

Use of Social Networking Sites among Undergraduate Students of Delta State University, Abraka

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Abstract - Social networking sites are regarded as popular social media platforms that have rapidly changed the communication setting of today's social world. Today social networking sites have been accepted by higher institution making it a platform where students connect with their lecturers, fellow students and other higher authorities across the board. This therefore called for the study to investigate the use of social networking sites among undergraduates of Delta State University. The study employed descriptive research design, by asking 300 undergraduates across various faculties of the institution questions on their preferred social networking sites and their purpose of using social networking sites. The 300 undergraduates were selected through the systematic random sampling method from a population of 5, 300 undergraduates of the institution. The findings revealed that the students widely make use of social networking sites; however, the most preferred social networking sites used are Face book, Whats App, Twitter and YouTube. The least used social networking site as indicated by the students is My Space. As regards to the purpose of using social networking sites, the findings indicates that private messaging, photo upload and video sharing were the main purposes for which the students use social networking sites. It is important to state that this study was conducted in a single academic institution; therefore, findings may not be applicable and reasonable to be generalized on all academic institutions. However, students' motivation that will enable students use varieties of social networking sites is highly recommended. In conclusion, students should also be motivated to use social networking sites as platforms for academic discussions such as for assignment and other course related works as well as receive and send academic information among their peers.

Keywords: Social Networking, Undergraduate Students

I. INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites have become very popular among undergraduate students as a means of interpersonal and public communication across the globe. This has been made possible with the help of digital technologies (tablet, smart phone, notebook, etc.) and internet recently (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social networking sites are regarded as modern interactive communication channels through which users connect to one another, share ideas, knowledge, pictures, messages and experiences. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social networking sites enable users to connect to each other by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending e-mails and instant messages between each other. Similarly, Onomo (2012) note that

social networking sites have become a widespread tool for communication and exchange of ideas, helping individuals and organizations with just causes to reach a phenomenally vast audience that could hitherto not be reached by traditional media. Social network sites can be described as:

Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Social networking sites are products of information and communication technology (ICTs) bequeath to the modern society through the instrumentality of the Internet and the telecommunication gadgets. Some are accessed via computer while others can be used with mobile phones. The importance of the internet in social networking sites cannot be over emphasized as social networking sites can only be accessed through the Internet, whether computer or mobile phone-based, it becomes obvious that the penetration of the Internet as well as broadband access will determine how the social media will be used. Also, the Internet makes it possible to expand the networks and to increase the possibilities for communicating with wider audiences on the globe. The interactive aura of the new media confers an unprecedented popularity on them. Also the ubiquity of the social networking sites within their short period of arrival is unparalleled in the annals of media industry. Hence, Awake (2011) noted that social networking sites have become hugely popular. It is worthy to note, however, that one phenomenon behind the development and exponential expansion of the social media is the Web 2.0, which is a second generation Web applications that facilitate participation, information sharing and collaboration on the Web. A Web 2.0 application allows users to interact and collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community.

The inception of social networking sites, to facilitate new forms of computer-mediated social interaction, evolved from early suggestions. Measure and efforts to support social networks via computer-mediated communication were made in many early online services; include unset, bulletin board service like America online, prodigy, and

CompuServe. Early social networking on the World Wide Web began in the form of generalized online communities such as the glob.com (1995), Geocities (1994) and Tripod.com (1995) (wikipedia, 2011). Characteristically, many of these early communities focused on bringing people together to interact with one another through chat rooms and encouraged users to share personal information and ideas via personal web pages by providing easy-to-use publishing tools and free or inexpensive web space.

