

Facebook Usage Habits of Diploma Students in the Classroom: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Facebook has been widely accepted in recent years as a medium for teaching and learning to replace the traditional classroom approach. There are a few Facebook tools that have been identified by previous researchers that simplify the process of distributing information including tools for the purpose of photos and video sharing, creating groups, creating documents, and so on. The aim of this study is to investigate the Facebook usage habit of 45 diploma students in Universiti Teknologi Mara, Pahang who had registered for the MGT 315 Creative and Critical Thinking course as a case study. This study reports on the actual practice of Facebook use in the classroom and attempts to answer the following questions; (1) what are the Facebook usage habit of the students? (2) What are the most preferred Facebook tools used by the students? This study employs descriptive statistical methods such as percentages and mean scores in order to understand the students' habit in using Facebook for academic purposes. The findings of this research explain the Facebook usage habit among the students in the particular course.

Keywords: Facebook, undergraduate student, classroom

Introduction

Facebook is known to be an educational tool to develop student-lecturer connection and several researches have shown that there are benefits of Facebook usage in the classroom. Based on previous studies, the usage of Facebook in the classroom was found to help students improve their performance in English language class (Kabilan et al, 2010), retrieve information (Din et al., 2012), develop their skills in writing business plan (Chang and Lee, 2012), as well as help the lecturer in teaching a statistics course (Everson et al., 2013). The 24-hour accessibility to Facebook allows for longer learning process compared to traditional classroom. Students can access information everywhere; get connected with lecturers and peers for longer time, and reduce the gap of communication between both parties. Using Facebook can improve the lecturer's efficiency in managing the classroom and various tools offered by the Facebook such as sharing photos and videos, commenting, liking, writing notes, uploading document, and putting up private messages could encourage enjoyment and creativity in the learning process.

This paper aims to investigate the students' habit in using the Facebook in academic related activities and their preferred Facebook tools. This paper will record findings related to the practice of utilising Facebook in a real Creative and Critical Thinking course. In addition to that, this paper will answer two questions as follows; (1) what are the Facebook activities that relate to the students' learning process? and (2) what are the most preferred Facebook tools used by the students?

Literature Review

With the popularity of social networking sites among youths today, many researchers have studied how this phenomenon has impacted youths not only as a socialising tool but also for educational purposes. As Facebook is considered the most popular social networking site among youths nowadays, a lot of studies attempt to investigate the use of the Facebook as a tool among higher education students. Duncan and Barczyk (2013) studied on how the Facebook affected the students' sense of community. Many students considered the use of Facebook in the classroom as beneficial. This is because the Facebook increased their ability to connect with other learners. Lam (2012), in his research had studied the factors that influenced how much students learn when they used Facebook as their learning platform. He found that the Facebook had

increased students' engagement in the learning process and that among others, the factor of interaction between teacher and students and level of engagement was found to be positively correlated. Being a tool primarily meant for social interaction, the Facebook provided an avenue for the lecturer to communicate with the students. Li and Pitts (2009) studied the virtual interaction between students and their lecturers and found that satisfaction was greater for students when actual meeting hours were complemented with virtual meetings. Some researchers experimented using the Facebook in a creative way. For example, Cain and Policastri (2011) in their management class invited experts from the field to submit posts on the Facebook page so that students could interact with these experts. This provided a chance for the students to gain exposure about real-life issues. Subsequent feedback and assessment of this activity demonstrated a positive response from the students. Buus (2013), however, cautioned that in utilizing the Facebook, some students felt that the teacher needed to guide the learning process as the expert and not just facilitate discussion among students. On the other hand, not all learners and faculty members accepted the use of Facebook as a tool for academic interaction. Some previous studies also raised several issues such as privacy and security as being some concerns in the use of the Facebook (Lam, 2012).

