

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A PERSUASIVE UBIQUITOUS LEARNING TOOL FOR SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT TOWARDS SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

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Received: 7 August 2020

Revised from: 23 September 2020

Accepted: 23 October 2020

Published: 31 October 2020

ABSTRACT

Social media has infiltrated the 21st-century generations of Internet users, making it a very prominent means of communications dissemination, particularly among students at a higher level of education. As technology will continue to evolve the role humans play in the near future, everyone will be required to adapt their skills throughout their daily and working lives. Therefore, individuals especially younger generations will need to act and engage in lifelong learning, so they are adaptable when the changes happen. Nowadays, the learning process is not only confined to the walls of the classrooms, instead, students are also able to access knowledge at any time and place that they are comfortable with to clear their doubts. Social media has also brought forth the concept of ubiquitous learning, which means that students can explore and request a related topic of interest from experts from all around the world. While this social engagement brings many benefits to the students particularly towards improving their self-esteem and enhance their learning philosophy. However, the question of can their social media engagement behaviours affect their social sustainability is still in debate. Hence, this research will explore the role of social media as a persuasive ubiquitous learning platform to enhance individual social sustainability. The research focuses on a particular field such as in education and society and will also relate the gratification factors on how social media like LinkedIn and Twitter will broadly affect students and societies. Questionnaires will be distributed through LinkedIn, to find out whether student is impacted by social media for social sustainability or not. This paper demonstrates the ideas of social media and other aspects like the importance of social media in social engagement for social sustainability. It also presents an outline on social media LinkedIn as a tool. It helps organizations to understand why students use social media and what gratifications they receive from social media for social sustainability.

Keyword: Social media, learning tool, social engagement, social sustainability, social empowerment, quality of life

INTRODUCTION

The use of social media among youths is growing exponentially and gaining more and more popularity among students. Many students get addicted to the use of social media sites as they continue to engage in one activity or another on social media sites very often. The use of social media has become eminent especially among the youth. The possible impacts of the use of social media on student learning need to be studied as it may help understand how to best use the technology for academic purposes. Most higher learning institutions rely on social media to reach large audiences to persuade and encourage actions as well as disseminating

information without knowing how to use it effectively. Very few have used social media for building community and engage with societies.

Social media platforms and applications offer huge benefits for as well as risks to university students and their effect on students' psychological adjustment, learning behaviours or their social engagements. Nowadays, social engagement has become a basic requirement for students to get an update on important news on what is happening around them, to gain more information for their learning materials, building confidence level as well as to improve their communication skills. However, students who are not actively engaged in social media as part of their learning experience are more likely to emerge as graduates who are lacked with the cross-cultural skills and perspectives, knowledge, as well as experience which make negative contributions to social sustainable development throughout their lives.

Although engagement is important, keeping students focused is becoming more of a challenge than ever before. In the modern age, distractions are becoming more common. Social and digital media are succeeding in distracting students from their learning objectives, which leads to further disengagement in their studies. Arnold and Paulus found that even when social media is used for an educational purpose, students incorporate the technology into their lives in a way that may differ from the intentions of the course instructor (Arnold & Paulus, 2010). For example, off-topic or non-academic discussions occur on social media because of its primary design as a social networking tool. Another issue is that students who spend more time on social media may have difficulty balancing their online activities and their academic preparation (McDonough, Hua, & Tarantino, 2013). Hence, the social connections with peers or virtual group that the students developed via social media may influence their daily lives.

Social engagement is also associated with improved individual happiness, health and general well-being which is also referred to as social sustainability. To develop social sustainability, people will get engaged with the information shared via social media, use the benefits of their lives, and share the benefits to society. For instance, on LinkedIn and Twitter, the student can meet professional people, they are persuaded to join groups to discuss and change ideas to satisfy their needs and get motivated with social networks. However, concerns arise when students are persuaded to use social media for unbeneficial activities such as sharing on political disinformation which can ruin their social reputations and motivation in lifelong learning.