In recent years, social networking sites usage has increased significantly among students as these networks allow students to communicate in a more economical and effective way. This new channel of communication helps to keep more general topics for discussion. It provides various interactive platforms for students to share knowledge and experiences. Hence, various social networking sites are used by students. However, Face book, Twitter and Instagram, are the most popular ones used by students. Others include MySpace, LinkedIn, Mebo, Flickr, Blogs, Wikis, Youtube Google+, Tumblr, 2go, Skype etc. Students are known to be dedicated users of one or more of these social networking sites, many of whom have been made to use these sites as daily for communication and other activities. Charnigo and Barnett-Ellis (2013) stated that Face book is currently the largest online social network targeted for the academic environment, while Muruli and Kumar (2013) asserts it is the most popular and successful of its kind as it is very user-friendly and interactive website for connection. Social network sites enable students to establish and maintain an academic relationship with one another where issues pertaining to academics can be discuss with the aim of learning and assisting each other. Students also use social networking sites as a medium of making useful connections with their lecturers as well as course mates. Also, Students use social networking sites as a platform for a meaningful and serious academic deliberations as well as sharing links and online learning materials to accomplish educational and social being. Hence, researchers have fast realized the need to incorporate this to the educational faculties, as a resource to support the educational communications between student and faculties.

The use of social networking sites encourage the principles of collective exploration and innovation rather than individualized instruction in our present day educational system. The availability of social media tools encourages students to engage with each other, collaborate and share resources for education purposes. For instance, Face book is found relevant to collective learning. Social media help to create learning communities among students, improve teacher-student interaction in form of web-based communication as well as provide supports for classroom learning (Muñoz & Towner, 2010). A number of Nigerian universities are using social networking sites for learning and communicating with students and graduates as well as marketing to attract potential students. For instance, University of Nigeria, University of Lagos, Federal University of technology, Owerri and many others have an

official Face book account where students regularly find information and feedback on conferences, seminars, events as well as occasional papers.

Since the inception of social networking sites like Face book, twitter, 2go, My Space, Skype, students often use these sites for social and education purposes. The use of Social Networking Sites among students have been recognized as advantageous in terms of enhancing communication, collaboration and the potential for the promotion of and support for learning (Junco, 2011). Thus, Hussain (2012) indicated that social networking sites seemed to have a greater impact in higher education than other levels of education. This is evident in a study on social networking sites usage involving selected students from all the colleges at the University of New Hampshire in the United States of America that showed 96% (1,082) of the surveyed students being regular users of social networking sites especially Face book (Martin, 2009). Also, Research conducted by Blaschke (2014) supports that students could benefit from social networking sites usage throughout their college years. It could also mold them into a better learner as well. In the classroom, tools such as YouTube enhanced learning by connecting students both with external experts and novel educational content. Outside the classroom, Twitter, face book and other applications sustained and augmented learning conversations, enabling real-time dialogue to take place among students. This new way of communication enhances sharing of dynamic experience.

According to Notley and Tacchi (2005), social networking sites help in the school and universities to leverage and complement formal education activities and enhance learning outcomes. In other words, it offers plenty of opportunities for learning and interactivity with their peers and even teachers about class-related subjects. In addition, social networking sites can facilitate learning and skill development outside formal learning environments by supporting peer-to-peer learning of knowledge and skills collaboration and diverse cultural expression. Social networking sites, such as Face book, Google+, LinkedIn, Twitter, Tumblr, have hundreds of millions of daily active users (Fire, Goldschmidt, & Elovici, 2014). With aggregated features found in other Web 2.0 applications such as messaging, blogging, video streaming and social tagging, students are able to connect with each other to share educational resources. Furthermore, social networking sites have been found to be helpful in enhancing libraries' social visibility among students through profiles that showed a uniform identity. For instance, Face book and MySpace allow different users to contribute knowledge and information, maintain a profile together and share resources (Chu & Du, 2012). Social networking sites offer plenty of opportunities for learning and interactivity and it is not too hard to see how students and its users benefits from using social networking sites. Students' self- esteem, personal validation and value are positively affected by the use of social networking sites. Among social networking sites, Face book in particular has been found to increase user's