The Case Study: Facebook Group for Creative and Critical Thinking Subject

A group of 45 students who had registered MGT 315; Creative and Critical Thinking course for semester December 2012 / April 2013 were selected as respondents. This course was designed to meet the Outcome Based Education (OBE) standard as implemented in the whole of the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) system. It was offered to diploma students under the Business Management faculty. MGT315 had 3 credit hours and 100% marks were based on continuous assessments. This group of students were required to join a Facebook group named UiTM Pahang (MGT315) specifically created for the subject. The group was created to fulfil the syllabus requirement to encourage the use of technology in implementing the course. In order to encourage the students to use Facebook in this class, the lecturer had to manipulate a few Facebook applications. Table 1 summarizes the Facebook applications and activities in the classrooms as practiced in this particular course. The students were required to update their progress on projects like posting photos of assignment activities, as well as share information and upload files like work sheets and post their video assignments. Figure 1 shows examples of posts made by the lecturer while Figure 2 shows examples of posts made by the students.

Table 1: The Facebook applications and activities in the classroom

<i>Facebook application</i>	<i>Activities</i>
Status	Post announcements (e.g. reminder of deadline) Share links (e.g. share links of additional reading materials, YouTube, blog, SlideShare, etc.)
Tagging	Tag students in announcement Tag photos or posters and videos
File / note	Write note (e.g. assignment guideline) Upload file (e.g. assignment rubric, work sheet)
Photo album	Upload / Share photos of class event Upload poster of announcement Upload photos of project progress
Comment box	Comment on post Reply on query
Like	Hit like button (e.g. acknowledge students' work, thanking)
Personal message	Ask personal question
Create event	Call and reminder of class event

