Acceptance of Social Media as a Learning Resource in Higher Education: A Case Study at University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the undergraduates’ acceptance of social media as a learning resource in higher education by Nursing & Radiography & Radiotherapy undergraduates in University of Peradeniya. Cross sectional survey research design was applied. Purposive sampling technique was used to select sample and 150 questionnaires were administered. Data were analyzed using SPSS and results were presented using descriptive statistics. Study findings showed that undergraduates are aware of the concept of social media and majority of them are using social media for entertainment and sharing contents. Study found that Face book and You tube are the most preferred sites among the social media networks surveyed. Majority of undergraduates have positive perceptions on social media acceptance as well as use of social media as a leaning resource. Undergraduates showed their readiness to use social media as a learning resource in the study, but how it is being apply and the outcomes of using it within the university sector to be further researched.

Keywords: Social Media, Higher Education, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

Introduction

Rapid development of Information Communication Technology has extended of easy access to new services and electronic learning environments compared traditional learning settings. It can facilitate effective communication among students, lecturers or researchers and has the potential to increase throughout rate and student pass rates (Nurulrabiah et al. 2013; Renes & Strange 2011).

As social media is a fairly new medium of communication, many studies have been carried out on the use of social media in education sector around the world( Rameez 2015, Al-Mukhaini et al. 2014) but in Sri Lanka there have been few research conducted in the field of higher education. Therefore, this study, is trying to identify how social media can apply as a leaning resource for Sri Lankan academic environment.

Hence, there is need to find out whether students are selecting, using and accepting the social media sites for their learning activities or not. Further, it is better to understand students are taking advantage of the opportunities social media offer for their academic activities.

Research Objectives
The main purpose of the study is to find out undergraduates acceptance of social media as a learning resource for their academic purposes by Allied Health Sciences students in Peradeniya University. Specifically;

- To identify the undergraduates awareness of the concept of social media
- To identify types of social media used by students
- To find out undergraduates perceptions on social media acceptance
- To ascertain the undergraduates acceptance on use social media as a learning resource

**Methodology**

The study employed cross sectional survey research design. The target population was undergraduates of Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, 150 students were selected using a purposive sampling method. A questionnaire was administrated to students in the department of Nursing and Radiography & Radiotherapy during the first semester of 2016/2017 who includes third and fourth year students. The questionnaires were distributed to students in their lecture rooms and laboratories with the permission and assistance of their lectures. In all, a total of 138 copies were dully completed and returned. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics which includes frequencies and percentages.

**Results and Discussion**

In total 138 undergraduates responded to the questionnaire, there were 48% of males and 52% of students were females. 41% of students were in the age group of 18 to 20, 59% belonged to age 21-25 group. Results showed that 100% of undergraduates were aware of social media sites. It is noticeable that all undergraduates are very familiar with the concept of social media. With respect to social media use, almost all students reported that they are using social media. Study findings showed that more than 50 % of undergraduates spend more than one hour on social media sites. Even though, undergraduates spend specific time on social media sites, majority of undergraduates stay online whole day, but active with social media when they received any notifications.

In the survey, undergraduates were asked to mention the types of social media sites that they are using every day. Majority of undergraduates are using one or more social media sites. More than 70% of undergraduates are using Face Book and You Tube following Viber (67%), Google & Yahoo group (66%) and Whats Up (55%). Least number of undergraduates are using Newsvine, Could computing Linkdin and blog. The study showed that undergraduates most preferred social media sites are Face book and You Tube (81%). It is necessary to find out what sites are used by undergraduates, knowing their preference would be an advantage to implement in the teaching process.

Purposes of using social media sites are for communication and sharing contents. Majority of them are subscribing social networking sites for educational and entertainment activities.
Entertainment and educational activities are the strong reasons for social media adoption. When analyzing undergraduates perceptions on how they accept of social media, about 76% of students believed that Social media creates social engagement among people or groups. About 67% of undergraduates slightly agreed that social media allows to communicate directly with people or groups.

Study examined how undergraduates perceived social media sites use as a learning resource, majority of them (76%) agreed that social media can be used efficiently and effectively for teaching and learning purposes. Further, they (69%) strongly agreed social media sites can be used to communicate with their teachers. Significant number of undergraduates (65%) believed that social media sites have potential power to establish common goal through dialogue and collaboration.

**Conclusion & Recommendations**

Study findings showed that undergraduates are aware of the concept of social media and majority of them are using social media for entertainment and sharing contents. Study found that Face book and You Tube are the most preferred sites among the social media networks surveyed. Majority of undergraduates have positive perceptions on social media acceptance as well as use of social media as a learning resource. Research findings showed that undergraduates showed their readiness to use social media as a learning resource, but how it is being apply and the outcomes of using it within the university sector is to be further researched.

**References**


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