sense of efficacy and personal belonging. Also, this sense of efficacy and personal belonging has in and of itself been positively correlated with academic performance (Eke, Omekwu & Odoh, 2014). Salas and Alexander (2008) revealed that social networking sites provided students a platform to discuss about class materials and to share academic issues. Social networking sites provide the most benefit in terms of learning when there is integration of social networking users in educational settings and their everyday lives (Kennedy, Judd, Churchward & Bray, 2008). Therefore, it is paramount for educational institutions to integrate social networking sites into their information and communication technologies programmes since social networking sites are part and parcel of the ICTs. This assertion is strongly supported by Famutimi (2013) noting that the present generation is a social media generation, and that as the society transforms into a technologically-savvy one, there is the need to redesign the curriculums of Nigerian schools to embrace social media so that students can be empowered to acquire skills to use technology.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this paper is to examine the use of social networking sites among undergraduates of Delta State University, Abraka. The specific objectives of the study are as follow:

1. To examine the use of social networking sites by the undergraduates
2. To examine the purpose for using social networking sites

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey design. This survey design according to Aina (2004) is the commonest way to gather information by seeking the opinions of individuals, the consensus of which is expected to provide a solution to the problem. The area of study was the Delta State University, Abraka. The population of this study is 5, 300 undergraduates in the institution.

Due to the large population, the study thereby employed the stratified sampling technique breaking the population into five levels based the faculties. Thereafter, the random technique was used to select students across the various departments in each stratum (faculty). Therefore, a sample size of 300 students was used for this study. A structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire covered all the aspects of concern in this study. It was alienated into two sections. The first section was to elicit background information of respondents. While the second section was to elicit information on the objectives of this study. The return rate of questionnaire administer stood at 100%. The descriptive statistical method was used to analyze the data collected. Specifically, frequencies and percentages were used for analyzing data.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

This section deals with the analysis of data collected from respondents. They are presented according to the objectives of the study.

A. Use of Social Networking Sites: Respondents were asked to indicate their use of social networking sites in order of preference. The results are presented in Fig.1.

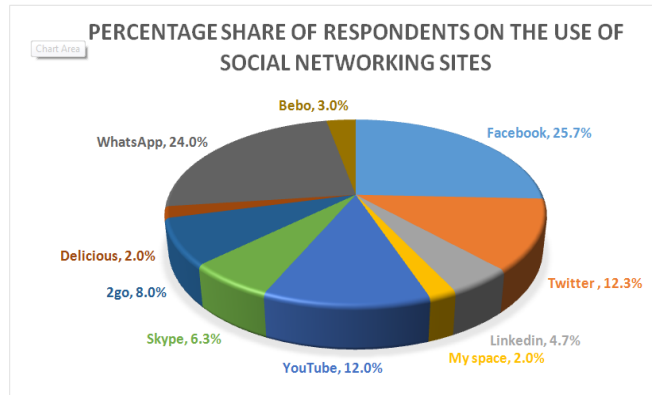


Fig. 1 Use of social networking sites

As represented in fig. 1, there is an indication that the entire respondents make use of social networking sites. However, their preference for the choice of social networking sites varies. Face book recorded the highest with 77 (25.7%) of respondents admitting that they use it. Face book was closely followed by WhatsApp with 72 (24.0%) of respondents indicating their preference for WhatsApp as a social networking site. Respondents’ use of Twitter and YouTube recorded 37 (12.3%) and 36(12.0%) respectively. Respondents also indicated that they make use of 2go with 24 (8.0%) affirmative responses, while 19(6.3%) indicated preference for Skype. LinkedIn and Bebo usage preference got 14 (4.7%) and 9 (3.0%) responses respectively. The least used social networking site as indicated by the respondents is MySpace with 6 (2.0%) responses.

B. Purpose of Using of Social Networking Sites: Respondents were asked to indicate their purpose of using of social networking sites. The results are presented in fig. 2.