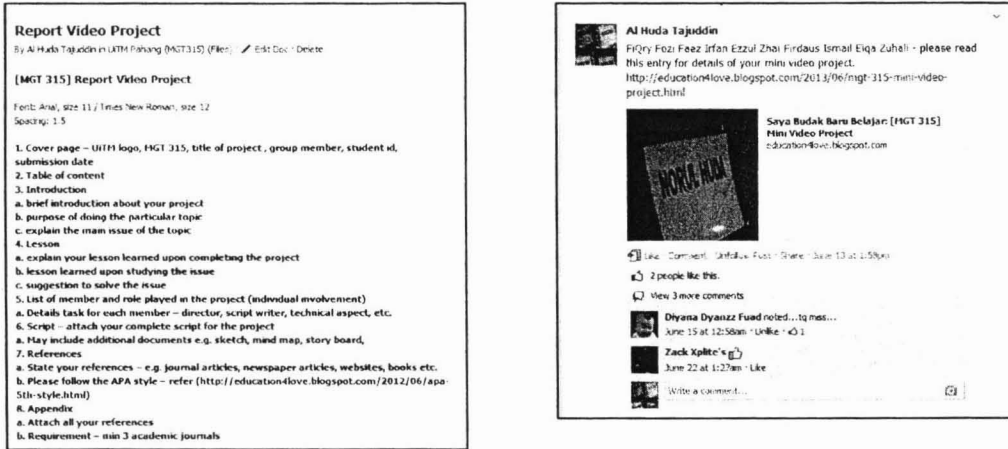


Figure 1. Posts put up by lecturer

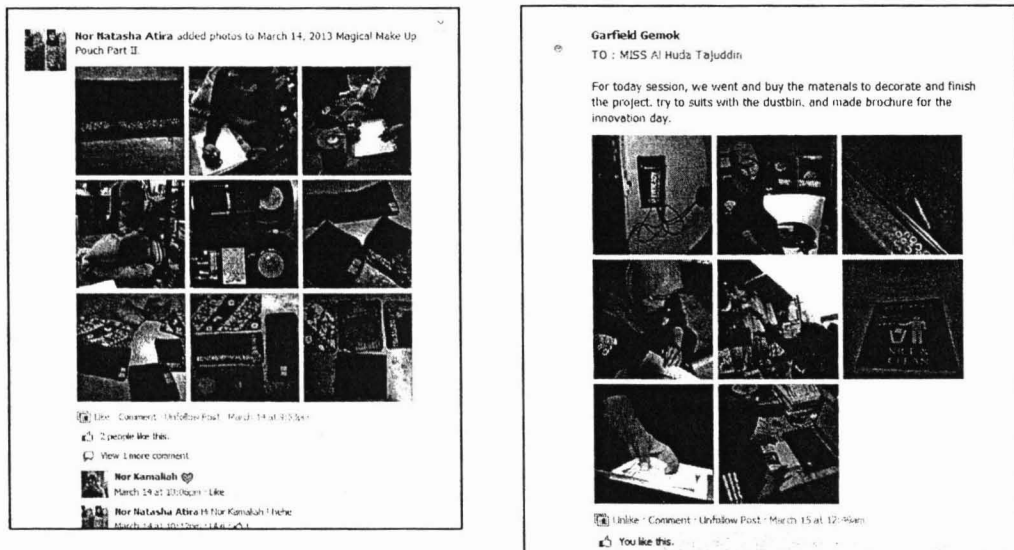


Figure 2. Posts put up by students

Research Methodology

This study is conducted purportedly to obtain some knowledge regarding the Facebook usage habits among students in the classroom. The main instrument of this study is a set of questionnaire adapted from the study done by Bicen and Cavus (2011). Some modifications were made to the items in the questionnaire in order to suit the context of UiTM Pahang students. The respondents were students who had had some experience in using Facebook in the class as a learning medium consisting of 45 students in total. The questionnaire contains four components which were divided into two sections namely, Part A which addressed demographic information, and Part B which touched on the educational aspect of Facebook and favourite Facebook tools. The five-point Likert scale measuring the degree of agreements ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” was used for items related to the educational aspect of the Facebook. Meanwhile, the items that relate to the respondents’ favourite Facebook tools were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 0 representing “Never” to 4 representing “Always”.

All the respondents returned the completed questionnaires thus accounting for zero missing value for the total respondents. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20. The data analyses were carried out to answer the research questions as stated previously. This study uses descriptive statistics in presenting the data which measures the frequency, mean value and percent.

Findings and discussion

Demographic profile

Table 2 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. A total of 45 students who enrolled in the MGT 315 course for the December 2012 till April 2013 semester were selected as respondents. 68.9 per cent of them were female and 84.4 per cent of them were aged between 20 to 21 years old.

Table 2: Demographic results

<i>Demographic categories</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender		
Male	31	31.1
Female	69	68.9
Age		
20 – 21	38	84.4
22 – 23	7	15.6

The frequency of times logging in to Facebook per day is shown in Figure 3. The pie chart indicates that 38 per cent of the students logged in between 2 to 3 times per day. Surprisingly, there were 16 percent of the students who lost count of how many times they logged in per day. Figure 2 shows total hours spent by the students on Facebook. It was discovered that 33 per cent of the students spent between 10 to 30 minutes on Facebook. Sixty per cent of the students used smart phone as a device to access Facebook. While, 36 per cent used their own personal computers, and 4 per cent used others’ personal computers (see Figure 5).

