



Social Media as a New Constituent of Communication in Higher Education Institutions

¹Tanu, ²Dr. Sushil Sharma

¹Research Scholar, ²Professor, Kurukshetra University

¹tanukhasa190996@gmail.com, ²Sushilsharma@kuk.ac.in

ABSTRACT

The internet has changed the nature of communication in the past two decades. Due to social media's widespread use as a powerful instrument for communication on a global scale, changes have been made to how individuals connect and communicate online. Social networking websites, instant messaging, blogs, vlogs, and virtual communities are examples of social media channels. Institutes can use social media as a new teaching technique in academia to both within and outside of the classroom for engaging pupils. Students gain a variety of advantages from using social media, including increased engagement, attention, and control over their education. Social media can be prominent and essential in all of these activities. The intent behind the study is to explore the student perspective on functions of social media platforms connected to the technique of instruction and learning, student assistance activities, establishing online communities, and marketing and promotion programs. This study further finds out the most popular social media platforms among students used for academic purposes. Online surveys were undertaken from students of the top two public state universities of Haryana. According to this study, social media networking sites are widely used by state university students as an official platform for formal learning, notably for academic discussion. The two social media sites that students used the most were Google Meet and WhatsApp groups. There are no differences were found between the students of the two universities which was Kurukshetra University and Maharishi Dayanand University in relation to the technique of instruction and learning, student assistance activities, establishing online communities, and marketing and promotion programs. This study further concludes with the implication of the research.

Keywords: Social-media, Higher education, communication, universities

INTRODUCTION

At the start of the twenty-first century with the emergence of web 2.0 higher education system underwent a vast social transformation. Higher education institutions is under more pressure than ever, and college competition has also intensified. Higher education institutions are under increasing pressure to expand their student bodies, boost their endowments, and enhance their standing locally, nationally, and internationally. The time when colleges and universities controlled the lives of students is long past. Students today are becoming increasingly intelligent. Higher education institutions began to think about their virtual presence as a possible competitive edge as a result universities and institutions are aware of communication through technology. With the utilization of technology, colleges, and universities are also adjusting to the new set of demands and expectations. Education service providers like HEI must continuously develop by offering cutting-edge pedagogical solutions.

Due to technological advancements, as well as the desire for quick social interactions and communications, online social networking has seen a sharp rise in popularity in recent years, especially among young people, including students. Examples of social media platforms involve Second Life, YouTube, Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, open online course sites, skype, mobile apps, forums, Wiki, blogs, Delicious, text messaging, online gaming, Myspace, and other platforms. These systems have been highly used to gather and disseminate knowledge, facilitate group learning, and establish personal and professional online connections.

In 2022, 4.8 billion people used social media globally, which is more than half of the people on earth. There were 3 billion active Facebook members worldwide in 2022. India ranks second in terms of social media users reaching 755 million. Social media use is prevalent among the target demographic of students and potential students; among those between the ages of 18 and 29, 90% consistently use it. Young adults utilize Facebook as well as other social media platforms like Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter. As a result, all higher education institutions must concentrate on social media marketing and communication as a way to set themselves apart from their rivals and gain a competitive advantage.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION STATUS IN INDIA

Number of Degree awarding Universities / Institutions.	1113
Number of Colleges	42343
Number of Stand-Alone Institutions	11296
Gross Enrolment Ratio	27.3
Student's Enrolment	4.14 crore
Number of faculty/ teachers	15.5 lakh
Pupil-Teacher Ratio	24

(AISHE 2020-2021)

The Government of India (GOI) has introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in an effort to change the Indian educational system. Under National Education Policy 2020, it is the purpose to improve the gross enrolment ratio in higher education institutions from 26.3 percent (the year 2018) to 50 percent. Moreover, 3.5 crore additional seats will be appended in post-secondary education institutions. By 2030, the goal of complete youth and adult literacy has been reached. The Government should similarly offer institutions special policies in order to raise the Gross Enrolment Ratio. Universities are facing new pressures and more responsibilities than ever before as more stakeholders become involved in higher education. The universities must employ digital and social media marketing strategies to draw in students and hire personnel if they are to meet this goal.

The research objective for this research was:

1. How much do students at state public universities utilize social media to maintain formal academic communication?
2. Are there any differences between the students of the two selected universities in when using social media as an official communication channel?
3. How do students' patterns and practices of formal educational communication change as a result of using social media?
4. What lessons and ramifications could be drawn from using social media to encourage social presence and promote online learning?

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Social media refers to a digital platform that enables users to create and manage public or semi-public profiles. Users can only connect with other users when they choose to, based on their personal interests (Boyd & Ellison, n.d.). Social media technology has given users the ability to express their opinions about companies and products, greatly increasing online word-of-mouth”. The use of the online world, social news websites, social networks, and social beliefs-sharing websites to target customers based on the cultural environment of social communities in conducive to achieving communication goals is known as social media marketing (Tuten, 2008). Social media (SM) networks are where a lot of information is added to and exchanged about businesses and products (Stojanovic et al., 2018). SM promotes consumers to interact and engage with businesses and others at many points in the consumer journey, such as while gathering information, making decisions, and hearing about commodities and services from others (Filo et al., 2015; Wirtz et al., 2019a). One of the key benefits is the potential for swiftly reaching a big audience. By paying contributions in the beginning, this might be boosted. Direct communication with social networking users and subsequent comments are additional advantages. By doing this, businesses or organizations can better understand their clients or candidates while also enhancing the services they offer to them. Each post also demonstrates how engaging it is by what proportion of viewers, commenters, and sharers there were. One of the drawbacks of social media is the potential for receiving unfavorable feedback, which may spread quickly and be damaging.

