

Student`S Approach towards Social Network Sites

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Abstract: *The aim of this study is to determine the usage purposes of social network sites with an attention on the conceivable differences between male and female students. These days, social network sites are the most popular and widely used around the globe. The study group consisted of 100 male and 100 female undergraduate students. analysis of the results showed that mostly the student`s nature and priorities are the same when using social network sites.*

Keywords: *Students, Social networks sites, usage priorities.*

I. Introduction

Social Network sites have now taken place where different people meet with similar interests meet, express opinions and interact. It has been used as a tool and valuable platform for people to connect with each other, (SitiEzaleila Mustafa, AzizahHamzah). Now the technology advancements changed from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0, this is changing and growing very dramatically. According to O'Reilly, Web 2.0 refers to the second generation of web development and is often associated with social media applications. The important feature of this media is the development of software that enabled mass participation in social and collective activities (Mustonen, 2009). Web 2.0 helps the user to overcome the technical obstacles, and making it a user friendly medium. One can easily consume (read, listen, watch, download, search, and buy), create (personalize, aggregate, and contribute), share (publish, upload), facilitate (tag, recommend) and communicate (send messages, post comments, rate, and chat) online. (SitiEzaleila Mustafa, AzizahHamzah). The new media technology evolved to meet the technical requirements for creating an effective online social network, namely (i) bounding: to form an online group meeting, (ii) tracking: the list of community involvement in discussions, (iii) archiving: to maintain records for easy discussion, and (iv) warranting: ensuring the identity of the participants (Feenberg&Bakardjieva, 2003). Cyberspace now became a new playground and online interaction where people can get together and form groups based on their interests with the use of social networking and virtual world sites. Millions are logging in, joining up, and participating. It became more fun, interactive, and "live" with elements of video, audio, and digital animation offered by this new media (SitiEzaleila Mustafa, AzizahHamzah).

Social network sites are applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to profiles, sending e-mails, and instant messages between each other. These personal profiles can include any type of information, such as photos, videos, audio files, and blogs. According to Wikipedia, the largest social network sites are U.S.-based Facebook (initially founded by Mark Zuckerberg to stay in touch with his fellow students from Harvard University) and MySpace (with 1,500 employees and more than 250 million registered users). Social network sites are of such high popularity, specifically among younger Internetusers, that the term "Facebook addict" has been included in the Urban Dictionary, a collaborative project focused on developing a slang dictionary for the English language.

II. Origin And Development

The concept of virtual communities dates back to the early days of computer networks, only some years after the advent of internet, social network has met public and commercial success. Computer network was initially envisioned in the early days as a military-centric command and control scheme. But as it eexpanded, beyond just privileged few hubs and nodes, so too did the idea that connecting computers might also make a great forum for discussing mutual topics of interest, and perhaps, even meeting or renewing acquaintance with other people.

III. Current Background Of Virtual Communities

A. The Initial Era:

In the 1970s, efforts to support social networks via computer-mediated communication (CMC) were made in many online services, including *Usenet, ARPANET, LISTSERV and Bulletin Board Services (BBS)*. These online meeting places were effectively &independently producing hunks of codes that allowed users to communicate with a central system where they could download files or games and post messages to other users. There were also many other avenues for social interaction, with prototypical features of SNS, such as *America Online, Prodigy and CompuServe*. Though the technology of the time restricted the flexibility of these systems, and the end-user`s experience, to text-only exchange of data that crawled along at glacial speed, these services continued to gain popularity throughout the 80`s and the 90`s, when the internet boomed dramatically.

B. Beyond initial era:

The two inventions that boosted up the internet were the creation of hypertext in 1990, a system that links together electronic documents, including texts and graphics, which resulted in the establishment of the *World Wide Web (WWW)*, and the invention of web browsers in 1993. The first phase of web represents the *Web 1.0*, which according to Tim Barners-Lee

could be considered the “read-only” web. Early social networking on the *World Wide Web* was established as generalized online communities such as *TheGlobe.com* (1994), *Geocities* (1994) and *Tripod.com* (1995). Many of these early communities focused on bringing people together. chat rooms were the source of connection among users. These rooms facilitated sharing personal information and ideas via personal web pages by providing easy-to-use publishing tools and free or inexpensive web space. Some communities, *Classmates.com* (1995) ,took a different approach by connecting people via e-mail addresses. *Classmates.com* is a social media website created by Randy Conrad. The site helps members to find, connect and keep in touch with friends and colleagues. Unfortunately, the users could not create profiles or lists of friends until years later.

