A Study on Usage of Social Networking Sites among the College Students

* K. Chellamma
** A. Ruth Priya
*** Dr. L. Vijayashree

* Assistant Professor, BNM Institute of Technology, Bangalore, Karnataka, India
**Assistant Professor, BNM Institute of Technology, Bangalore, Karnataka, India
***Professor, BNM Institute of Technology, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

Abstract

The way people communicate has recently changed as a result of the Internet. One of the most important reasons for this change is social network sites (SoNSs). Social networking services (SoNSs) are web-based services or communities that emphasize Internet-based interactions grounded in social relations. This technology normally consists of user profiles, social network links and several additional functions such as e-mail, instant messaging with multimedia and group discussion. SoNSs are so popular that their core characteristics have spread all over the world. An SNS can bring about learning outcomes directly or indirectly by supporting peer-to-peer learning. The use of SoNSs may not only increase knowledge and skills but also strengthen existing relationships among people. SoNSs in higher education foster social engagement and initiate new ways of learning such as giving control to students, providing transferable skills, and supporting peer-to-peer learning and enhancing reflective learning. We could see that more and more students are accessing social networking websites these days. It important to explore the possible benefits out of using social networking sites for the students. This paper studies the potential benefits of using social networking sites for the college students. Sample of 200 students were asked to fill up a questionnaire. The findings indicate that more and more students are using social networking sites. They see perceived benefits such as collaborative learning, job search and information exchange.

Keywords: Social Networking, Collaborative Learning, Social Media

1.0 Introduction

The way people communicate has recently changed as a result of the Internet. One of the most important reasons for this change is social network sites (SoNSs). Social networking services (SoNSs) are web-based services or communities that emphasize Internet-based interactions grounded in social relations. This technology normally consists of user profiles, social network links and several additional functions such as e-mail, instant messaging with multimedia and group discussion. SoNSs are so popular that their core characteristics have spread all over the world. An SoNS can bring about learning outcomes directly or indirectly by supporting peer-to-peer learning. The use of SoNSs may not only increase knowledge and skills but also strengthen existing relationships among people. SoNSs in higher education foster social engagement and initiate new ways of learning such as giving control to students, providing transferable skills, and supporting peer-to-peer learning and enhancing reflective learning. We could see that more and more students are accessing social networking websites these days.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Social networking sites are being increasingly used by college students for various reasons. The paper aims to understand the benefits that students derive from the usage of social networking sites.

1.2 Purpose of Research

This paper studies the perceived benefits of using social networking sites among college students.

1.3 Objectives

1. To identify the extent to which students use social networking sites for learning from peers, information exchange and job search

2. To find the relationship between education, age and learning from peers, information exchange and job search

3. To study whether there is a variation in gender and learning from peers, information exchange and job search

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Social Media

Social media was defined by Marketo (2010) as "the production, consumption and exchange of information through online social interactions and platforms."O'Reilly (2010) defined Web 2.0 as the 'second generation of Internet-based services that facilitate interactive information sharing, social networking, collaboration and end user participation'. Hoffman and Fodor (2010) identified the '4 C's of connection, creation, consumption, and control' as the motivators behind social media engagement. Social networking websites provides a platform for communication and collaboration. Social Media tools exist from as early as year 2002. LinkedIn, Facebook, Google+ are some of the major tools available. College students are using social networking sites

2.2 Social Networking and Peer to Peer Learning

Bloom divided what and how people learn into three separate domains: cognitive, affective and psychomotor. In accordance with his classification, a learning outcome is the particular knowledge (cognitive), value or attitude (affective) and skill or behavior (psychomotor) that a student is expected to exhibit after a period of study (World Bank, 2011). An SoNS can bring about learning outcomes directly or indirectly by supporting peer-to-peer learning of knowledge and skills, collaboration (Ito, Okabe & Matsuda, 2006; Jenkins, 2007). SoNSs provide novel affordances for computer-supported collaborative learning, particularly in asynchronous environments (Grant, 2008; Idris & Wang, 2009).

2.3 Social Networking and Information Exchange

SoNSs can facilitate a sense of connectedness, community and belonging. An online community as a collective group of entities, individuals or organizations is constructed either temporally or permanently through an electronic medium to interact in a manner tied to a common problem or interest space (Plant, 2004). This community can even become an ongoing attraction (Johnson, Levine & Smith, 2009). In addition, Minocha (2009) found that SoNSs in higher education foster social engagement and initiate new ways of learning such as giving control to students, providing transferable skills, supporting peer-to-peer learning and enhancing reflective learning. Leise, Beyerlein and Apple (2011) insist that the SD of learning includes a hierarchy of skills related to communication, teamwork, management and leadership.

2.4 Social Networking and Job search

The most obvious use of social media in recruiting is candidate searches. Sites such as LinkedIn provide not only thousands of searchable resumes, but also links to relevant discussion groups, blogs and Twitter posts that candidates may have written.

Consequently, a searcher can learn not only about a candidate's "on-paper" qualifications and experience, but also other details such as how well the person writes and how he or she might fit into a company's work culture (Stoller,2012). Students can look for organization profiles and search for job openings. For example, linkedin provides an opportunity for users to search for jobs and apply for the same. It also created a opportunity for them to connect with the potential employers and recruiters.

3.0 Hypothesis

H1. Students use social networking sites for learning from peers, information exchange and job search.

