 25 to 30 take up of 18%. The percentage of age between 30 and 35 is 10.3.

41 people used to be user of Renren.com which accounted for 89.1%, 5 people never registered for Renren.com before, no one still use Renren.com.

37% of users has registered Renren.com when they study in the junior high school. Users registered from senior high school accounted for 23.9%. The percentage of people who registered from the University is 28.3. Only one person has registered Renren.com when he/she was a primary school student.

Then, I have chosen 10 users who have done the survey to go in depth to investigate the reason for churn based on user experience.

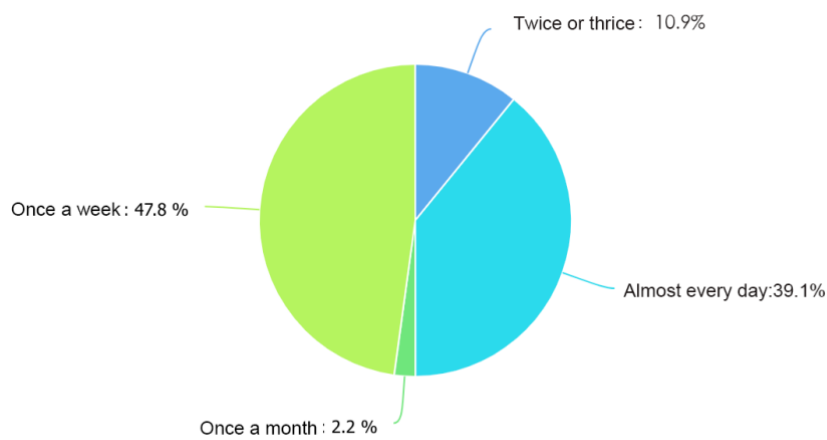
### 4.2 User Usage Perspective

54.4% of users thought the reason of them registered on Renren.com is they have seen other friends start to use Renren.com. 21.7% of people start to use Renren.com to have



convenient communication with their classmate. Some users were curious about Renren.com accounted for 19.6%. Only one person has other reason.

39.1% of people used to login to Renren.com almost every day. 10.9% used Renren.com twice or thrice a week. Most of the users used to login to Renren.com once a week accounted for 47.8%. Only one person used once a month. (bar 1)



bar 1

The most of users pay attention to the what their classmate post on the Renren.com accounted for 82.6%. 56.5% of people care who visit their homepage. 43.5% of users would like to read reprinted or original articles. The percentage of users who prefer play games on Renren.com is 19.6. Only one person has other reason. (chart 1)

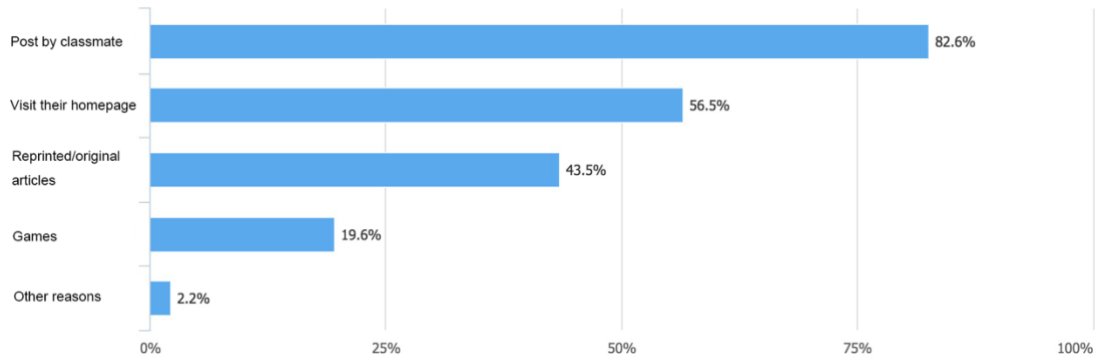
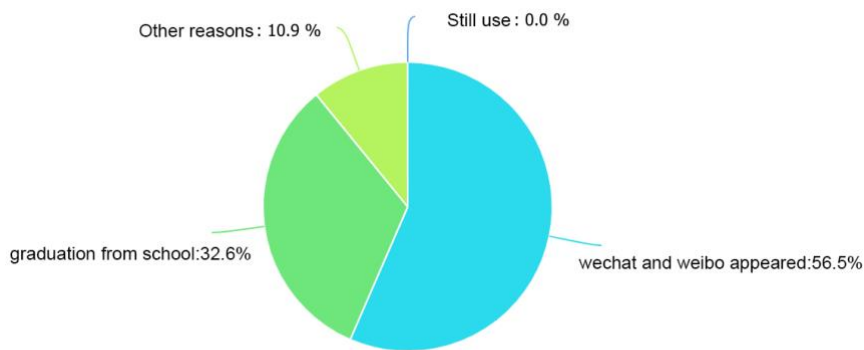


