Chapter 49
M-Learning:
Exploring the Use of Mobile Devices and Social Media

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ABSTRACT

From the perspective of improving e-learning, the free access and user friendliness of User Generated Content (UGC) tools, such as social media, embedded onto mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, make them attractive to be adopted by students and professors in many institutions around the world. This chapter presents the results of an exploratory study on the use of smart phones and social media, identifying differences among countries, focusing on the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa). The objective is to facilitate the understanding of the rapidly evolving and expanding technology of smart phones and social media and explore its potential for m-learning purposes. Results show that social media and mobile devices can be effectively combined in a promising way to enable m-learning.

INTRODUCTION

E-learning can be an efficient educational approach for anyone, anywhere, any time. It enhances the speed of training people, drastically reducing costs for educational institutions and businesses facing an increasing need to train people rapidly. This is possible thanks to a relevant use of Internet technologies such as User Generated Content (UGC) tools, applications, websites, widgets and social media. At the same time recent figures show an impressive growth of mobile devices use worldwide: cell phone adoption is widespread especially in young population, with 75% of teenagers and 93% of adults aged 18-29 having a cell phone and with 55% of the latter group accessing the Internet wirelessly from their cell phone (Lenhart *et al.*, 2010).

A recent study by Time Magazine (2012), which surveyed 5,000 respondents of all age groups and income levels from eight countries, shows that one in four checks their mobile device every 30 minutes and one in five check it every 10 minutes. In addition, one third of the respondents admitted feeling anxious when being without their mobile phones for even short periods, two thirds of the respondents would answer their phone over their lunch if forced to choose, and finally, three quarters of 25-to-29-year-olds sleep together with their phones. The evolution of mobile communications has triggered an increase in the use of mobile devices, such as smartphones, for mobile commerce on the mobile Web (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000), but has not been yet adopted for m-learning. In parallel, the growth of social media remains a global cultural phenomenon. Nearly three-quarters of Internet users aged 18-29 and 39% of those being thirty years old or older use social networking websites, with 45% doing so on a typical day (ComScore, 2012). The growing use of mobile devices and the multiplication of tools to communicate and disseminate knowledge, as well as the proliferation of e-learning platforms pose the question of the relevance to use such devices for learning in a different, possibly more comfortable or faster manner.

E-learning as well as knowledge management systems, grow, in various organizations, such as companies, universities, or business schools. In fact, nowadays student learning is changing, and universities are confronted with e-learning 2.0 which is based on Web 2.0 (Mhiri Sellami, 2013). At a time when the online, social and mobile environment continue their explosive growth, e-learning is entering a period of rapid change with the emerging acquisition of student's power through social media, especially through websites whose contents are generated by users such as Facebook or Twitter. The rise of social media as a source of information in learning represents both an opportunity and a threat to e-learning. In the perspective of managing the Intellectual Capital

(IC), the user friendliness of UGC tools may make them preferable over the Information Systems platforms offered in the majority of organizations, especially in the e-learning area where students and learners in general have to spend a considerable amount of time reading, memorizing, answering questions as well as watching videos or listening to podcasts. On the other hand, the emergence of social media can complicate the relationship between educators and their students, and intensifies the competition among schools, colleges or universities. It is a vulnerability of social media that their open forum nature allows anyone who wishes to vent about a bad experience in a very public way. The main limitation of social media lies in this mode of operation open to all. This leaves room for any form of expression, little or no ethics sometimes, perpetuated by a student and his colleagues. Deceptive reviews cannot be restricted, they are a fact of life, but they can be managed. This new competition challenges the veracity of the information transmitted on social media, and where this chapter tries to question its use for m-learning purposes:

1. **Problem Statement:** To our knowledge, few studies have been conducted with a view of examining how students react, work, and progress in m-learning to attain better scores with the use of social media.
2. **Objective:** The objective of this chapter is to explore the potential of using social media and mobile devices for m-learning purposes.
3. **Scope:** It particularly aims at presenting an exploratory study in order to identify differences among countries, focusing on the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa), extending from Morocco to Iran, including the majority of both the Middle Eastern and Maghreb countries, and the rest of the world[1]. At its greatest extent, its population is roughly 523 million.
4. **Importance:** Taking the large population of the MENA region into account, there

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