



Social media's role in Higher Education: Students' Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Social media is innovative approach to correspond and allocate information with the help of internet. Social media sites are being used commonly by millions of people worldwide. Social media has become one of the best mediums to convey the information and knowledge in the world. Social media is often seen just as a way to pass the time or stay connected to friends and other people. But now, its use is rapidly increasing into the educational sector. Students especially use the medium to stay in touch with their old friends and also to meet new ones and opportunities. The objectives are to find which social media is used by students, what kind of information they are getting or sharing with respect to academic activities. This study revealed that Facebook is the students' favourite SNS. Information related to career is mostly shares and SNSs plays a significant role in higher education. This study will help to understand the social media usage and its impact on students.

KEYWORDS : Social media, Higher education, students, impact, usage.

Introduction

Social media is a media which disseminates information through interaction. In social media web based technology transforms information. Social media have been modernized to reach consumers in a new way, through internet. Social media is different from traditional media such as newspapers, television and film. Social media is tool and platform to create and foster communities and relationships.

Wikipedia defines social network service as 'online platform that focus on building and reflecting social networks or social relations among people who share interests and activities'.

Social media is innovative approach to correspond and allocate information with the help of internet. Social media sites are being used commonly by millions of people worldwide. According to 'We Are Social' report, Across India, there are 153 million users of social media. Urban areas witnessed a growth of 35 per cent with 118 million users as of April 2015. Facebook emerged the leading social media website with 96 per cent of urban users accessing it, followed by Google Plus, Twitter and LinkedIn.

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Online Social networking is a type of virtual communication that allows people to connect with each other. This concept arises from basic need of human beings to stay together in groups forming a community. Michael Wesch, cultural anthropologist at Kansas State University, compared the tribal societies to online social networking. Like the tribal culture, in Facebook people project their identity by demonstrating their relationships to each other. You define yourself in terms of who your friends are (Wright, 2007).

Social networking sites, email, instant messaging, video- and photo-sharing sites and comment posting are all tools that help people to communicate and socialize with each other (Mooney, 2009).

Top 10 social networking sites in the world

Rank	Sites	Estimated Unique Monthly Visitors
1	Facebook	1,100,000,000
2	YouTube	1,000,000,000
3	Twitter	310,000,000
4	LinkedIn	255,000,000
5	Pinterest	250,000,000

6	Google Plus+	120,000,000
7	Tumblr	110,000,000
8	Instagram	100,000,000
9	Reddit	85,000,000
10	VK	80,000,000

Source: www.ebizmba.com, March, 2017

Social networking website Facebook's Indian user base has grown by 5.35% from 112 million monthly active users (MAUs) to 118 million MAUs in Q4 2014. Facebook India's daily active users (DAUs) are at 55 million, out of which 49 million DAUs come through mobile, accounting for over 89% of Facebook's daily traffic as of December 2014.

Background of the study

Now social media is an integral part of daily communication. Everything is shared and everyone is connected through social media. Students are getting contents for their studies on social media in the form of discussion, videos, pictures, opinions etc. Social media can also stimulate new creativity in the way subjects are taught. Social media has become an essential communication and entertainment medium among the young adults. Social Media is a great opportunity for education institutions to interact with existing students and prospective.

Review of literature

According to a survey conducted by TCS on 12,300 high school students (aged 12-18 years), India's young generation is hooked onto Facebook and other social media channels. The survey also revealed that the majority of the youngsters have access to mobile devices. Social media helped students have a better direction of what they want, now they have ease of reaching to mentors in the same industry and people already working in their dream company, and get a taste of what it is like, which was quite impossible for students 10 years ago.

Now we are beginning to see lectures in the form of online videos and podcasts, as well as using Skype, Twitter and Facebook as platforms to discuss and share materials from the classroom. Potential students are also beginning to send video "pitches" through YouTube as substitutes for traditional college essays. In addition, Skype is being used to improve language skills by communicating with foreigners through internet calls.

Because of the way Facebook was started, it has developed an "elite" image, and is more attractive to colleges and universities to adapt, over MySpace. The numbers also support the attractiveness – 85% of students at 4-year universities have Facebook profiles and Facebook user demographics in areas like higher education and

discretionary income are typically higher than those of MySpace (Qualman 2007).

Micro-blogging sites such as Twitter, location-based services like Foursquare, and consumer review platforms including Yelp have all worked collaboratively to provide a totally new and engaged media experience, which has now become more accessible through mobile devices (Reuben, 2008).