In the late 1990s, user profiles became a central feature of SNSs, allowing users to compile lists of “friends” and search for other users with mutual interests.

According to the earlier discussed definition, the first recognizable SNS was the *SixDegrees.com* in 1997. *SixDegrees.com* allowed users to create profiles, friend’s lists and explore these lists. *SixDegrees.com* was named after the six degrees of separation concept, i.e.; no person is separated by more than six degrees from the other. The founders worked hard on the concept by encouraging users to bring more people into the field. Sadly, this ultimately became frustrating for many. This website slowly de-evolved into a loose association of computer users. Furthermore, Numerous complaints raised due to spam-filled membership drives.

C. the horrizon:

In the beginning of the 21st century, the technological refinements brought a new version of web, *Web 2.0*, which helped the boom of internet and social networks. Terry Flew, in his 3rd Edition of *New Media*, described the differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0: “...Move from personal website to blogs and blog site aggregation, from publishing to participation, from web content as the outcome of large up-front investment to an ongoing and interactive process, and from content management system to links based on tagging (folksonomy)”. The newer generation of SNS began to blossom with the emergence of the *Friendster* in 2002, which used a degree of separation concept that is similar to *SixDegrees.com*. Just after its launch, *Friendster* has got more than three million registered users and numerous investments. Despite the service’s fair share of technical difficulties, questionable managerial decisions, and the drop in the North American market, it remains a potent force in Asia. *LinkedIn*, which took a more serious and sober approach, was launched in 2003. Rather than being a playground for former classmates and teenagers. *LinkedIn* is an ongoing networking resource for practitioners who want to connect with other professionals. A study revealed that on 11 February 2010, *LinkedIn* had more than 60 million registered users from more than 200 countries. By 2003, there were multiple SNSs. most of them did not drive much attention, especially in United States. For instance, *Xing* was formed for businessmen, while services like *MyChurch*, *Dogster* and *Couchsurfing* were formed for social services. Facebook, the popular SNR was founded in 2004. The website membership was initially limited by the founders to Harvard University students, who peddled their products to other university students, and later in 2006, *Facebook* was lanched to the general public., *Facebook* was a monster with tens of millions of dollars invested. Facebook was expanding to a degree where even Silicon Valley’s bigwigs such as PayPal lagged behind. The secret behind Facebook’s success is its simplicity and its memorable descriptive name. Regardless of what cause made it popular, the general agreement is that *Facebook* promotes honesty and openness, (3). In the following years, many more SNSs launched with advanced features, mainly focusing on entertainment and communication. Some of the important network services were *Orkut* (2004), *YouTube* (re-launched in 2005), *Bebo* (2005), *Twitter* (2006), *Yahoo! 360* (2005), *QQ* (Chinese, re-launched in 2006) and recently, *Google Buzz* (2010). Many of the SNSs target people from specific geographical regions or linguistic groups. although this does not determine the sites’ constituency. *Orkut*, for example, was launched in the US with English-only interface, but portugese speaking Brazilians quickly became the dominant user group (Kopytoff, 2004). *Orkut* is one of the leading SNSs in India.

IV. Why Social Network Sites

V. Methodology and Reports

The research was based on a quantitative method. A set of questionnaires were distributed between students during their class hours. The sample consists of 100 male undergraduate and 100 female undergraduates in King Saud University, Riyadh. Within 10 to 15 minutes they were completed and returned to the researcher. The study was conducted with the help of class teachers. This research shows the interest of the students towards social network sites. SPSS software was used to compile the data and get the results.

Gender		Questions asked
Male (UG Students)	Female (UG Students)	
100 Questionnaires (More than 99% Turnout)	100 Questionnaires (More than 99.5% Turnout)	16

Below a few questions were taken from the questionnaire asked from male and female students:

Q 1: What is the most important thing for you in the social network sites?

