

Suspicious minds: user perceptions of privacy on Facebook in Myanmar

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Facebook central to Internet use in Myanmar

- Facebook accounts for 85% of data traffic in Myanmar
- 19 million Facebook accounts in June 2018
- Used for diverse reasons including networking, work, studies, entertainment and obtaining news; some used it as a search engine

Sources: Facebook Advertising Portal (2018), Roache (2018), Cihon & Galpaya (2017)

Privacy viewed as a means of contextual integrity

Privacy as a means of contextual integrity holds under 2 norms

1. Appropriateness: Suitability to reveal in a relevant context

What type of information is being shared? Under which circumstances?

2. Distribution: Movement or transfer of data from one party to another

With whom is information being shared?

Nissenbaum (2004)

Privacy is a **culturally specific process** that regulates social interaction

Altman (1979)

Focus group discussions and in depth interviews used as primary means of sourcing data

Qualitative

- Focus group discussions and in depth interviews in Yangon, Mandalay and Kachin
- 98 respondents
- August-September 2017

Quantitative

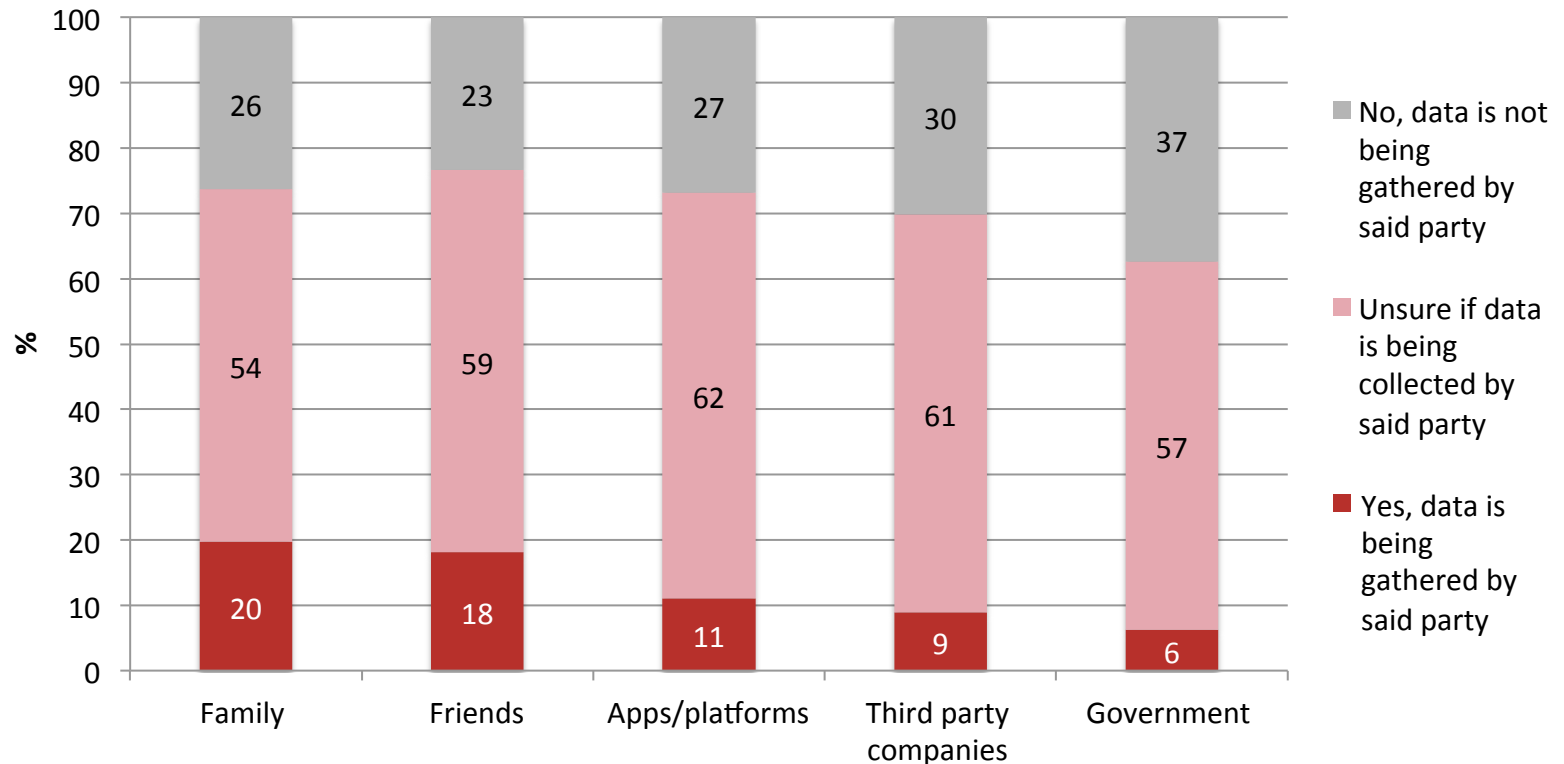
- Online survey sourced from Kantar TNS Connected life panel
- 403 respondents
- October-November 2017