Nowadays we can enter a social media site and share links, add comments and make other activities that the platform provides. Social media helps making connections with students and between them. Students can share links, answer questions from the instructor and even post questions and comments to a fellow student (Heiberger, G. & Harper, R. 2008).

Social media is all about getting connected to one another. Users of social media are connecting to each other regardless of national boundaries, culture or religion within fields and across industries. "Social Media strongly supports the logic to keep both students and the institutions updated with the evolving needs and offerings, by allowing them to have a more direct and social level of relation" (Ranjha, A. 2010).

The entire range of social media applications noted above share the innate ability to enable social behaviour through dialogue – multiple-way discussions providing the opportunity to discover and share new information (Solis, 2008).

Recent studies are showing that even professors are using social networking sites to assist in negotiating the teacher-student relationships. Yet, at many colleges and universities, administrators and faculty still wonder whether they should embrace SNS as a pedagogical tool (Harris, K, 2008).

Some colleges and universities have utilized podcasts, video blogs, and webcasts to share the work of students, faculty, visiting scholars, and alumni with the broader world. Tweeting the function of a status update (tweets) by users of the Twitter platform – has also found its place prominently in online courses as a discussion medium for faculty and students (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2009).

Technology in today's society allows various ways for students to stay informed and aware of offerings at their universities. According to annual survey of Social Media Use by Higher Education Faculty done by Pearson Learning Solution (2013) the use of Social Media in teaching has grown 21.3% from 2012 (34%) to 2013 (41%).

Social media networks have without a doubt changed the lives of rural people. As far as agriculture is thought of, these have given many opportunities to the farmers and made the process of selling the crop easy through online programs which have resulted in the removal of middlemen. There are many success stories in field of health care as well. Rural politics is the area where social media networks haven't reached to the required potential. But there still remains a lot of room for improvement for social networking services as with better technology, the connectivity of these places should improve and provide the economic opportunity to take benefits from the system. Social Media can help provide that, media which cares for a well-integrated society and believes in having social responsibility. Services like Facebook, twitter provide a mass reach, but of a population which can afford to have the required technology to avail the service but can help connect the large population. The requirement is of the necessary technology from which these platforms can be accessed. Once accessed, it is important that social media doesn't influence the people in a way that alienates them from the real potential of these platforms. The impact can be seen through many examples and these examples are of not just Social media like – Facebook but with the use of internet NGO's like Gramvaani have flourished, defining social media in a new perspective which is of development and of a social responsibility. The impact in India is very slow, but it is slowly

impacting more and more lives (Bansal E, 2015).

Students especially use SNSs to stay in touch with their old friends and also to meet new ones. Schools are adopting technology for pedagogical purposes and introducing social media into the classrooms. This is a trend that has garnered a lot of support as well as apprehensions. Social media can enable students to easily contact each other with regards to school projects and assignments. It is also possible for them to work on group assignments from the comfort of their own homes. Students that use social media can also participate more in class. When social media is used in pedagogy, students who have difficulty in expressing their thoughts in their classrooms can get involved in the learning process. It will help build these children's confidence level as well. Social media is also useful for students when doing homework. Any doubts can be cleared by posting a message through social media. Any questions that they may have can be asked on a message board and other students can also benefit from the feedback given by the teacher.

Objectives

Social media have a role to play in education field and so as in student's life. In this background the aim of the study is to find which social media is used by students to share or get information. What kind of information they are getting or sharing on social media with respect to academic activities and the its role in their learning process?

Methodology

It is quantitative research based on survey with questionnaire. Samples are students who are studying post graduation. 100 respondents are taken for the study in Bangalore University as the Bangalore University represents students from different parts of Karnataka.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this study both primary and secondary sources of data were included. The secondary data is provided through a literature, gathered from research articles review related to the study.

The statistical analysis of data is done based on the information collected by the post graduation students of Bangalore University. All respondents are active users of internet. Respondents are using different devices such as computer, laptop, tab, smart phone etc to get connected with the internet.

As mentioned respondents are active users of internet, majority of them are using internet more than 20 hours a week. 56% students are using internet more than 20 hours a week and 24% of them are using less than 10 hours. 16% respondents said about 5 hours and only 4% respondents are using internet less than 5 hours per week for different purposes.

50% of the respondents use internet for information search more than 5 times a day, 20% said they use internet rarely that is sometimes in a month, 16% said few times in a week and 14% said less than 5 times a day.