Therefore, social engagement might influence individual's social sustainability such as individual's human rights, living conditions, health, safety, wellness, diversity, equity, work-life balance, empowerment, community engagement, philanthropy, volunteerism, and many more. This paper argues that (Diraditsile & Samakabadi, 2018). Online engagement is more affordable as students can earn as they learn, and travel costs are reduced. For these reasons, online learning is important in supporting social engagement (Farrell & Brunton, 2020)

Hence, the research will extend the Uses and gratifications theory and focuses on the initial investigation of the influence of social media engagement behaviour among students and the impact to social sustainability (Vinney, 2019). The research will deep dive into the use of social media platform, such as LinkedIn and Twitter in education, to see how individuals, communities and societies live with each other for functional needs, emotive needs and contextual needs.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN EDUCATION

Social media is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Whitting & Williams , 2013) They also stated that social media is a

communication mechanism that allows users to communicate with thousands, and perhaps billions, of individuals all over the world. Social media refers to websites and applications that are designed to allow people to share content quickly, efficiently, and in real-time (Hudson, 2020). The social media influence is already seen in different ways of interaction. For example, television, radio and press have created profiles in the social networks to remind of their existence, inform about the latest news regarding the program or content, as well as to represent themselves (Gaile, 2013)

With the world amid social media revolution, social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Skype are commonly used for communication purposes. This form of communication can be with an individual or a group of individuals. Today, for staying in touch with their peers, most of the people particularly the youngsters are hooked on to the different social networks. Social media is a social interaction network as a physical reality of communication. One of the most important advantages 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 or students in educational institutions (Baruah, 2012)

Today, technology plays an important role in the educational process, particularly online social networks that facilitate communication among educators and students. Educators and students are connected and can make good use of these platforms for educational purposes. Presence of social media is growing vigorously in education. Social media is about collaborating, networking, sharing, and generating knowledge and content, and all of these features are of great value in the context of higher education.

According to Bakeer, social media helps educators to be connected to their off-campus students as well as with their ex-students. Educators use social media as a way of teaching by creating groups and accounts for students where the information can be accessed. Educators can share ideas and point students to LinkedIn and Facebook. Educators create hashtags that allow students to tag their academic posts, and view submissions to see what the collective has creatively produced. Everyone gets a chance to participate in the educational system and express their opinions through strong civic engagement (Bakeer , 2018)

UBIQUITOUS LEARNING TOOLS: LINKEDIN AND TWITTER

The most important factors for the students to use LinkedIn are to get peer support, meet professional people, join groups to discuss and change ideas, and seek for a career anytime and anywhere. These are the persuasion factors for them to socialize on LinkedIn. Knowledge enhancement and information seeking factor will also help students to get useful information and services in a certain area and at the same time, students can share with their connections. With numbers of professionals on LinkedIn, students will have so many references and good examples to follow for their study and career. This is such a good example for them to consume in their lives and practice it. LinkedIn is one of the platforms that can teach us to communicate with the right and experienced people. Hashtags will be the most effective way for students to apply to get information for their needs. LinkedIn also helps students to get access to recent articles and posts relevant to what the students need for their daily feeds. Students are encouraged to build a professional network and find and apply for jobs online. (Awan, 2017). These are the benefits that encourage students to have a profile on LinkedIn to enhance their fields.

Twitter, which was launched to the public in October 2006, is an internet social medium with aspects of both mass and interpersonal communication. It is more commonly known as a micro-blog, a platform for publishing and sharing short 140 characters or fewer messages with

others within a user's social network (Johnson & Yang, 2009). The combination of Twitter's involving growth and rise in popularity is indicative of a new trend in how humans are communicating with each other on the internet. Not only are internet users spending more time using social networking sites and blogs than email, but at least 11% are also using Twitter or similar services to share and read status updates of others as of December 2008 (Johnson & Yang, 2009). In terms of social connectivity, Twitter allows a user to follow any number of other users as well. Twitter can be used to meet a variety of learning objectives, in individual contexts and a manner best suited to one's needs (Fingerle, 2017). Besides, Twitter is a great tool for exchanging views and ideas with others such as specialists in their particular fields. In this way, one can benefit from the expertise of others, get feedback or discover new ideas. Users can do this in several ways, including by asking questions, answering questions from others, expressing their ideas, giving feedback or creating surveys (Fingerle, 2017). In an educational setting, Twitter is a microblogging tool that enhances social interaction in a course throughout of the classroom interactions that can have strong instructional value (Rinaldo, Tapp, & Laverie, 2011). According to Veletsianos Twitter is a place for students to share information, resource, and media sharing, where the students will be able to make the classroom activities or information available to others. It is also providing opportunities for students to interact with individuals outside of the classroom, as well as they can request assistance and offering suggestions (Malik, , Heyman-Schrum , & Johr, 2019)