Chart 1

56.5% of users rarely used Renren.com when wechat and weibo appeared. 32.6% of user thought they rarely used Renren.com because they all graduated from school. Some users who have different kind of reasons accounted for 10.9%. For example: one of user has use Renren.com for 3 years, one of user registered for Renren.com but never use it. No one use Renren.com until now. (bar 2)



bar 2

## 4.3 Interview Data

### Interviewee A

Interviewee A thought Renren.com is an online address book and a social network platform focus on people's feelings. Users can find the previous classmates through Renren.com. Before weibo and wechat which is the most popular social media platform in china appears, Renren.com has large amounts of users in campus. A found there appear error page on Renren.com, there would not be able to access the site. He finds some problems with the functions of the website. For example, it was not easy to search the useful information directly on the website. In the later stage of Renren.com, Renren.com develops a lot of new functions, such as mailbox feature, A prefer to use other platforms rather than Renren.com. A gave Renren.com 5 points (out of 10). On the bad user experience and some useless functions make him uninstall the application. A got to know the news that Renren.com lost large number of users on wechat. She thought the main reason is that some social websites have unclear customer orientation and a good operation team. The complex and useless features and bad user experience of social websites lost user like A.

### Interviewee B

Interviewee B thought Renren.com is a chat tool that can reconnect with pervious classmates. I B has not logged on Renren.com since 2011. She gave Renren.com 7 point. (out of 10) Renren.com was popular at the time of graduation from University. She prefers to use Kaixin.com at that time. B has known Renren.com user churning and she thought the most important reason is the appearance of Wechat and Weibo, which made Renren.com lost competitiveness. She thinks it's common phenomenon for social networks to lose users. While B started using wechat and weibo, she was no longer needs to get information about her friends or classmates on Renren.com. B thought that the user

experience influence she stay on the website but it's not the main reason. The more important reason is that users have better alternatives.

### **Interviewee C**

Interviewee C first impression of Renren.com is a campus social platform which is easy to operate and help students who have lost contact with each other to increase friendship and communication between classmates and Renren.com narrows the reality gap. In the process of using Renren.com, it's not easy to find the information that she needs, it needs to search in various aspects. Website access is not fast, sometimes the mobile application will load wrong. She thought the experience more intuitive on website. Her satisfaction with Renren.com is 8 points (out of 10). She started to use Wechat gradually and it's more convenient for her to use Wechat. The Interface of Renren.com is more complex but Renren.com had a lot of funning games. C knows that many friends no longer use Renren.com, mainly because of Wechat appeared. She thought social websites are soon chased away by the new product. The user experience for C will directly affect her stay on a website. She is not willing to use tedious methods to find any information.

### **Interviewee D**

Interviewee D thought Renren.com is a way for students to share life and find connections with pervious memories and expand their circle of friends. His satisfaction with Renren.com is 5 points, because there have too many marketing accounts, which brings bad experience to users. He personally experienced the user losing of Renren.com. Renren.com official account did not pay attention to the high-quality articles. But they encouraged the content of the marketing accounts what they published. D thought the main reason is that Wechat appeared with a better experience. It's a normal phenomenon for him, if the website is not good enough, there will have a better product to replace it.

For him, the user experience will influence him to stay on the website, but he pays more attention to the content publishing by users.

### **Interviewee E**

Renren.com is a useful website for E to find college alumni. When she works in the student union, she has posted some activities on Renren.com and looked up some popular activities if she was interested in. The most important function of Renren.com for E is help her find alumni and received notice from school associations. E personally satisfaction rating of Renren.com is 6 points (out of 10). She did not follow the news of user churning of Renren.com. What makes Renren.com less attractive for users is that new social media platforms appeared. The real reason why E no longer uses Renren.com is that Wechat is gradually popular in China and Wechat has better privacy protection. User experience can influence E to stay on the website. But more important reason is that the popularity of website and whether it can provide her with effective information. E thinks user churning behavior happens on every social network.