Age	SEC	Number of Male (M) / Female (F)	Location
15-24	A/B	6M	Yangon
25-34	A/B	6F	Yangon
25-34	A/B	3M & 3F	Yangon
19-27	B/C/D	3M & 3F	Yangon
35-44	C/D/E	6F	Yangon
15-24	A/B	5M & 1F	Yangon
15-24	C/D/E	4M, 1 non-binary	Yangon
19-42	A/B/C/D	6M	Yangon
21-42	B/C/D	6M	Yangon
22-34	C/D	3F	Yangon
35-44	A/B	6M	Kachin
25-34	C/D/E	6F	Kachin
15-24	C/D/E	6F	Kachin
35-46	A/B/C/D	5M	Kachin
25-34	C/D/E	6F	Mandalay
35-44	C/D/E	6M	Mandalay

Sampling table for FGDs

Respondents deem invasion of social privacy more likely than institutional privacy– high levels of uncertainty

Perception of unauthorized data gathering (% of respondents)

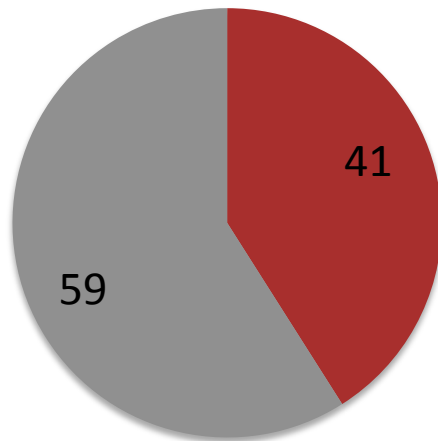


Base: All respondents, quantitative
N: 403

Q: What is the likelihood of the following people / organizations collecting information about you online without your knowledge or consent?

41% of respondents used multiple Facebook accounts

Use of multiple Facebook accounts
(% of respondents using social media)



■ Uses multiple Facebook accounts

“I have 12 [Facebook} accounts– I use all 12 accounts all the time. Five of my accounts are real with my own pictures, but the others do not have my real pictures. One account is in a girl’s name. I use fake accounts to fight with other people on comments. I watch 18+ videos on some accounts...”

Male, 19, Student, SEC D, Yangon (R17.1)

*Base: All respondents using social media
N: 381*

Some women did not upload their real names and photographs on Facebook due to restrictions from male relatives/spouse

“I don’t use my real pictures and real name. My husband doesn’t like it. He doesn’t want me to use Facebook officially.”

Female, 22, Housewife, SEC D, Yangon (R13.3)

“My husband doesn’t like me to posting my pictures on Facebook. If I use it with my real female name, boys will hit on me.”

Female, 34, Housewife, SEC C, Yangon (R13.1)

“If I upload my picture, I will receive many friend requests. My brothers told me not to upload my picture after they opened my account for me. They [also] told me that some people Photoshop the pictures you upload on Facebook. So, they forbade me from uploading my photograph”

Female, 26, Tailor, SEC C, Myitkyina (R6.6)

Anonymity was used to engage in discussion on politics and ethnicity

“Without showing my identity, I can engage in preventing misconceptions or state my opinions on local and international news without getting my name hurt... I can take the news without letting my identity be revealed. I use nicknames or other funny names with profile pictures like cartoon characters.”

Female, 38, Part time volunteer for NGO, SEC D, Yangon (15.1)

“I don’t use my real name or my photo when using social media. Many people hate Rakhine and I don’t want to use them. They [have given} us “Haha” sticker comments. When we meet one day there will be problems. I changed my name to avoid such situations.”