H2. There is a relationship between education, age and learning from peers, information exchange and job search

H3. There is no variation in gender and learning from peers, information exchange and job search

4. Methodology

The data required for this study was collected through primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected from the college students in Bangalore city. A questionnaire was distributed to 200 students and a response of 137 students was obtained. The secondary data was collected from various databases like google scholar and ebsco database.

Table 1 . Indicators for Job Search, Information Exchange, Social Learning

Variable	Indicator	Measurement Instrument
Participation in SNs	P1	I use social networking sites
	P2	Frequency of visiting to social networking sites
	P3	Time spend on social networking sites
	P4	Objective behind using social networking sites
	P5	Member in your network
Learning from peers	L1	Social Networking Platform offers valuable learning opportunities for me
	L2	Social Network Platform helps me in my skills development
	L3	Whenever I have doubts or queries, I can always rely on people I follow in my network.
	L4	Social Networking platform brings me with much valuable knowledge
Information Exchange	E1	I read posts of people I follow.
	E2	I respond posts of others.

Information Exchange	E3	I am in contact with my peers
	E4	Whenever I have a query, I ask the members of my network
	E5	I know whom to ask certain questions.
	E6	I can find information whenever I need it.
	E7	I exchange information with my friends who are in my network
Job Search	J1	Social Networking sites help me in my job search
	J2	I am able to find suitable jobs on the social networking sites.
	J3	My friends share interesting job opportunities with me
	J4	I can find details about the potential employers from the social network sites.

Table 2 Demographics data

Variables	Number of respondents (N)	Percentage%
Gender		
Male	66	48.2
Female	71	51.8
Age Group		
16-20	8	5.8
20-25	129	94.2
25-30	0	0
Above 30	0	0
Education		
UG	51	38%
PG	85	62%

The respondents are a proper blend of male and female. They are in the age group of 20-25 years. Most of them are postgraduates. 38% of the respondents are undergraduate students.

5. Result Analysis

5.1. Result Analysis for Objective 1

Table 3 : Mean and Std Deviation q12-q14 - learning from pears

		q12	q13	q14	q15
N	Valid	137	137	137	137
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.956	3.729	3.489	3.8248
Std. Deviation		.7363	.79060	.8921	.70604
Combined mean		3.75			
Std Deviation		0.56			

Table 4 : Mean and Std Deviation q16-q22 – Information Exchange

		q16	q17	q18	q19	q20	q21	q22
N	Valid	137	137	137	137	137	137	137
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.7883	3.3723	3.6715	3.5109	3.9124	3.9051	3.9708
Std. Deviation		.71157	.85756	.76801	.84989	.72228	.69540	.70650
Combined mean		3.73						
Std Deviation		0.42						

Table 5 : Mean and Std Deviation q23-q26 – Job Search

		q23	q24	q25	q26
N	Valid	137	137	137	137
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.8467	3.613	3.693	3.664
Std. Deviation		.76591	.8510	.80039	.7696
Combined mean		3.70			
Std Deviation		0.59			

5.1.1 Interpretation

Social networking sites offers learning opportunities for students and helps in their skill development. They always rely on people in the network to solve their doubts or queries .It also brings valuable knowledge to students. So learning from peers is the highest perceived benefits that student gets from social networking sites when compared to information exchange and job search.

5.2. Result analysis for Objective 2

Table 6 : Correlation

		Age	Education
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	.318**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	137	137
Education	Pearson Correlation	.318**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	137	137
Learning from peers	Pearson Correlation	.024	.212*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.779	.013
	N	137	137
Information exchange	Pearson Correlation	.011	.121
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.896	.159
	N	137	137
Job search	Pearson Correlation	.035	.230**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.682	.007
	N	137	137

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

5.2.1 Interpretation

As age increases, learning from peers as a benefit of Social networking sites also increases. Information exchange also increases with increase in age. As age increases, job search as a benefit also increases.

As educational level increases, Job search is the perceived benefit that students get from social networking sites. The next benefit is learning from peers and information exchange is the third important benefit.

There is a positive correlation between educational level and job search as a benefit of social networking sites.

5.3. Result analysis for Objective 3

Table 7 One way Anova

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Learning from peers	Between Groups	.052	1	.052	.138	.710
	Within Groups	50.857	135	.377		
	Total	50.909	136			
Information exchange	Between Groups	.252	1	.252	.901	.344
	Within Groups	37.734	135	.280		
	Total	37.985	136			
Job search	Between Groups	.005	1	.005	.012	.914
	Within Groups	54.462	135	.403		
	Total	54.467	136			

5.3.1 Interpretation

There is no significant variation between gender with respect to learning from peers, information exchange and job search as perceived benefits of using social networking sites.

6. Conclusion

Majority of the students use Facebook and Google+ as social networking sites. They visit the sites almost every day. The times spent on browsing these sites are 2hrs.They have 100-200 members in their network. Students browse these sites for various reasons. Some of them use these sites to find friends and to promote their personal brands. However, majority of them use social networking sites to learn from their peers when compared to information and job search. As age increases, the student's use of social networking sites for learning, information exchange and job search also increases. As educational level increases, students are using social networking sites for job search. They also use these sites for learning from peers and information exchange. Gender does not make any significant difference when it comes to learning, information exchange and job search through social networking sites.

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