### **Interviewee F**

Interviewee F first impression on Renren.com was “a campus version of Facebook” which enabled him to have more communication with his classmates on Renren.com. When he visited the website, he found that there would be misloads of pictures. The navigation bar did not help him to find what he needs. F thought a keyword search will help him to find the information more quickly. The satisfaction of Renren.com for F is 6 points (out of 10). Because there are too many advertisements on the website and the website is not distinctive. F learned from the NEWS website that Renren.com lost large number of users. He thought that the main reason was that the website did not have its own characteristics and could easily be replaced by other websites. When F knows that his classmates no longer use Renren.com, he started to use other social application. The user experience for F is a key factor that directly influences his stay on the website.



## **Interviewee G**

Renren.com is a social networking site for her to interact with friends. G didn't have any problem when she visited the website and the navigation bar allowed her to quickly find the features she needs. She got a good experience on the application of Renren.com. G gave 7 points (out of 10) and enjoyed some games on Renren.com. G believes that Renren.com lost large number of users because of a big problem in the later operation mode and lost some high-quality users. If there are some problems on the website that are not solved in time, it would lost a large number of users. She left from Renren.com when she found out that her friends stopped posting new content. G believes that website with bad user experience are unlikely to retain users.

## **Interviewee H**

She's first impression of Renren.com was that it was a social networking website mainly for college students. H don't have any problems when she visited the website. The design of the navigation bar enabled H to quickly find the information she needed. She was satisfied with Renren.com overall performance and gave 7 points. (out of 10) H knows that Renren.com lost a large number of users. She thinks the main reason is that the popularity of Wechat. She prefers to share her life on Wechat rather than Renren.com. The user group of Renren.com is students. The user experience of the website is very important for H and will directly influences she stay on the website.

## **Interviewee I**

Interview I felt that the speeds of website were slow and the navigation bar did not give him too much help to find the information he needed. His satisfaction rating for

Renren.com is 3 points. He felt that the operation and user experience of website was terrible. He thought some social websites lost users because the other social media platform is becoming more popular, making it less competitive. The real reason he stopped using Renren.com was that he had no friend still used Renren.com. A bad user experience would influence his stay on the website, but the most important reason is whether social networking sites popular or not.

### **Interviewee J**

Interviewee J positioned Renren.com as a real name networking site. J doesn't have any problem when she visits the website, but the design of navigation bar is not clear for her to find the needed information. The most important function of Renren.com is users can know the real information of friends, such as school, classmates and age. J gave Renren.com 5 points (out of 10). The positioning of Renren.com is not clear and it's a social networking site with no characteristic. J knew Renren.com lost large number of users through her friends. She thought the reason was that the website did not understand the needs of users. The reason why J stopped using Renren.com is that there is other social application with good experience. Social networks can easily be replaced without good user experience. User experience is very important for J, which will directly affect her stay on the website. In term of the functions of the website, interviewees tend to use email or third-party accounts to register social websites. Only fewer users would like to register directly with their phone number.

## 5 Data Analysis

This chapter is designed for the analysis based on empirical findings and existing theories. Basically, the empirical data will be listed in two methods separately regarding user preferences and perspective of user churning two aspects, then followed by the statistical analysis and narrative analysis.

**From the UX perspective, what are the reason that social networks lose their users?**

### 5.1 Essential User's Information

Regarding the age of users and user preferences perspective, there are two types identified from empirical data and illustrated in Table 1. It represents from investigators who are the users of Renren.com have cross-identification of data with user preferences. As Table 1 illustrates, the age of main users of Renren.com are concentrated in 15-35, These data can be drawn that the most of users pay attention to what their classmate post on Renren.com. They want to know more about the new things between friends. Some of users would like to see who visit their homepage or read some reprinted and original articles. Only a few people prefer play games on Renren.com platform. It's clearly shows user preference behavior for Renren.com

What kind of information do you concerned about on Renren.com?

	15-20	20-25	25-30	30-35	35+
Post by classmate or friends	2	19	7	4	0
Recent visitors	1	11	5	3	0
Reprinted or original articles	2	13	5	0	0
Games	1	6	1	1	0
Other reason	1	0	0	0	0

Table 1

In the aspect of user log-in time and the reason of their churning from Renren.com. It represents from respondents who are the users of Renren.com have statistical analysis with the reason user churning. Table 2 showed the most of users no longer used Renren.com because their friends or classmates rarely posted something on the platform, some of them login almost every day, some would use twice or 3 times a week or once a month. 17 users thought other Chinese social media have better user experience than Renren.com, this circumstance let users only login Renren.com once a month. Two of users thought user experience is very important for them, that's why they left Renren.com only because of the bad UX. Unnecessary functions also is a big problem for Renren.com, this problem let four investigators stop using Renren.com.