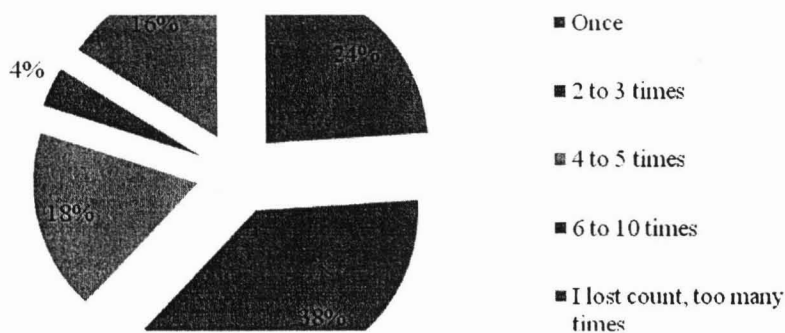


Figure 3: Time login to Facebook per day

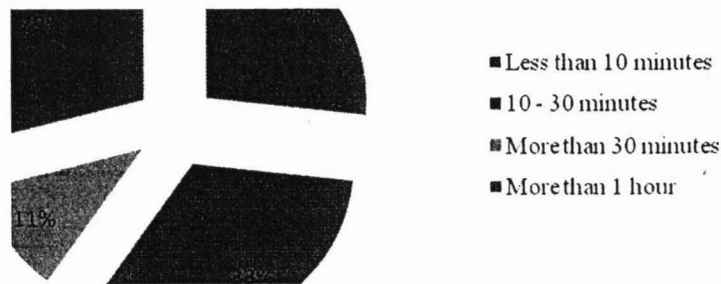


Figure 4: Hours spent on Facebook

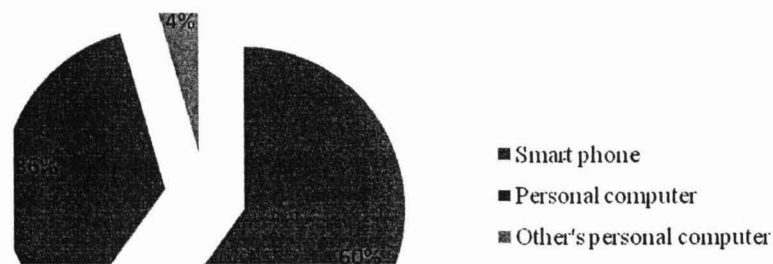


Figure 5: Access device to Facebook

Activities on Facebook that relate to learning process

Table 3 shows some activities on Facebook undertaken by the students that relate to the learning process representing data which answer the first research question. There were seven items stated in order to measure the activity level of the students when they used Facebook.

The mean value of item 1 which is 3.13 shows the lowest mean value compared to the mean value of other items. This might be due to the fact that 20 per cent of the respondents disagreed with the statement that Facebook represents much more natural learning environment than provided by the school or university. The mean value for item 2 is 3.56 indicates that many of the respondents used Facebook to search or discover new things. More than half of the respondents agreed that they had a personal account for friends and family and another one for the educational activities with the mean value of 3.58. It is the third highest of the mean scores. This is supported by the fact that 55.6 per cent of the respondents agreed with item 3. This same percentage also made up the value for item 7. For item 4, 46.7 percent agreed that they felt a sense of belonging to a community or group when they were on Facebook while 35.6 per cent chose neutral for this statement with a mean of 3.42.

Meanwhile, the results for both items 5 and 6 indicate 51.1 percent respondents agreeing that they would share or recommend their activities or interest on Facebook while 33.3 per cent took a neutral stand. However, the mean value for item 5 is 3.42, which shows that most of the respondents would share or recommend their activities or interest on the Facebook. Most of the respondents also agreed that Facebook groups were useful for educational purposes with a mean of 3.62. It recorded the second highest mean score indicating a good sign for the implementation of Facebook use in this class. Item 7 recorded the highest mean value of 3.73 which indicates that most of the respondents used the Facebook to follow the pages of some universities or organizations.

Table 3: Facebook activities that relate to students' learning process

Statements	Frequency value					Mean
	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	
1. Facebook represents a much more natural learning environment than that provided by school/university	2.2	20.0	46.7	24.4	6.7	3.13
2. I use Facebook to search or discover new things.	0.0	6.7	42.2	40.0	11.1	3.56
3. I prefer to have a personal account for friends and family and another one for educational activities.	2.2	11.1	22.2	55.6	8.9	3.58
4. I feel I belong to a community or group on Facebook	0.0	13.3	35.6	46.7	4.4	3.42
5. I share or recommend on Facebook (What I need, what video clip I watch etc.)	0.0	13.3	33.3	51.1	2.2	3.42
6. Facebook groups are useful for education	0.0	6.7	33.3	51.1	8.9	3.62
7. I follow the Facebook pages of some universities or organizations (non-governmental, student associations for example; academic clubs, volunteerism project, child protection etc.)	0.0	4.4	28.9	55.6	11.1	3.73

The most preferable Facebook tools in the learning process

The bar graph below indicates the favourite Facebook tools used by the respondents consisting of a total of 18 Facebook tools. This data were used mainly to answer the second research question which aims to determine what are the most preferred Facebook tools used by the students. In order to measure the favourite Facebook tools used by respondents, the Likert scale was used in which 0 represented "Never", 1 for "Rarely", 2 for "Sometimes", 3 for "Usually", and 4 for "Always". As shown in the graph, the highest mean value was presented for 'liking' tools with 2.91, followed by viewing photo with a mean of 2.73 which indicates that majority of the respondents liked to view photos in their Facebook account and click like if they were interested. A previous study by Bicen and Cavus (2011), found that messages, chat, friends, links, news and photos were the most preferred tools used on Facebook.

