

**“A Study on Social Media Habits and Preferences among Students and Working Professionals in Coimbatore”**

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**Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to determine whether there are any differences between students and working professionals in their social media activities, preferences, and use habits. The study examines to what extent or by whom social media tools are actively used and which factors promote the current use of social media. T test was used to analyse the data collected from a sample of 300 social media users based on the users’ specific activities on social media platforms. It was found that there is widespread consumption among students and working professionals, the more apparent fact is that students are more active on the social media platforms. The findings of this study can be useful in profiling social media users and further social media research in the digital marketing field.*

*Key words: Habits, Preferences, Professionals, Social media, Students.*

**Introduction**

The Internet and communication technologies are the most vivacious areas of technological and social innovation for several decades now. Through World Wide Web technology, the Internet is now widely used to connect to worldwide information channels. With technological advancements over the last few decades, many people now use the Internet not only to communicate, socialize, and interact, but also to produce and use information rather than just connecting to it. Internet, with the rich content, has created new platforms for users that encourage and facilitate the participation of users. The empowered consumers, in turn, create value through their social interactions on the Internet. They share information and experiences with one another and easily access one another’s information [Hajli, 2014]. Participatory web applications have produced two important results: social media and creative consumers.

It is imperative for businesses to know who makes use of social media and how they behave in order to more effectively plan their marketing activities. To this end, it is important to make a meaningful classification of user types, frequency and variety of use, and content preferences.

**Social Media**

In the literature, there is no standard definition of social media. According to Kaplan and Haenlein [2010], social media “is a group of internet-based applications, which are built on Web 2.0’s technological foundations that permit users to create content and change.” Postman [2008] defines the term as “the most current form of content of Web-based applications, which can be considered as a revolution, created with participatory communication, community-building, knowledge creation and sharing.” Other researchers have defined the term as “a range of platforms facilitating individuals to communicate, connect, and collaborate” [Jue, Marr, and Kassotakis, 2009]; and as “online tools where content, perspectives, ideas, and media can be shared” [Nair, 2011]. Bolton et al. [2014: 248], has come out with a new definition, who describes social media as “any online service through which users can create and share a variety of content.”

The history of social media goes back to 1997, with the establishment of social networking site Six Degrees [Kietzmann et al., 2011]. Other sources quote the starting date as 1980s, with

Usenet groups as pioneers [Blackshaw and Nazzaro, 2006]. Social media allow users to develop relationships that differ from face-to-face relationship and to keep those relationships going. Social media creates a type of social communication, which allows individuals to stay in touch constantly with the people with whom they share common interests [Hemsley and Mason, 2013]. Social media users can search, find, and share information and comments, thoughts, and personal experiences about certain products/services/events/factors. Thus, content is becoming more democratic [Drury, 2008].

### **Social Media Platforms**

Social media platforms can be classified based on their type and uses as (Kurtulus, 2015):

- *Contact Platforms*: Blogs, micro-blog status applications (Twitter), social networks (Facebook)
- *Collaboration Platforms*: Social tagging/social bookmarking, social news
- *Multimedia Platforms*: Photo sharing (Instagram), video sharing (YouTube), music, audio sharing
- *Comments and Review Platforms*: Products, work assessment applications, shared written content and news, review/recommendation systems.
- *Entertainment Platforms*: Imaginary worlds, game sharing

### **Behaviour of Social Media Users**

People start their relationship with the social media as consumers or because they are curious about the concept. Although they visit these platforms, at first, users may not participate or contribute.

The activities of social media users can be grouped into three categories [Shao, 2009]:

- *Consuming*: The users only watch or read; they never participate.
- *Participating*: The users engage in activities like sequencing the content, adding to the playlist, sharing with others, posting comments, etc.
- *Producing*: This behavior includes the creation of content and the posting of personal contents, such as texts, images, tapes, and videos.