Besides that, students have the opportunity to engage in the social commentary. Twitter is a combination of communication and learning where students learn how to express ideas or questions accurately and concisely. In fact, as a platform to improve on writing and reading skills for students where when they read the status; they are learning and engaged. It will also give benefits to students to create bonding between a student and an educator. Educators can advise the students even they are not in the same geographical as educators can use Twitter to keep track of their students' performance and progress. There is a study indicated that Twitter has a positive impact on informal learning, class dynamics, learning, social skills and social interaction (Malik, , Heyman-Schrum , & Johr, 2019). Twitter is a microblogging portal that proves extremely useful across academic applications. Educators, students, and parents can benefit greatly from the advantages offered by using Twitter in education. The short tweets can be used to inform students about any changes and to collaboratively work as a great team (Norman, 2016) Not only a short tweet but a retweet, reply, hashtag, direct message and mention can involve in engagement. Twitter may have a limited character count, but that makes it ideal for linking to e-Learning videos and articles that your learners may find helpful.

USES AND GRATIFICATION FACTORS

Uses and gratifications theory asserts that people use media to gratify specific wants and needs (Vinney, 2019). Uses and gratifications theory characterizes people as active and motivated in selecting the media they choose to consume. Among the uses and gratifications frameworks available in the literature, this study focused on three: Palmgreen and Rayburn's, Korgaonkar and Wolin's, Papacharissi and Rubin's and Ko. These frameworks were selected because they looked at uses and gratifications concerning the internet. There are four themes which are social interaction, information seeking, communicatory utility, and convenience utility (Whitting & Williams , 2013).

Information Seeking

This information seeking theme is defined as using social media to seek out information or self-educate. Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999) also had a similar construct called information motivation, which they defined as how consumers use the web for self-education and information. The categorization of this theme includes both information seeking and self-education. In education, students will be able to search for information for their needs and be able to get how-to-instruction, get help with math, and learn new things. Social media makes it easy for people to search and share information that they could not get elsewhere. By seeking information, social media will support students' learning and educate people. Information seeking will get the students to engage with the content and consume it for the benefits.

Social Interaction

Social interaction is operationalised as communication that occurs between two or more individuals, in which each person is aware of either his or her membership in the group and relationships to and with others that belong to the group and in which the interactions occur primarily through an Internet venue to achieve mutually shared goals (Bagozzi, Dholakia, & Pearo, 2014). According to Smock, Ellison, Lampe, & Wohn, conjecture that social media platforms offer features that foster the development and maintenance of relationships for social media users, which, in turn, become a shared social experience. This is where human to human connection to share knowledge and information as well as to contribute for a benefit to others (Smock, Ellison, Lampe, & Wohn, 2011)

Communicatory Utility

This category is defined as communication facilitation and providing information to share with others. Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999) had a similar construct labelled socialization motivation for using the internet. They describe their construct as a facilitator of interpersonal communication and actions and its usefulness in terms of conversational value. This construct is different from the previously discussed social interaction construct. Communicatory utility helps to facilitate communication instead of providing social interaction. The communicatory utility is how they use social media to give them things to talk about with others. Unlike the traditional media where feedback is delayed or not guaranteed, participants on social media enjoyed the privilege of immediate feedback (Musa, Azmi, & Ismail, 2016)

Convenience Utility

This category of social media usage is defined as providing convenience or usefulness to individuals. Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) had a construct called convenience for internet uses. Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999) also had the word convenience in some of their scale items such as "enjoy the convenience of shopping on the web". In such a way, social media is a convenience tool for students to use for information seeking and students feel easy for them to get any source of information. Convenience utility is a way for students to have an ease of use, ease of access, and speed of use in Uses and Gratification literature (Florenthal, 2018)

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Social Media Engagement Behaviour (SMEB) is an engagement and interactions of users in social media where they contribute contents, comments and likes and with these, they will encourage people to also comment and likes on their posting in social media. This is a motivation where it will lead to word of mouth and awareness that give benefits to all. Social media interactive properties have transformed consumers from passive observers of content to

active participants who now actually creating vast quantities of content through their online conversations, interactions, and behaviours (Dolan, Conduit, Fahy , & Go, 2016)

In this study, social media engagement behaviour will encourage students to get engaged with updates in social media either from their universities or classmates related to their study. With this engagement, it will give greater satisfaction with community, feel more supported by the connections, great participation, and more opportunities to use skills and abilities and deepen social connections.