The least used tool by the respondents was tagging videos which recorded a mean of 1.38. This indicates that most of the respondents were less likely to share videos on Facebook. This finding is in contrast with a

study by Bicen and Cavus (2011) which showed that events, pages and notes were the least preferred Facebook tools used by the students. Meanwhile, tools for posting videos and creating event stated the same mean value of 1.53 each which were also the less preferred tools used by the respondents. The other tools that were not widely used by the respondents were the tools for response to poll and saving links which recorded 1.62 and 1.69 respectively while adding groups reported the mean value of 1.80 and tagging photos reporting the mean of 1.96. The Facebook tools that recorded average means included tools for adding friends which reported a mean of 2.11, playing games with 2.13, status updates with 2.20, posting photos with 2.27 and viewing videos with a mean of 2.42. Other than that, there were also the tools that were commonly used by the respondents when streaming online and logging in to their Facebook accounts. These tools were chatting (2.58), private messaging (2.60), commenting (2.62) and checking up on friends (2.64).

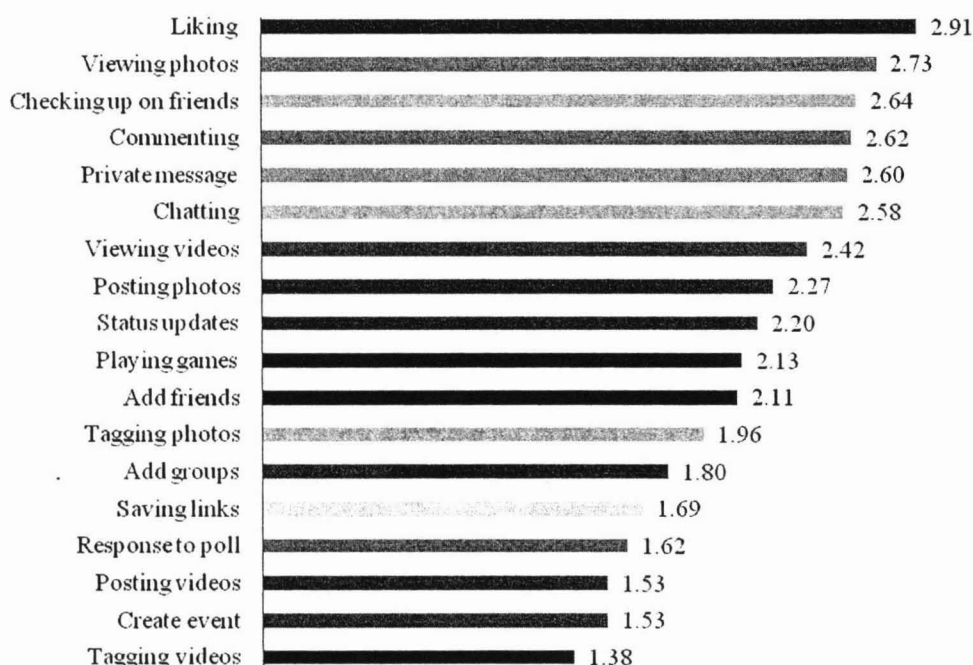


Figure 6: Distribution of the most preferred Facebook tools of students

Conclusion

This study is based on an actual practice of using the Facebook as a teaching tool in the MGT315 course. In this particular course, the students experienced using the Facebook to complete their assignments as required by the lecturer. The result of this study is not meant to be generalized to other cases of using the Facebook in the classroom. It is just a record of the pattern of usage of Facebook among students in this particular class. However, this study indicates reasonable statistics on students' usage habits of the Facebook where they do spend considerable time on such social network sites. Thus, the lecturers should harness this propensity and channel it towards their students' academic enhancement. As noted by Tucker and Courts (2010), "as the technology age becomes more prevalent in educational institutions, it is time to approach teaching and learning from a technological point of view." Some might not find it comfortable at first but they must make an effort since in the world we live in today, technological advancement is so wide-spread and far-reaching that those who do not embrace it will be left far behind. It would also be most unfortunate if the lecturers themselves do not utilise this popular tool in their teaching process as students are already spending long hours on it.

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