Ans: After getting the results it was noticed that the male students used a social networking site mostly for entertaining themselves and the percentage of them was 44.4%.

Secondly the male students showed interest in education and knowledge which is 33.3%. Therefore, we concluded from this research that most of the students are using these sites for friendship and other entertainment purposes.

Q 2: Do you agree that it is a source of advertising?

Ans: Being a researcher we did not notice this before that social network sites can be used as source of advertisement. We have the best example of www.youtube.com and www.facebook.com these days. In (youtube.com) when you open a video, a 10 second commercial is played before your desired video. After 5 seconds you are allowed to skip that advertisement or if you want to watch completely, it's up to you. The feedback of this question whether the students are agreeing that it is a source of advertising, 48% students agreed, while 32% strongly agreed, 17% neither agreed nor disagreed, 2% disagreed and only 1% strongly disagreed. This shows that these sites can be used as an advertising tool in the short future.

Q 3: Can we use these sites to share information and resources with others?

Ans: Social network sites can be used to share information with others, 50% male students agreed with the statement while 41% strongly agreed. 7% neither agreed nor disagreed and 2% disagreed.

Q 4: Can we use these sites for exchange of academic information?

Ans: It's difficult to keep away from social media or social networking sites these days, the students were asked whether these sites can be used as exchange of academic information. 45% male students agreed upon this statement while 18% strongly agreed, 28% neither agreed nor disagreed, 7% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed.

Q 5: Can we use these sites to make changes in our daily lives?

Ans: Human nature needs change in life style with the passage of time; we humans get fed up with old things with the passage of time, as someone anonymously said "life goes in the speed of thought". Therefore, social media and these sites were the need of the time to save more time and be more productive. When asked whether social sites are making changes in daily lives or not. 100% turn out came, 42.4% agreed and 31.3% strongly agreed, 17% neither agreed nor disagreed and 9.1% disagreed.

Therefore, we can say these social sites are making changes in daily lives.

Q 6: Can we use these sites to make professional relations?

Ans: The question was asked from the male students whether we use these sites to make professional relations. 44% turnout agreed 16% strongly agreed and 28% neither agreed nor disagreed, 8% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed.

Q 7: Are these sites wastage of precious time?

Ans: 33% students agreed that it's a time killer and the use of these sites can be a danger. 29.9% neither agreed nor disagreed, 12% were strongly agreed that it's a time killer while 15.5% disagreed and 9.3% strongly disagreed.

Q 8: Are these sites innovative style of traditional gathering?

Ans: With the shortage of time and managing things in a limited time frame, this has now become a basic need to keep oneself updated through social network sites. After the student's turnout to the asked question, 44% of students agreed on the statement that it's an innovative style of traditional gathering. 30.9% neither agreed nor disagreed, 15.5% strongly agreed while 9.3% disagreed with the statement above.

Q 9: Are you comfortable with using these sites?

Ans: This question was asked to know about their peace of mind, whether they are satisfied using these sites or just addicted to these sites. 40.2% agreed with the statement, 34% strongly agreed, 17.5% neither agreed nor disagreed and 7.2% disagreed, in addition to the statement 1% students strongly disagreed.

Q 10: How many hours approximately it took from you daily?

Ans: Addiction will bother again and again to repeat daily activities. They were asked how much time it takes from you daily. A turnout of 27.1% answered 2 hours, 25% were 1 hour, 18.8% were 3 hours, 10.4% were 4 hours, 7.3% were 5 hours and 11.5% were more than 5 hours. This question cleared the student's interest towards social network sites.

Q 11: Which is your favorite social networking site?

Ans: 58.2% students show their interest in twitter, 26.9% were Facebook users, and 14.9% YouTube users.