### **Social media industry**

The industry became a reality about 10 years ago with chat messengers. Now, the industry embraces Facebook and Twitter under its parasol. The attractiveness of these platforms has made the advertisement industry to spotlight on tactically placing ads on these platforms, which has altered the media industry per se. The size of the industry is \$10.7 billion.

The business model of the players in the social media industry is, on increasing their user bases and then successfully make money through digital advertisements. However, the success depends upon a platform's ability to engage its users. The key players of the industry include Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, LinkedIn, You Tube, Google + and whatsapp.

### **Review of Literature**

Kurtulus et.al.(2015), examined to what extent or by whom social media tools are actively used in Turkey and which factors promote the current use of social media. The researchers have used cluster analysis to classify a sample of 530 Turkish social media users, based on the users' specific activities such as just following others, following and participating, and content creation on social media platforms. The results reveal that Turkish social media users can be grouped into five clusters; namely, social pioneers, observers/watchers, content creators, engagers, and game lovers. The authors found that there is widespread consumption

among Turkish users, but that they use social media primarily to follow others in order to learn and to interact socially. Using social media for original content creation is not yet common. The findings of this study can be useful for further social media research in the digital marketing field globally.

The purpose of the study conducted by Mircea et.al. (2015), was to learn about Generation Y students' traits, habits, needs and expectations when using Social Media. Identification of this behaviour is, necessary for the academia. Firstly, to understand what their real profile is. Then, a serious and constant adjustment of our attitudes, teaching materials, ways of providing information and a redefinition of universities' policies and procedures is necessary. On this basis, the authors conducted an empirical study, to determine why do Generation Y students use Social Media, what are their preferences for one media or another, how/for how long/from where do they use Social Media tools, and what do they expect from universities and their professors.

The present work first compared characteristics of Face-book users to non-users among adults age 51 to 91 and found that older adult Face-book users were significantly more satisfied with their current social roles than non-users. Second, the researchers explored several characteristics of active older adult Facebook users, providing detailed data regarding the ways in which they access social media, the kinds of personal information they typically share, and information about their public versus private communication practices, preferences, and concerns. (Hutto et.al, 2015)

Considering the statistics about Y Generation population in Turkey, that's an important data, that 35% of Turkey population consists of this generation (TUIK, 2010). This paper deals with Generation Y consumers in Istanbul, Turkey and describes the ways in how they use new communication technology. Also, this study purposes to find out user preferences of new media, social networking usage and media consumption. A survey was conducted with consumers aged 18–32 located in Istanbul. A snowball sampling plan was utilized. This study was conducted to understand the habits of Generation Y consumers about usage of new communication technology. (Alan and Ezgi, 2012)

### **Objectives**

1. To study the social media habits and preferences of students and working professionals
2. To determine whether there are any differences among students and working professionals in terms of activities, use habits and preferences.

### **Research Methodology**

The researchers chose to focus upon two different groups in their study (students, and working professionals), and developed a questionnaire to measure respondents' media habits preferences and was sent to the respondents in the following proportions: students (N = 200); and working professionals (N = 100). The intention was to explore the possible differences between the groups. The results showed that students' media habits preferences was significantly different from that of working professionals. The questionnaire was composed of 30 questions concerning their use of social media and their social media habits and preferences. The main thrust of the data analysis was to test the hypotheses. T test was computed.

### **Findings**

Of the respondents (N = 300), 91.3% indicated that they used social media. The social media in which the respondents are active is whatsapp (100%) followed by facebook (74%). More than ever, people are starting to use multiple social media networks instead of sticking to just one. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents (66.6%) indicated that they spend 1-2 hours on social media on an average day, and 40.1% respondents are active on social media in the

evening and night; 54.7% of the respondents are active both in the weekdays as well as weekends.

30.6% of the respondents post pictures and videos. 25% respondents post once a week, 26.7% never post at all. 25.7% of the respondents spend time on social media on activities like liking, sharing or forwarding Pictures / status / posts of friends. 53.7% do not check ads on social media; they argue it is annoying and intrusive. A majority (68%) claim that they communicate about education and courses through social media. 85% of the respondents shop online. 64% of the respondents have said they do not buy based on ads on social media.