“ How often do/did you use Renren.com ? ”	“ What makes you no longer used Renren.com? ”			
	Twice or thrice a week	Almost every day	Once a week	Once a month
<b>Friends or classmate rarely post something</b>	2	10	0	7
<b>Bad user experience</b>	0	1	0	1
<b>Many unnecessary functions after revision</b>	0	2	0	2
<b>Wechat or weibo have better user experience</b>	2	5	0	10
<b>Other reasons</b>	1	0	1	1

Table 2

## 5.2 Experience of target users

According to the introduction of the 10 users, who are between the ages of 23-33. Most of users have registered Renren.com from 2008 to 2012 and they all had a bachelor's degree or above. These interviewees have been users of Renren.com for 2-5 years. From the web

experience perspective, Interviewees have various impressions of Renren.com, such as, online address book and a social network platform focusing on people's feeling, chatting tool or "a campus version of Facebook". However, the most users said that the most impressive from Renren.com was a social networking site used to reconnect with classmates or make new friends in school. Most of users said they didn't have any problem when they visit the website. One of user said that he logged in with third- party account will appear error page, there would not be able to access the site. Others thought the website misloads pictures. More than half of interviewees have downloaded application of Renren.com. Three of users thought they got a good experience on Application using. Only one of user uninstalled the application because of the bad user experience. Ten of interviewees gave Renren.com an average satisfaction score is 6 points (out of 10). One of interviewee gave the lowest score of 3 and he said he felt that the operation and user experience of website was terrible. Another interviewee gave the highest score of 8. She felt the experience of using Renren.com was great and she especially like the funning games on Renren.com. 6 of interviewees said that the navigation bar of Renren.com was not easy to find the information they need. Most of interviewees thought the most important function of Renren.com is the chatting function which can help them find friends they haven't contacted for a long time. Interviewee A points out that the most important function for her is "Today in the past" which will help users recall some memories and would be pleasantly surprised when they saw the messages. Interviewee D thought the most important features are friend's update, journals and photo albums. Interview J focus on the real information of friends, to get know their school, classmates from Renren.com. None of them followed on the new features of Renren.com.

Almost every interviewee knows that Renren.com lost large number of users from News, other social media platform or heard from friends. They have different views on Renren.com user churning. Some interviewees thought Renren.com have unclear customer orientation and a good operation team. Others thought the reason is that the Wechat and Weibo appeared and have better experience than Renren.com which made Renren.com lost competitiveness. This phenomenon caused many people no longer use

Renren.com. One of interviewee points out that the main reason is they have a big problem in the later operation mode and lost some high-quality users. When asked if the user experience would influence them stay on a website or not. Only 4 of interviewees thought the user experience is a key factor which directly influences them stay on the website. Others thought user experience would influence them but not the main reason. The more important reason can be that users have better alternatives, pay more attention on the content publishing, the popularity of website and what can the website provide her with effective information,

## 6 Conclusion

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This chapter presents a final summary of this thesis, which fulfills the research purpose and answers the research questions. Besides, the limitation and weakness of this thesis during the research process will be discussed and the future recommendation will be put forward as well.

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The purpose of this thesis is to illustrate the user churning behavior in social networks while using Renren.com as a case. To fulfill this research question, I came up with a research question, conducted 8 questions and 10 interviewee's data for analysis. To answer the research questions, I have developed Table 1 or Table 2 and description by combining the empirical findings with theoretical framework, thus to find user preferences and user churning behavior. The empirical findings are based on questionnaire and interview related to user usage perspective.

**RQ: From the UX perspective, what are the reason that social networks lose their users?**

I have collected the data from 46 users who ranged in age from 15 to 35 years to get some basic information about users. According to the Description of the 10 users, there are between the ages of 23-33 who have already done the questionnaire and they trend to go in depth to investigate the reason. From the user usage perspectives, the problem of Renren.com and the reason why they are no longer use some social websites. The reasons are:

- (1) Their competitors made Renren.com lost competitiveness. Wechat and Weibo are the most popular social media application in China. They have better experience than Renren.com in that they provide from privacy protection and user experience.