THE MALESTUDENTS (responses to the asked questions in the form of table)

Male student's model (1st phase of question)

Questions asked from students	Education & knowledge	Professional development	Time passing environment	Friendship / uploading pictures & other entertaining things
What is the most important thing for you in social network sites or social media?	30.3%	10.1%	15.2%	44.4%

2nd Phase of questions

Questions asked from students	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neither Agreed Nor Disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
Social network sites are attractive source of advertising.	32%	48%	17%	2%	1%
Social network sites can be used to share information and resources with others.	41%	50%	7%	2%	0%
Social network sites are used to exchange					

academic information.	18%	45%	28%	7%	2%
Social network sites can be used to follow the changes occurring in our daily lives.	31.3%	42.4%	17.2%	9.1%	0%
Social network sites can be used to make professional relations.	16%	44%	28%	8%	4%
Social network sites are wastage of time.	12.4%	33%	29.9%	15.5%	9.3%
Social network sites are new (innovative) way of traditional gathering.	15.5%	44.3%	30.9%	9.3%	
Social network sites kept my life easy and comfortable.	34%	40.2%	17.5%	7.2%	1%
How many hours daily you are spending on social network sites.	1hr 25%	2hrs 27.1%	3hrs 18.8%	4hrs 10.4%	More than this 11.5%
List your preferred social network sites ranking from most visited to least.	Facebook users 26.9%	Twitter users 58.2%	YouTube 14.9%		

The questions Below demonstrate few important variables that were added.

Q 1: What is the most important thing for you in the social network sites?

Ans: After getting to the result it was noted that the female students were using social networking sites mostly for entertaining themselves and the percentage was 51%. Secondly the female students show interest for education and knowledge which is 39%. Therefore, we concluded from this research that mostly the students are using these sites for taking care of friendship and other entertainment purposes. 7% agreed that it can be used for professional development and 3% agreed a place where we can pass our time.

Q 2: Do you agree it's a source of advertising?

Ans: Being a researcher we did not notice this before that social network sites can be used as a source of advertisement. We have the best example of www.youtube.com and www.facebook.com these days. In (youtube.com) when you open a video a 10 second commercial advertisement is played before your desired video. After 5 seconds you are allowed to skip that advertisement or if you want to watch it's completely up to you. Regarding the asked question their feedback for this question whether the student are agreeing that it is a source of advertising, 37% students agreed, while 46% strongly agreed, 4% neither agreed nor disagreed, 6% turnout disagreed and only 7% strongly disagreed. This shows that these sites can be used as an advertising tool in the short future.

Q 3: Can we use these sites to share information and resources with others?

Ans: Social networking sites can be used to share information with others, 35% female students agreed with the statement while 62% strongly agreed. 3% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Q 4: Can we use these sites for exchange of academic information?

Ans: It's difficult to keep away from social media or social networking sites these days, the students were asked whether these sites can be used as exchange of academic information. 42% male students agreed upon this statement while 32% strongly agreed, 23% neither agreed nor disagreed, 3% disagreed.

Q 5: Can we use these sites to make changes in daily lives?

Ans: Human nature needs change in life style with the passage of time; we humans get fed up with old things with the passage of time, as someone anonymously said "life goes in the speed of thought". Therefore, social media and these sites are the need of the time to save more time and be more productive. When asked whether social sites are making changes in daily lives or not. 100% turnout came, 41% agreed and 54% strongly agreed, 5% neither agreed nor disagreed. Therefore, we can say these social sites are making changes in daily lives.

Q 6: Can we use these sites to make professional relations?

Ans: This question was asked from female students whether we use these sites for making professional relations. 37% turnout agreed, 32% strongly agreed and 28% neither agreed nor disagreed and 2% disagreed.

Q 7: Are these sites wastage of precious time?

Ans: 17.2% students agreed that it's a time killer and the use of these sites can be a danger. 8.1% strongly agreed that it kills time with no profit. 34.3% neither agreed nor disagreed, while 23.2% were disagreeing and 17.2% strongly disagreed.

Q 8: Are these sites an innovative style of traditional gathering?

Ans: With the shortage of time and managing things in a limited time frame, this has now become a basic need to keep oneself updated through social network sites. After the student's turnout to the asked question, 57.6% of students agreed on the statement that it's an innovative style of traditional gathering. 15.2% neither agreed nor disagreed, 25.3% strongly agreed while 2% disagreed with the statement above.

Q 9: Are you comfortable with using these sites?

Ans: This question was asked to know about their peace of mind, whether they are satisfied using these sites or just addicted to these sites. 46.5% agreed with the statement 33.3% strongly agreed, 17.2% neither agreed nor disagreed and 3% disagreed.