**Ho1:** There is no significant difference between students and working professionals in their social media habits

Social Media	Profession	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig
Habits	Student	200	.6550	.47656	.932	.352
	Working professional	100	.6000	.49237		

[Source: Primary Data]

The above table t value 0.932 for the mean difference in the social media habits between students and working professionals is not significant ( $p = 0.352$ ). Hence Ho1 is accepted.

**Ho2:** There is no significant difference between students and working Professionals in the activities on social media

	Profession	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig
Chatting	Student	200	.7750	.41863	8.522	.000
	Working professional	100	.3200	.46883		
Browsing	Student	200	.6900	.46365	3.596	.000
	Working professional	100	.4800	.50212		
Job searching	Student	200	.0900	.28690	-1.807	.072
	Working professional	100	.1600	.36845		
Shopping	Student	200	.3250	.46955	3.072	.002
	Working professional	100	.1600	.36845		
Passtime	Student	200	.4350	.49700	.577	.565
	Working professional	100	.4000	.49237		

[Source: Primary Data]

In the above table t values for the mean difference in the activities respondents involve on social media between students and working professionals is significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). There is significant difference between students and working professionals in activities like chatting, browsing and shopping. Students involve more on those kinds of activities than working professionals.

**Ho3:** There is no significant difference between students and working professionals in their social media preferences

Social Media	Profession	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig
Facebook	Student	200	.6550	.47656	.932	.352
	Working professional	100	.6000	.49237		
Twitter	Student	200	.1750	.38092	.325	.745
	Working professional	100	.1600	.36845		
Instagram	Student	200	.2350	.42506	1.214	.226
	Working professional	100	.3000	.46057		
LinkedIn	Student	200	.0550	.22855	4.430	.000
	Working professional	100	.2200	.41633		
Pinterest	Student	200	.0300	.17102	.505	.614
	Working professional	100	.0200	.14071		
You Tube	Student	200	.4450	.49821	2.789	.000
	Working professional	100	.2800	.45126		
Google+	Student	200	.3650	.48264	5.481	.000
	Working professional	100	.0800	.27266		
Whatsapp	Student	200	.8650	.34258	2.295	.000
	Working professional	100	.7600	.42923		

[Source: Primary Data]

The above indicates the t-values for the mean difference in their preference for different social media between students and working professionals.

There is no significant difference between students and working professionals in their preference for social media like facebook, twitter, instagram and pinterest but there is significant difference between students and working professionals in the active usage of

LinkedIn, You tube, Google+ and whatsapp. Students are active on Youtube, Google+ and whatsapp and working professionals are active on LinkedIn.

### **Discussion**

The results of the current study points out, that there is no significant difference between students and working professionals in their social media habits. But, there is significant difference between students and working professionals in the kind of activities they involve on social media like chatting, browsing and shopping. Students involve more on those kinds of activities than working professionals. In terms of preferences for social media students are active on Youtube, Google+ and whatsapp and working professionals are active on LinkedIn.

Social media users have a great interest in social networks such as Facebook and Whatsapp. These can be great sources to understand the way people think and act. Marketing managers can shape their marketing strategies based on the relevant purposes for each user type.

### **Conclusion**

Social media in all of its forms has definitely become an integral part of a student's life, and even younger generations for that matter. Young adults have consistently been the heaviest users of social media, and today that's even more true, an astounding percentage of them use social media. The results indicate the differences between students and working professionals in their social media habits and preferences.

This study has repercussion for businesses that need to do more than just posting updates. Since majority of the respondents regularly visit social networking web sites for the purpose of learning, getting up to date information on latest trends, or even just for fun, it should be understood that promotions can no longer use traditional approaches. It should involve reviewers and honest opinions. This is the future of marketing and engaging with customers.

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