

TRENDS IN SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS EFFECT ON TERTIARY EDUCATION - THE STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE*

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ABSTRACT

This paper identifies and discusses key findings from various literature, the various trends in social media and its effects on tertiary education. Social media is not only being used for entertainment purposes only but also for educative purposes which has both positive and negative influence on students. It is evident that the development of social media has paved way for globalization and it is the main force that has brought human interaction to an interconnect level in recent times. In some ways, it has impacted on the society positively. For instance, with the help of internet, so many social media sites and applications have been created which help users to interact with one another, to create and share textual, visual, audio contents etc. But at the same time, there have been various challenges in the uses of social media sites as it has been creating negative impacts by making people more engrossed, addicted in unhealthy ways to the latest happenings on social media sites such as Face book, Whatsapp, Twitter, YouTube etc. Even though social media networking has a great influence on people's lives by helping in various fields such as education, human resources, economy etc., it also comes with its bad influences. It is in view of this that this paper tries to juxtapose its positive and negative influences.

Keywords: Facebook, Networking, Education, Unhealthy addiction, Academic habits.

INTRODUCTION

As Chen (2007) indicated, the impact of digital or new media on human society is demonstrated in the aspect of cognition, social effect, and a new form of aesthetic. New media can therefore be seen as the main force which helps in accelerating the trend of globalization in human society. Globalization trend on the other hand has led to the transformation of almost all aspects of human society. It is therefore this rapid development of social media that has been the force accelerating the trend of globalization in human society in recent times. Social media networking sites has brought human interaction and society to a highly interconnected level.

People nowadays hardly go about their everyday activities without making use of some forms of social media. It has become so popular and as grown so much as a result of rapid development in technology. It is also the rapidity in the growth of social media of which face book, twitter, my space, etc. is part of that has helped in empowering people as computers are now more of mobile things and can be accessed by anyone anywhere. Anyone who is online can be empowered by an unrestricted flow of information, which can add to their knowledge bank. The social media plays an important role in impacting knowledge and in our understanding of the world. It is the forum that enables people to exchange ideas, relate with people, connect with friends, and do so many

* National Media Communication Conference for Tertiary Institutions, held at the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro: 31st October -2nd November 2017.

things .It removes communication barriers and pave way for open communication channel .It has brought about many benefits. It also gives room for common interest based groups to work in collaboration and also fosters creativity,

Social media also comes at a price. It has a negative impact on our lives, robs us of the trust and comfort reposed in one another. It is the objective of this paper to present evidence from several emerging topical areas in this line of study by scholars in different environment that includes effects of social media majorly on education

UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can best be described rather than defined because the word does not connote a single network but a group of new kinds of online media that shares similar characters. As Jackaand Scott (2011:5) argue, there is no single recognized definition of *social* media, The increasing innovation of technology and the knowledgeable skills of social media users means that what connote or make up social media continue to typifies what social media is and these sites have become enormously popular, and as well boost of thousands of millions of users in respective of their age, race or gender.

Jacka and Scott (2011:5) also contend that it can be said that social media is the set of web based broadcasting technologies that enables the democratization of contents, giving people the ability to emerge from consumers of contents to publishers. The oxford dictionary (2011), defines social media as websites and applications used for social networking, while in turn, social networking is defined as the use of dedicated websites and applications to communicate with other users, or to find people with similar interest to one's own.

Basically, social media has evolved to include other tools and practices which it does not include before .The ABC (2011), Also produced a technology explained website where definitions and explanations are provided for modern technical and online terms. The website comments that "social media encapsulates digital tools and activities" that enables communication and sharing across the net. It is used by all areas of society; business, education, media, economy, etc. and it has also become a key tool for provoking thought, dialogue, and action around particular social issues. According to the social media guide website (2011,) Social media is a user generated content that is shared over the internet via technologies that promote engagement, sharing and collaboration.

THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

This paper is premised on the uses and gratification theory.The theory of uses and gratification has been studied for more than 60yrs, Instead of asking what media do to people; this theory asks what an active audience does with the media. Why and with what effect "(Lasswell,1948).It assumes that individual select media and content to fulfill their needs .Specifically ,the theory aim to explain what social or psychological needs motivate people to engage in variety of media use behavior (Katz,Blumber& Gurevitch,1974). According to Strafford et al (1999:663) uses and gratification theory is a postulation that an individual would prefer the use of a particular communication medium over others owing to perceived higher satisfaction potentials of the medium. In other words the theory refers " to the use of a particular medium in the belief

that beneficial attributes of that medium allow the user to obtain gratification more readily than other media''(Strafford et al 1999:663).