Social engagement in higher education is more towards participation and interaction between students and social media platforms. The importance of social media as platforms of social interaction, communication and marketing is growing. The view of engagement in higher education is widely accepted emphasizes on student behaviour and teaching practice. Student engagement was viewed as an emerging structure capturing a variety of organizational activities and student behaviour linked to student satisfaction and accomplishment, including time on an assignment, social and academic inclusion, and learning practice. Within this perspective, student engagement is defined as the ‘time and effort students devote to educationally purposeful activities. Today, engagement is conceptualized as the time and effort students invest in educational activities that are empirically linked to desired college outcomes (Hu & Kuh, 2002) . While there is little study focuses on the connection between social media and student engagement in higher education, many studies have discovered links between technology utilization and involvement.

Engagement is more than involvement or participation – it requires feelings and sense-making as well as activity. Trowler (2010) also stated that student engagement has been also defined as “participation in educationally effective practices, both inside and outside the classroom, which leads to a range of measurable and the idea that students must be actively engaged in the learning process for it to be effective is not new (Trowler, 2010). A diverse body of educational research has shown that academic achievement is positively influenced by the amount of active participation in the learning process. Current research has indicated that using social media as an educational tool can lead to increased student engagement. By encouraging engagement with social media, students develop connections with peers, establish a virtual community of learners and ultimately increase their overall learning. Student engagement represents both the time and energy students invest in interactions with others through educationally purposeful activities (Hu & Kuh, 2002). Nelson Laird and Kuh (2005) reported that students who use information technology for academics also have a higher likelihood of contributing and participating in active, academic collaboration with other students. This collaboration indicates that as engagement with technology increases, engagement with academics also increases, promoting a deeper connection between the students, educators, and course content. By participating in a community of learners, students become more engaged with the course content which increases the achievement of popular learning outcomes, such as critical thinking and individual student development.

Tarantino also stated that student engagement through social media can increase connections to create a virtual community leads to better learning content. Students can also use social media to research content material to develop new knowledge. In addition to enhancing established peer groups, social media can bridge the diversity that exists in classrooms by establishing a neutral zone in which students can interact with one another. By collaborating with peers on a given topic, social media offers opportunities to develop a stronger sense of community among students (Tarantino, 2013).

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Social sustainability is a life-enhancing condition within communities and a process within communities that can achieve that condition (McKenzie, 2004). Pieper, Vaarama, and Karvonen (2016) developed a SOLA model conceptualises social sustainability as a set of processes which define the ability of social systems to innovatively react to challenges by taking into account the individual visions of a good life and a good society. Humanity can make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Pieper, Vaarama, & Karvonen, 2016).

According to Mathews (2013), the new media serves the growth of sustainability as a powerful communications tool and as a persuasive means of pushing for pro-social change. This process can lead to the quality of life as they gain information and apply for the benefits in life. In this study, we will focus on the quality of life and social empowerment. Students who are actively engaged with sustainability agendas as part of their student experience are more likely to emerge as graduates who are equipped with the skills, knowledge and experience that make positive contributions to sustainable development throughout their lives.

According to Campbell (2006), education is widely recognised as having a strong correlation with multiple forms of civic and social engagement. Social empowerment brings benefit to the students in terms of they gain social facilitation where they bring up things that they have seen on sites in conversations with many other people, which they will use things for a discussion and argument with the people they know and life inspirations. These are the things that will bring benefits to one's life in the long term.

SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment can be defined in general as the capacity of individuals, groups and/or communities gain control of their circumstances and achieve their own goals, thereby being able to work towards helping themselves and others to maximise the quality of their lives. Social empowerment is an interactive process through which people experience personal and social change, enabling them to take action to achieve influence over the organizations and institutions which affect their lives and the communities in which they live. Furthermore, Whitmore also states that social empowerment is for individuals to understand their own needs better than anyone else and therefore should have the power both to define and act upon them. Social empowerment is a lifelong endeavour and personal knowledge, and experiences are valid and useful in coping effectively. For example, a LinkedIn member Gary Vaynerchuk, has 3,534,032 followers on LinkedIn (LinkedIn website). Looking at his profile, there are so many members are commenting on his post. This is due to his social empowerment has reached to the top where he always contributes ideas and advice. Empowerment has been defined in many ways. It has a relationship with characterising much in education and social service work (Sleeter, 1991). It helps in growing an individual's intellectual horizons, wellbeing, and potential for empowerment (Dimick, 2012).

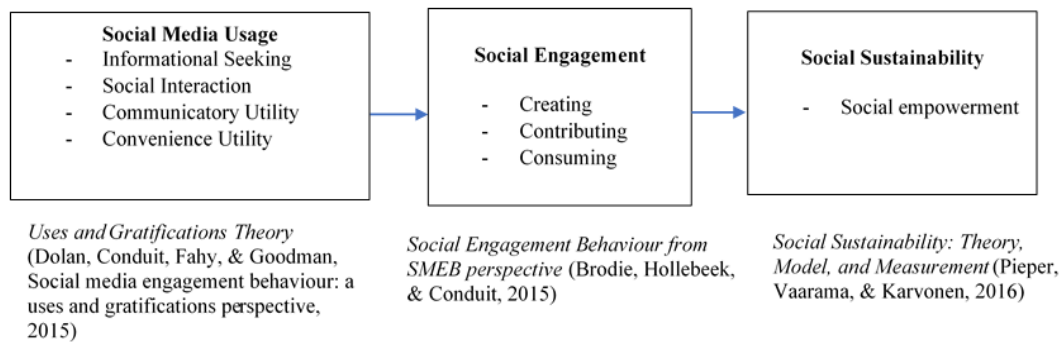


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of gratification factors of social media towards sustainable social engagement.

Figure 1 shows a conceptual framework for this study. Informational seeking and sharing are the most common activities where users engaged with social media by searching for any information that satisfies their needs. There are creating, contributing, and consuming under the positive valence of social engagement. These three dimensions have a positive valence where according to Dolan (2015), creating, contributing, and consuming are where users engage in this form of behaviour through making positive active contributions to existing content on the social media brand page. Social empowerment is one of the dimensions under social sustainability, which means a person is at an advantage by the way the power relations presently shape their decisions, opportunities, and well-being. Therefore, a person can be more empowered to make decisions about their lives, and it is the essence of greater freedom and control over important decisions that affect their lives and directly impact the quality of life. Social empowerment is a social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities, and their society, by acting on issues they define as important. In educational empowerment, traditional concepts recognize higher education as an instrument of personal development. It helps in growing an individual's intellectual horizons, wellbeing, and potential for empowerment (Mandal, 2013)

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

The study can help individuals to create awareness and innovate the way they live. Social media has helped people to discover new and innovative things that can enhance their personal lives. Students can plan and change the way they interact on social media for their social sustainability towards the quality of life. The awareness can help society to participate in common discussions, improve life in the small community and take decisions based on the voices of many. The results can encourage universities to share students' experiences and keep students and alumni engaged with the school even after they have graduated as well as attracting future students. This research will also contribute to the Government Transformation Plan- Increase social engagement for building social empowerment for greater social sustainability. For example, in education, a government agency may invest more on social media platforms for online learning or a platform that everyone can get access for information sharing.

CONCLUSION

People use social media to engage with the contents and to satisfy their needs through engagement. The important factors influencing people is to seek benefits from the expectation of the media itself. For instance, students who use the social media platforms for some motivation factors will engage with the media and contents thus develop sustainable social interaction which leads to self-empowerment and enhance quality of life. They can seek information for their studies, build a connection for career and reputation, involved in the social community to gain new knowledge, and socialize, participate in a forum for discussions and meet people to broaden the contacts. When the students create, consume, and contribute the benefits they gained, the students are indirectly having a good quality of life.

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