Male, 42, Fish salesman, SEC C, Rakhine ethnicity, Yangon (R12.6)

Use of multiple accounts allowed maintenance of separate identities when commenting on politics/ethnicity

“We cannot say anything we want openly now given the current situation, even though it is free now... Online, however, we can talk to each other about anything without needing to be afraid. I have two accounts... One account doesn’t have a profile picture. I can see news and write anything I want freely.”

Male, 35, Carpenter, SEC B, Myitkyina (R5.4)

“One time, people in the comments section [of one of my posts] got into an argument. After that, I decided to use two accounts for different purposes. One is with my Kachin name [for] my relatives and friends from the same ethnicity. The other one is with my Burmese name and it is for activities where there could be negative impact if I used my Kachin name. [This is] for political or other controversial views. Since then, I [haven’t had] any problem.”

Female, 25, University student, SEC B, Yangon (R2.1)

Respondents tended to add strangers to Facebook networks

“I send two friend requests every day– one girl and one boy. I send request to two people each day whether they accept it or not. In fact, I want to make friends by telling them about myself.”

Male, 35, Jade trader, SEC C, Mandalay (R10.4)

“I have about 100 friends that I know in my account. I have about 1000 friends that I don't know [outside Facebook]. There are more outside friends that I don't know...”

Female, 20, University student, SEC D, Myitkyina (R7.1)

Religion and ethnicity used to determine boundaries

“I don’t accept [requests from] many people though... I [usually] don’t accept people from other religions. I accept requests mainly from Buddhist people.”

Female, 35, Housewife, SEC D, Buddhist, Yangon (R15.4)

“I accept only Kachin people. I don’t like other races.”

Female, 18, Tailoring apprentice, SEC C, Kachin ethnicity, Myitkyina (R7.2)

“There are one or two Burmese people in my account— I only accept [Burmese] people who I know as friends. I accept Kachin people whether I know them in real life or not. If they have mutual friends with me, I accept them.”

Female, 19, Housewife, SEC D, Kachin ethnicity, Myitkyina (R7.4)

“Usually, we wouldn't think twice to accept people from different ethnic groups. I accept them at once when they send me requests. [Now, however] If other ethnic groups send me request, I think a long time whether to accept them or not. I take a long time because of what is happening in our State...”

Male, 34, Carpenter, SEC A, Kachin ethnicity, Myitkyina (R5.3)

Nationality too was used, though not in isolation– ethnicity and religion used as filters

“If I accept only people with Myanmar name, my doubts are clear because they are Myanmar people. I feel friendly to them because I am Myanmar too. [I also accept those] who have English names that I can read. If they upload pictures such as flowers or girls, I accept them. I usually don’t [accept] people who write their names in languages that I do not understand– like Chinese language or Thai languages. However, [if] it turns out that he is the Bengali. When I think that he/she is Bengali, I don’t accept him/her.”

Female, 26, Tailor, SEC C, Burmese ethnicity, Myitkyina (R6.6)

“I would check their profile when I receive a “Hi.” Some people, they don’t use their pictures as their profile, so I need to check on other pictures and other things, too. If I see someone I know in their friend list, then I would accept them. Even if that person is a non-Buddhist foreigner, I would still accept him/her, unless they are Kalar, because I know some of them just want to make friends and some might even understand Burmese.”

Female, 40, Housewife, SEC B, Burmese ethnicity, Yangon (R15.3)

Screening criteria may be misleading

Gender used a screening criteria, but men posing as women also encountered

“I mostly accept [requests from] females, I don’t accept males that much. [I don’t accept requests from males] because my husband is jealous.”

Female, 32, Trader, SEC C, Mandalay (R9.4)

“I have met guys who used a girl’s name on their account. I have been chatting with this person online and one day, he made a mistake and switched using a guy’s pronoun instead of a girl’s while talking. When I get confused, he admitted that he’s actually a guy pretending to be a girl, and his identity like where he’s from.”

Female, 38, Part time volunteer for NGO, SEC D, Yangon (15.1)

“I use a woman’s photo for my account and talk with the women. I can also get 200- 300 likes in a couple of days then.”

Male, 23, Construction worker, SEC C, Yangon (R12.4)

In short...

- Appropriateness and distribution of information often tied to gender and ethnicity, sometimes politics, nationality, presence of mutual friends
- Use of multiple accounts allowed different information to be shared with different audiences.
- Use of disingenuous information sometimes allowed respondents to participate in discourse that they would otherwise not have participated in
(Accountability-?)
- Respondents tended to put up disingenuous information, but screen those they were adding to networks based on information put out by others— sometimes misleading

Thank you!

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