According to Rubin (2000:426) the uses and gratification theory has typically focused on how media are used to satisfy cognitive and affective needs involving personal needs and entertainment needs. Denis McQuail (1987:234) averred that 'The uses and gratification research tradition rests on the notion of a passive audience and it involves a number of assumptions which key item is that the audience make a conscious and motivated choice among channels and content offer.

This theory places the sole power in the hand of audience, rather than think that the media message have direct effect on those who consume them, The theory's perspective probes that receiver make deliberate intentional decisions about media messages they are exposed to and at what frequency based on personal needs and desires irrespective of its influence either positive or negative

CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

What is regarded today as social media include the following:

Social Network: This type of social media allows users to connect by creating personal web pages and then connect with friends to share contents and communication. The very common and most popular social network includes Facebook, snap chat, instagram, and twitter.

Podcasts: These deals with audio and video files that are available online and people can have access to by subscribing through services like apple iTunes. It is a combination of broadcasting and iPod. It enables users to download audio files that can be played on computers and portable devices.

Blogs: This is a very popular and well known form of social media; blogs are majorly online journals with entries appearing with the most recent first. It shares experiences and opinions about news, Events, etc.

Flickr: This enables users to reach a large variety of people (with no language barrier). It uses tagging to link people to photos in searches, users get to share photos of events, facilities etc.

YouTube: This provides a home for PSAs and educational videos; it has large accessibility and good resource for schools and organizations. It is easy and convenient to use. And it can as well be linked or embedded across the internet.

Wikis: These social network sites allow people to add content to and edit information on items. It also serves as communal document or database. Wikipedia is the most commonly used and known wiki and it is an online encyclopedia, which boost of millions of English language articles.

Forum: This is an internet message board where users can post messages regarding topics of discussion. It is an area of online discussion usually around specific topics. It's been in existence even before the term social and it is so powerful and popular element of online communication.

Facebook: This enables users to create a central page, check post, browse sites with its simple layout and it provides space for basic information and variety of posts types with its potential audience

Twitter: This is used mostly for short facts or reminders, It hash tags (#) group together similarly themed tweets. It can as well be linked to Facebook. it provides an On-The-Go updates for reminders. Integrated with cell phones and texting.

Micro blogging: These are the kinds of social networking that are combined with bite size blogging, where small amount of content (updates) are distributed online and through mobile phones. Twitter is an example.

Content Communities: These are communities that organize and share particular kind of content. Their main purpose is sharing of media contents between users.

Tumblr: This enables users to share information in many formats, It can also tag posts with keywords for searches, It enables posts to be "reblogged " by other users.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Openness: Majority of social media services are open to feedback, participation. They encourage many things such as voting, sharing information, comments etc. There are no strict barriers to accessing and making use of contents, password –protected contents is frowned on.

Conversational: While traditional media is more about "broadcast" (content transmitted or distributed to an audience), Socialmedia on the other hand is better seen as a two-way conversation.

Participation: Majority of social media networks encourages contributions and it also gives room for feedback from everyone who is interested .It blurs the line between media and audience.

Connectedness: Virtually all kinds of social media thrive on their connectedness which makes the use of links to other sites, resources and people.

Community: Social media allows community to form quickly and communicate effectively. Communities mostly share common interest such as the love of photography, political issues or interesting television show etc.

SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

Hoot Suite, Tweet Deck, Seesmic: this is used for updating multiple social profiles at once and it can also choose which one to send .It often have built-in Uniform Resource Locator (URL).

Metric: Google Analytics: Posts, visits, links, clicks, page views, fans/friends/subscribers etc.

PROCESS TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS INCLUDES:

Visit the site and then create your own account
Build networks by associating or establishing connections with other users
Contributing information to the community
Updating your profile/representation in site/community

USES OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN EDUCATION

Social media and Education: There are various apps and web tools that offer educational contents, so many institutions use variety of software tools and free web applications to enhance learning, and this has made the use of social media to be on the rising side in higher education. Classrooms, compared to the traditional learning method that only provide few opportunities for learners to develop and maintain their own learning activities. Since both teachers and students use social media in education, it has really helped students in developing good aims at upgrading and enhancing their studies as well as social interaction. The social media learning platforms as helped in playing the control of learning in the hands of the learners themselves.