Q 10: How many hours approximately it took from you daily?

Ans: Addiction will bother again and again to repeat daily activities. They were asked how much time it takes from you a daily. A turnout of 20.2% were answered 2 hours, 7.1% were 1 hour, 32.3% were 3 hours, 22.2% were 4 hours, 7.1% were 5 hours and 11.1% were more than 5 hours. This question cleared the student's interest towards social network sites.

Q 11: Which is your favorite social networking site?

Ans: 68.5% student's shows their interest using twitter, 19.6% were Facebook users, 7.6% YouTube and 4.3% were linked Inn users.

THE FEMALE STUDENTS (responses to the asked questions in the form of table)

1st phase of questions:

Question asked from students	Education & knowledge	Professional development	Time environment passing	Friendship / uploading pictures & other entertaining things
What is the most important thing for you in social network sites or social media?	39%	7%	3%	51%

2nd Phase of asked questions

Question asked from students	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Disagree	Agree Nor	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Social network sites are attractive source advertising.	46%	37%	4%		6%	7%
Social network sites can be used to share information and resources with others.	62%	35%	3%		0%	0%
Social network sites are used to exchange academic information.	32%	42%	23%		3%	0%
Social network sites can be used to follow the changes occurring in our daily lives.	54%	41%	5%		0%	0%
Social network sites can be used to make professional relations.	32%	37%	28%		3%	0%
Social network sites are wastage of time.	8.1%	17.2%	34.3%		23.2%	17.2%
Social network sites are new (innovative) way of traditional gathering.	25.3%	57.6%	15.2%		2%	0%
Social network sites kept my life easy and comfortable.	33.3%	46.5%	17.2%		3%	0%
How many hours daily you are spending on social network sites.	1hr 7.1%	2hrs 20.2%	3hrs 32.3%		4hrs 22.2%	More than this 11.1%
List your preferred social network sites ranking from most visited to least.	Facebook users 19.6%	Twitter users 68.5%	YouTube users 7.6%		Linked Inn Users 4.3%	

VI. Research Findings

The research aimed to know the interest about male and female student's priorities in using social network sites. Different priorities were noticed after the collection of data. Mostly their priorities, point of view and interest were the same. Minimal differences were noted..opinions varied between male's and female's perceptions in terms of advertisements in such SNRS.46% females strongly agreed while 32% male students strongly agreed. This could be attributed to the lack of interest among male students in online sales and promotions. female students in the other hand, showed their interests. that means female students are of the opinion that this is the best source for the companies to advertise their products on these sites, it might be that female students prefer online shopping and advertising because of social bounds. Similarly, one question asked how much time you are spending on these social sites, the highest ratio is 3 hours and 32.3% responders were female students while 18.8% male students are using 3hours per day. The most important thing which was founded in this study the use of preferred social site, according to this research twitter is the most used social site 68.5% female students are using twitter and 58.2% male students are using twitter. 33% of male students agreed that it's a killer of time while only

17.2% female students agreed to the above statement. Short time and work load are a hurdle in managing things, the ideal place to maintain social relations with friends, family members and others. Furthermore, 57.6% male students agreed that it's an innovative way of traditional gathering while 44.3% female students agreed with the above statement.

VII. Impact of Social Networking

Positive Impact (As per local survey report)

The main positive impact is that students are becoming familiar with multi-cultural systems. They are interacting with others. They are gaining knowledge by just one click and the world is in their access. They are familiar with the social network sites and are free to share their daily life updates with others (class mates, colleagues whoever). There is no time frame defined for doing such activities. According to student`s survey report they are sharing informative material with each other. 62% female students strongly agreed that this source can be used to share information and resources with others.

Negative Impact On Students (As per local survey report)

As far as this report findings, the authors are convinced that there are positive and negative impacts on student's life. From their responses in the questionnaires, this shows that students are using social network sites for 3 hours on average on daily base, and sometimes more than that especially on the weekends and other holidays. This will have a negative impact on their health. since they will be hooked up for long number of hours without physical exertion. The second serious issue is their eyes. The rays coming from the computer screen directly affects their eyes.

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