

Chapter 15

Exploring the Use of Social Media as Tools for Information Sharing Among Undergraduates of University of Ilorin

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of social media in the 21st century has revolutionized social interaction among individuals and groups beyond physical and geographical boundary. Social media tools such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, MySpace, Skype, Messengers, etc. have affected our traditional face-to-face interaction. It has facilitated extensive communication and sharing of knowledge in the society in general and schools in particular. In the academic field, social media serves as a powerful tool for communication. This chapter, therefore, explores the use of social media for sharing information among undergraduate students.

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of digital technology that brought about Social media has influenced the pattern of communication and interaction among individuals and groups in the present modern society. The traditional face-to-face interaction is gradually giving way to internet driven virtual discussion via various social media such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, MySpace, Skype, Messengers, etc. Social media has affected every facet of human society. It has changed how people, including university students, communicate, interact, and socialize over the course of their learning processes at educational institutions (Terzi, Bulut, & Kaya, 2019).

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The use of social media is not restricted to the working people but also there is a heavy increase in the use of social media by the students or education society (Raut and Patil, 2016). Its application has facilitated sharing of information; self-learning; teamwork; communication, both between students and between student-lecturer. University students now find it very easy to express their thoughts, ideas, and beliefs through various social media.

The concept of social media was coined officially by Tim O'Reilly and Dale Dougherty. Social media is a place where everyone can add or edit information. Over a decade, there has been an increasing interest in the new generation of web-based technologies, tools, and services offered by social media. This Social media, popularly known as Web 2.0 is becoming a central topic in our information world. Several authors have defined social media as a revolutionary arm of the web that enhances communication, collaboration, community building, participation, and sharing of information in an open social environment (Junco, Heiberger & Loken, 2011; Abdulsalam & Azizah, 2013).

Social media applications are commonly used by millions of people across the globe for different reasons (Al-rahmi et al., 2014). It is common in the present era to see people especially the students hooked on to different social media for keeping in touch with their peers. As noted by Adetimirin and John (2016:16) "social media has revolutionized undergraduates' communications as students hold brainstorming sessions, manage projects, share best practices and disseminate information without face to face encounters". One most important benefit of the advent of social media is the online sharing of knowledge and information among the different groups of people. This online sharing of information also promotes the increase in the communication skills among the people especially among the learners/students of educational institutions.

The proponents of social media argue that contemporary students have become habituated to a world where social media is the norm; and have become an integral part of student social life. It has become an essential tool for students to interact and relate with their peers. Social media enriches the learning experience by allowing students and instructors to exchange ideas, foster collaboration and discussion, and engage and interact using such emerging social platforms (Lederer, 2012).

Social media tools are now seen as learning platforms or communities that could be utilized to enhance students engagement and performance. They are playing a vital role in content sharing among universities students (Hossain, Jahan, Fang, & Hoque, 2019). The fundamental advantage of using social media is the building of interpersonal relations through the creation of new connections (Abbas, Aman, Nurunnabi, & Bano, 2019).

The benefits of social media application in the education system cannot be overemphasized; however, much as the social media has contributed positively to the communication pattern of human society, especially among the students in institutions of learning, there are flip sides to the use of social media tools. Sometimes, such tools are misused by people which leads to interference into one's privacy. Such situations can lead to dangerous proportions keeping in view the ethical aspect of the use of such media. Eke, Omekwu and Odoh (2014) described some dangers associated with social networking sites such as E-crime, Internet addiction, laziness, a standard crime like fraud, murder, kidnapping; immoral act like pornography, prostitution, and cyber-bullying.

In spite of the tendencies for social media to be used for negative purposes, its adoption and usage continue to increase especially among students, because it enables users to communicate with each other, to create, revise and share new forms of textual, visual and audio content (Raut & Patil, 2016). It has been pointed out that it is no longer a waste of time for students to browse the internet or to use social

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