

Chapter 12

Social Media Usage among University Students in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Social media are playing an increasing role in today's living. The social media platforms allow users to search, create, share, collaborate, and organise contents among them, and at the same time provide virtual self-presentation and self-disclosure of oneself. Social media were also claimed to give implications to human beings with regards to personality, yet these variables have not much been emphasised in previous studies. Thus, it is important to highlight the implications of social media on users' personality. Given the issues and challenges faced by the country in profiling the adoption of social media and its implications in view of the perspective of personality, it is timely and significantly important to undertake this research in Malaysia. The objective of this chapter is to discuss a research conducted recently to determine the relationships between social media and personality traits. The specific objectives of this study are to identify the profile of social media adoption among students in Malaysia, including duration, frequency of use, purpose, and person/s that introduced the social media, and to determine the relationships between social media and personality traits.

INTRODUCTION

The study in this chapter employed a cross-sectional survey using self-administered questionnaire which was distributed among university students who use social media via wired and mobile

devices. The data was collected for the duration of one month with the total respondents of 405. Results show that the purposes of using social media can be associated with the students' learning needs such as for searching for information, communicating with friends/families, keeping in

touch with friends/families, entertainment, and completing the assignment task. The research also identified the relationships between frequency of use of various social media applications and the Big 5 personality traits. The findings of this research can be used by university lecturers to utilize the social media applications for teaching and learning purposes, as well as the social media providers to enhance the applications for the use by students.

What is Social Media (SM)? What is so interesting about it that makes people 'addicted' to it? How and why do people use it? Is there any implication of SM to the Malaysian society? These are among questions that arise with the emergence of new Internet applications called Social Media. Social media are playing an increasing role in today's living. It is such a common scenario today to see people browsing and surfing social networking sites, reading blogs or chatting by using laptops, mobile phones or other sophisticated devices anywhere and at anytime. Some people are even addicted to certain applications, such as online games. Undoubtedly, social media is one of the fastest growing segments on the web (Parra-López, Bulchand-Gidumal, Gutiérrez-Taño & Díaz-Armas, 2010). Among the most popular applications of social media are weblogs or blogs (i.e. Blogger and WordPress), social networking sites (i.e. Facebook, Twitter and MySpace), photos and videos (i.e. Flickr and YouTube), online encyclopaedia (i.e. Wikipedia), online bookmarking (i.e. Delicious), virtual social worlds (i.e. Second Life) and virtual game worlds (i.e. World of Craft). These social media platforms allow users to search, create, share, collaborate and organise contents among them while at the same time provide virtual self-presentation and self-disclosure of oneself.

A report by Gartner Inc. (21st October 2010) stated that the Asia Pacific social media market is highly diverse and in many places evolving rapidly. The growth of social networking in China, Japan

and South Korea for instance, has been driven by strong consumer interest in online games, while India's social networking market has been spurred by demand for online dating and matchmaking sites. It is reported that more than 770 million people worldwide visited a social networking site in July 2009 (Nguyen, 2010). This figure increased 18 percent from the previous year. According to Gartner Inc. Report (13th January 2010), by the year 2012, Facebook will become the hub for social network integration and web socialisation. The report also predicted that Facebook will support and take a leading role in developing the distributed, interoperable social Web. Facebook claimed that its users are now reaching 500 million active users (Facebook, 2010). What is more interesting is that, if Facebook was a country, it could be the third largest in the world after China and India (Nguyen, 2010).

In Malaysia, the adoption of ICT and SM in particular has shown a significant growth in the last few years. Internet users in Malaysia alone comprised of 16 million in the first quarter of 2009, while the number of cellular subscriptions in the third quarter of the same year has reached 29.6 million (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commissions, 2010). 80% of affluent Malaysians (those with a household income above RM5,000 a month) use social networking sites; nine of the top 20 websites in Malaysia are social networking sites, and the top six sites are Yahoo!, Facebook, Google.com.my, YouTube, Google.com, and Blogger (Gibson, 2009). These show evidence that the demand for social media in Malaysia is growing. There are several social media established in Malaysia recently (i.e. youkawan.com, myfriends2u.com and roomz.com) but the adoption is still low (record shows that the registered users for youkawan is only 801 members as at 23 November 2010) as compared to the use of Facebook, Friendster and Twitter which recorded 7.5 million users from Malaysia alone (Shawkath Azde, 12 November 2010).

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