How social media affects students: Acquiring knowledge, establishing cordial and enduring relationships with people, through networking sites such as face book and various other social media is one great area that the social media has affected students. Through e-learning, educators and students get first hand answers to problems like helping students accommodate different learning styles with the help of technology. The applications used by various social media sites also provides different tools that learners use to best suit their individual learning styles which in turn helps in increasing their academic success. It helps students develop leadership skills and activities that facilitate social change. It encourages students to engage with each other, express and share their creativity.

Challenges faced by students on the use of social media: As far as there are so many positive effects of social media, there are also some negative effects as well. Some amongst others the following are the challenges posed by the use of social media:

Health Issues: The use of social media sites for long hours usually leads to health problems because the continuous accessing of these networking sites can lead to eye sight problems, severe back pains while sitting in a position for long hours.

Friendship: Social media networking sites do help people make friends but the integrity of these friendships is not always good.

Privacy: So many students are so into social media sites such as Facebook, snap chat, instagram, and many more, through which they interact with variety of unknown people. They engage in sharing vital personal and private information which can be used for wrong purpose by other users.

POSITIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON TERTIARY EDUCATION

Through social media, the world has become a smaller place; social media has improved our ability to absorb information and also gives us a very good opportunity to make use of it.

Everyday life keeps evolving through social media, what could have seems overwhelming is now normal to everyone. It gives an extreme ease in doing things. Some amongst others the following are the positive impacts of social media on education.

Students through new technologies develop familiarity with computers and other electronic devices by spending much time working with it.

Students with the increase force of technology in education, guild skills that aids them through their lives

Creativity sharing with ease and speed is another opportunity that social media as given students, with ease and speed, they can share stories, ideas and other creative works and as well get instant feedbacks from friends and other users on their creative outlets. It also assists students discover, develop and refine their creative ability and this gives room for much needed confidence to help them in choosing future career path.

Students with good talents easily get discovered through social media. Students, who are good in music, writing, programming etc., get their names out easily.

NEGATIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON TERTIARY EDUCATION

The most common bad effect of social media on students is addiction. The ease with which students can stay for long hours, constantly checking social network sites for updates is a prime bad influence and this negatively affects other valued activities of their lives such as concentrating on studies, preference of networking sites to real life communications. Some of the major negative impact of social media includes the following:

Reduced focus on learning and retaining information is one of the negative impacts of social media on education. The reliance of students on the accessibility of information from social media to provide answers to them on any given topic

Social media popularity and the speed at which information is broadcast has created a lax attitude towards grammar and vocabulary of students as it reduces a student's ability to effectively write or compose without relying on computer

Students spend more of their time on social media sites more than they do with their social life in person, as students spend a great deal of their time on social networking sites and because of the lack of body signals and other nonverbal gestures like tone and inflections, social media are not a good and adequate replacement for face-to-face communication because students are less able to effectively communicate in person

Students are also usually found in the habit of multitasking, they attempt to check social media sites while studying and this results into reduced academic performance. Facebooking, responding to messages while studying, chatting, etc. contribute significantly to their poor academic performance.

Also students are more engrossed and inclined towards the entertainment aspects of social media networking sites other than the relevant useful information derived from it, thereby overutilization of these social networking sites. They do not know as to when and where to make use of social media.

CONCLUSION

This paper validates the facts that there are some pros and cons in the use of social media. It shows some of the various positive and negative impacts of social media mostly on tertiary education. It is therefore concluded that since social media sites have a significant role to play in our everyday activities, there is the need to moderate the access to social media sites in order to alleviate the negative aspects of it, while improving on its positive advantages. For instance, social media usage, in human resources, helps in enhancing productivity amongst employees, as well as increase employee involvement in organization, to promote the flow of ideas from employees and also aids in innovation and help increase customer relations in order to promote employee productivity. While on the other hand, it has also contributed significantly on students' academic performances, even though it is regarded as an entertainment tool it helps students in the areas of study related activities (activities that relate to areas such as research, group activities, projects, as well as positive influence when it comes to communication and interactivity amongst students).

One major thing that can therefore help in the reduction of the negative aspect of social media majorly on education and that can in turn be of benefit to students is by paying more attention to their academic progress, reducing the amount of time spent on social media sites, as well as using social media for educative purposes. All these will go a long way in overcoming the negative influence of social media.

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