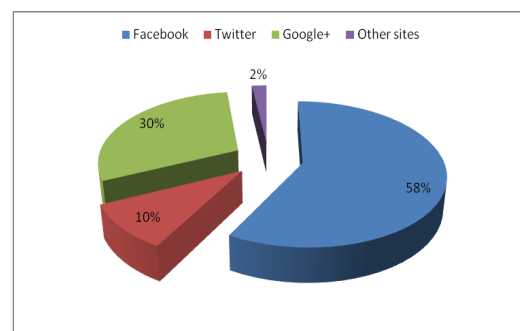


Fig 1: Favourite SNS's of students

100% of respondents are acquainted with Social networking sites. Majority of them said Facebook is their favourite SNS, 30% said google+, 10% of the respondents' favourite is twitter and only 2% other SNSs are attracted respondents. These sites are not only respondents' favourite sites; they are active users of these sites.

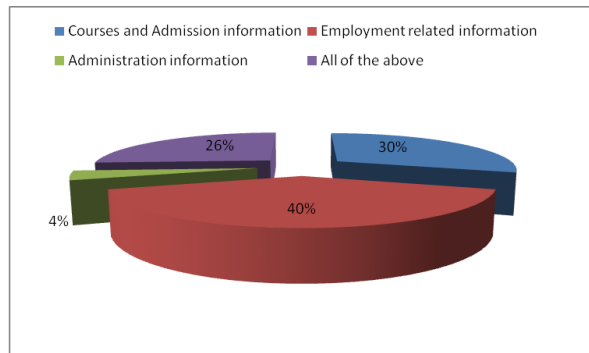


Fig 2: Information shared through SNSs.

When it comes academic material 40% expressed their reaction that through social media they are getting employment related information with respect to their degrees as their friends are sharing it, 30% opined that courses offered and admission information of different colleges and universities, 6% said administration of the educational institution and 26% respondents said they are getting all of the above information on SNSs.

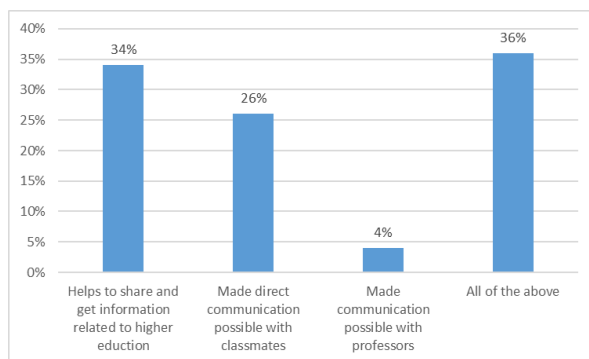


Fig 3: SNSs role in higher education

Respondents opined that SNSs are playing vital role in disseminating and obtaining higher education related information. 34% of them said social networking sites are helping them to share and get information related to academic activities. 26% said SNSs have made it possible to get connected directly with their classmates even when out of the college campus. Only 4% through SNSs they are communication with their professors after the class hours. Majority of them said (36%) SNSs have made all of these tasks possible.

Discussion and Conclusion

Respondents revealed that all higher education institutions are not active users of social networking sites. Every respondent said their department have a profile of these sites but they are not updating information on regular basis. According to them government owned higher educational institutions are not updating education related information frequently. During admission and examination time all educational institutions including government owned update their information on social networking sites. 64% of respondents said their educational institutions are active in SNSs use and updating information during admission and examination time and 36% reacted their institutions are not active in updating information. In this context, respondents are getting academic information on other media like newspaper, television and institutions official websites majority of the respondents reacted that for their education related information they depended on other sites also; only 25% of them are getting information through SNSs.

Although students are active users of SNSs majority of them (66%) still feel that in dissemination of information email is more effective compared to social media. The study disclosed that all most all students are aware of social media and SNSs. They are active users and visitors of SNSs. Today every organisation has their own SNS. But most of them are not updating frequently. Some students even opined that professors should use SNSs to update about classes and can send useful links to students as it happens in foreign universities. On the whole today social media is contributing higher education field in little manner, a lot need to be go on.

The use of social networking sites shows a significant change in the social and personal behavior of the students. Now SNS is an essential medium of communication between students. Therefore we can say that the popularity of SNS will not reduce in near future. At the same time SNSs have lots of challenges to face, ethical issue is one among them. If anybody misuses the official SNS of a educational institution students experience problems in many ways. If we focus on ethical of SNS it serves education field in right manner.

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