- (2) Some social websites don't know what users need. It's also a big problem for some social website like Renren.com. They do not understand and analyze the real needs of users, which lead to the user churning. And Renren.com have unclear customer orientation and good operation team.
- (3) Renren.com have many unnecessary functions, they have developed a lots of functions because of competitive pressures, these functions are complex and ineffective for users. The complex and useless functions gave user a bad experience.
- (4) Not many of users would decide to stay on a website or not only because of the user experience. They pay more attention to the whether the website can provide useful information to users. Some users would focus on if they have friends stay on a website or using application frequently. There are various reasons for users to consider whether they will continue to use the website.
- (5) For many users, it's normal phenomenon for social networks to lose users. If a website is not popular or some problems are not solved in time, users will have better choice. Social products have many alternatives for users

Compare my findings base on my case to other reason of user churning as mentioned in research, I also found privacy protection and information overload issues in my findings. While using Renren.com as a case, the reason they lost large amounts of users are the website does not popular than any other social platforms and they have no specific policies to protect users' original articles. However, I found that user experience is not the decisive factor for user churn. Social networks have many options for users, users are free to choose whether to stay or not on the website. User churning behavior in social networks could be the website is not well protected user's information, information overload, lack of



innovation, poor user experience or just more popular social products appears. From the user experience perspective, the social website is not meet user needs, have many unnecessary functions or not easy for use gave user a bad experience. It leads some users gradually leave from this social website.

## **6.1 Result Discussion**

User churning is a common behavior in the social networks. And it has many reasons which we have already known from the literature, it could be the privacy protection issue, information overlords and lack of innovation or any other reasons. User experience is also a big reason that lead to losing user. From my professional studies, I study user churning from the perspective of user experience. I found that user experience would directly influence some of users stay on a website or not. Other users feel bad user experience lead to user churning but not the main reason, the main reason could be the popularity of website and what can website provide to the users. Users have better alternative production also is a big reason for user churning. Although, they have various reasons lead to user churning. Every user believes that the website should understand user's need.

## **6.2 Limitation and Weakness**

Firstly, this thesis is only conducted by limited number of users who has used Renren.com and other social networks for a long time, due to the time and access available. Thus, apart from the respondents, I cannot get the data from the all of users from social website. Secondly, my research is from the perspective of user experience, and I cannot fully understand all the reasons of user churning. It might be operational issue or target issue from the website.

### **6.3 Further Research**

Due to the limitation and weakness of this thesis, there is one recommendation I put forward. The future study can focus on improvement plan from UX perspective, get more suggestions from users to meet user needs. As Chinese people still cannot use Facebook because of public opinion control. Renren.com is a similar website as Facebook. Improving the user experience can encourage the users to return.

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## Appendix

### Appendix1: Surveys

	Questions
1	What's your age?
2	Are you a user of Renren.com?
3	When did you registered on the Renren.com?
4	What's reason of registration on Renren.com?
5	How often do/did you use Renren.com?
6	What kind of information are you concerned about on Renren.com?
7	How long have you used Renren.com?
8	What makes you no longer used Renren.com?

## **Appendix2: Interview Guide**

Dear participants, I am a bachelor student majoring in New Media Design at Jönköping University (ju.se). Currently, I am conducting a bachelor thesis on the topic of “Understand user churning behavior in social networks while using Renren.com as a case”. As an academic investigation, I solemnly promise you that this interview will be conducted in a comfortable manner, and data or information you provide will not be disclosed. Here, I would like to express sincere thanks to you for your good collaboration and help.

### **Introduction**

1. Do you consent that I record this Interview?
2. Would you prefer to keep anonymous in this study?

### **Background**

1. Could you introduce some information about yourself? (e.g. educational background, age group, user’s timeline)
2. When did you start using social networks?
3. When you started to register on Renren.com?

### **Experiences on website**

1. What did you think of the position of Renren.com? (e.g. BBS, chat tools...) What was your first impression on this kind of website?
2. How was the loading speed of the website?
3. Have you downloaded the mobile application of Renren.com or some other platform? How was the experience of using application?
4. How satisfied are you with Renren.com? (Out of 10) Why do you give this score?

5. What social platforms have you been using for a long time?

### **Website's function**

1. Did you use your mobile phone number or a third-party account to register and login for social websites? Which approach do you prefer?
2. What do you think about the navigation of social website like Renren.com ? Is that easy to find what you need on the website?
3. There are many new functions of Renren.com in the later stage, such as live broadcast, membership, email. Which new features have you used?
4. What's the most important function for a social website?

### **User churning**

1. What's make you no longer used Renren.com?
2. What do you think about social networks losing users?
3. What do you think the main reason of user churning?
4. Do you think that user experience will influence you stay on the website?