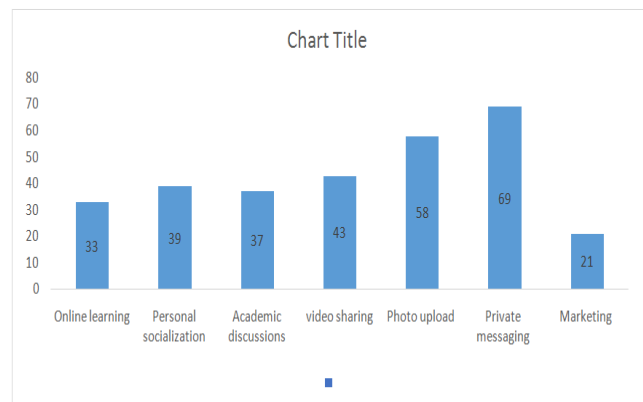


Fig. 2 Purpose of using social networking sites

As regards to the purpose of using social networking sites, 69 (23.0%) respondents affirmed that they use social networking sites for private messaging. Similarly, 58 (19.0%) respondents said that they use social networking sites for photo upload, while 43 (14.3%) respondents said that they use social networking sites for video sharing, this was closely followed by personal socialization with 39 (13.0%) of respondents affirmative responses on its usage. The use of social networking sites for academic discussion recorded 37 (12.3%) affirmative responses, while 33 (11.0%) respondents agreed that they use social networking sites for online learning. The least purpose of using social networking sites as indicated by the respondents is marketing with only 21 (7.0%) affirmative responses.

V. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This paper aims at discussing the use of social networking sites among undergraduates of Delta State University, Abraka. The respondents were requested to respond to survey where data on their preferred social networking sites and the purpose of using social networking sites was collected and analyzed. Data analyzed indicated that the most preferred social networking site used by the undergraduate is Face book. It is also obvious from the findings that students make use of WhatsApp as it closely followed Facebook as the most used social networking site. This finding corroborates Boateng and Amankwaa (2016) noting that social networks such as Face book, We Chat, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn are mostly use by students. The present study also identified Twitter and YouTube as among the top most used social networking sites. This finding is supported by Manzoor, Fayaz, and Gousia (2017) study which noted that prominent social networking sites used by the students are Face book, Google Plus, YouTube and Twitter. The results of the research show that the students use variety of social networking sites. Possibly because social networking sites serve as backchannels for communication among students and between teachers and students within or between classes. For instance, Lecturers can answer students' questions via a Face book page, WhatsApp or Twitter feed as well post assignments and lesson plans, extend in-class discussions, send messages and updates, schedule or announce forthcoming events, and inform learners about fixed classes. This lecturer-student interaction will certainly be enhanced through the use of social networking sites.

The study further indicated that the students use social networking sites for the different purposes. Findings revealed that majority of the students use social networking sites for private messaging. Students sometimes are engaged in private communication using social networking sites. Similarly, the students also indicated that they use social networking sites for photo upload, video sharing as well as personal socialization. Despite that the present study indicated personal socialization as one the purposes for students use of social networking sites, its findings varies

with Manzoor, Fayaz, and Gousia (2017) study that noted that majority of the students use social networking sites to gain knowledge, to be in touch with family and friends; to share information and promote social, religious, political and environmental awareness and few for passing the time. The study revealed that gaining knowledge is the foremost purpose of using social networking sites among the students.

However, the present study revealed that the foremost purpose of the students' use of social networking sites is for private messaging. This is worrisome as the study indicates a shift from students using social networking sites from gaining knowledge which relates to using it for academic purpose to using it for private massaging. The use of social networking sites for academic discussion recorded only 37 (12.3%) affirmative responses in the present study, while 33 (11.0%) respondents indicated that they use social networking sites for online learning. Therefore, students must be encouraged to use social networking sites for academic purposes. In conclusion, students should be motivated to use social media as a platform for academic discussions such as for assignment and other course related works as well as receives and sends academic information's among their peers.

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