Social Media in Education

In recent years, higher education institutions have begun to pay attention to social media as a means of communication between faculty, students, and management. The vast majority of market-driven tertiary education institutions globally, according to statistics, are actively engaged in social media promotion activities (Asderaki & Maragos, 2012; Barnes & Lescault, 2011; Raciti, 2010). Using these web platforms, universities and colleges are discovering unique and affordable ways to connect with global marketplaces for placement and recruitment opportunities (Choudaha & Kono, 2012). Hayes, Ruschman, and Walker (2009) explain that prior to the Internet, post-secondary education systems had a significant impact on the message. Before social media the sources used by post-secondary institutions were viewbooks, also known as prospectuses, which contain university information and are used for marketing, prospect letters, and high school visits, were the first means of communication between them and prospective students. Using emails and "passive websites," they were able to keep control of the material; now, with the rise of social media, it is becoming more difficult for these organizations to maintain control. Being active on social media, where the target demographic hangs out, is therefore the best course of action for them. The authors highlight a number of the key potential advantages, including student participation, real-time updates, and omni-less communication between post-secondary institutions and students. Social media, in the opinion of universities, is best utilized for marketing and informing prospective students about the HEI. The second most crucial use is enhancing student-to-student cooperation, participation, and involvement in college life. The third important use of social media to support student learning and academic outcomes, strengthen development/alumni relationships, improve student social life/interaction, and build campus community. Linvill, McGee, and Hicks (2012) carried out a content analysis study to uncover the manner in which

colleges and universities use Twitter as a communication tool. During the course of 10 days, data from 133 US institutions and colleges were gathered, and 1130 tweets in all were examined. Only 5% and 6% of Twitter data, however, were targeted at present students and general audiences, respectively, making up the remaining 89%. Twitter feeds with dialogic loop features or posts/tweets urging audience participation made up 30% of all feeds. According to this report, universities and colleges mostly use Twitter as a general news feed with nothing in the way of student engagement content.

The higher education system underwent an urgent transformation that was quickly put into place due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Online instruction uses a virtual setting and provides access to the documentation required to build meaningful learning. The essential communication tools at that time are social media sites. For instance, numerous Indian colleges have encouraged staff members to use free communication technologies like Zoom and Google classroom. Social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp are officially used by colleges and universities and faculty staff to build connections with students. HEI have to motivate educators to engage with their students through social pages and official groups on these social channels, such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook. After COVID-19, instructors and students are now legitimately compelled to communicate online for education-related goals in several developing countries. Social media can provide HEI with a tremendous opportunity to connect openly with their students and promote networked learning in the absence of an online learning management system. In order to promote online social engagement and create a successful virtual learning environment, the study focuses on the fact that academicians and students are present on these social networks.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection

This study is concerned with the top two public state universities in Haryana that were chosen on the basis of NAAC ranking 2019 which were Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, and Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak. For addressing the research objective, a survey instrument was adopted from the study of Abu Elnsar E. et al. (2020). Data were collected from the 201 students of these top two universities of Haryana through an online questionnaire. There were four sections to the questionnaire. In the first section, there was information on the student's gender, age, and level of study. Section two included the following three questions: The use of social media for official educational interactions, usage frequency, and which social media platform is mostly considered by the students. Section three evaluated the actual use of social media for official educational communication in the areas of teaching and learning (based on eight variables), student assistance (based on six factors), creating an online community and connection (based on four elements), and marketing and promotion program (4 factors). These elements were taken from earlier studies. Using a 5-point Likert scale, respondents were asked to rate their use of social media (1 = little to no use, 2 = little to moderate use, 3 = moderate to substantial use, and 5 = heavy use). Participants were prompted to contribute any further research-related comments in section four. Frequencies and percentages were used in the survey analysis to examine the characteristics of the respondents. To examine the scale items, descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, were used. To compare how the students at the two universities actually used social media, an Independent Samples t-test was used. The questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS.

Results of Survey

The configuration of students of Kurukshetra University

The ratio of female students of Kurukshetra university participates in this research was more than that of the male participants. All the participants of this university were relatively young, under the age of 20 to 25 so there is no age gap between the students. In addition, there was a high level of participation of students from graduation level than students those of from post- graduation level.

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	32	32.98%
	Female	65	67.01%
Age	Less than 20 years	22	22.68%
	20 to 25 years	72	74.22%
	25 to 30 years	3	3.09%
Study Level	Graduation	68	70.10%
	Post-Graduation	29	29.10%
The usage of social media in your university for educational communication	Yes	93	95.87%
	No	4	3.88%
How often do you use social media for formal educational communication	Daily	63	64.94%
	Weekly	34	35.05%

Social media platforms used for formal educational communication	WhatsApp	49	50.5%
	Google Meet	57	58.8%
	YouTube	22	22.7%
	Zoom	20	20.6%
	Facebook	9	9.3%

It is intriguing that all of the study participants used social media for official educational communication, and the majority of them do so on a daily basis. The most popular platform for formal academic contact among students was Google Meet (57%). WhatsApp (49%), YouTube (22%), Zoom (20%), and Facebook (9%) came after that.

The configuration of students of Maharishi Dayanand University

The ratio of female students of Maharishi Dayanand university participates in this research was more than that of the male participants. All the participants of this university were relatively young, under the age of 25 so there is no age gap between the students. In addition, there was a high level of participation of students from graduation level than students those of from post-graduation level.

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	44	42.30
	Female	60	63.46
Age	Less than 20 years	21	20.19%
	20 to 25 years	73	70.19%
	25 to 30 years	10	9.61%
Study Level	Graduation	71	68.26%
	Post-Graduation	33	31.73%
The usage of social media in your university for educational communication	Yes	101	97.11%
	No	3	6.73%
How often do you use social media for formal educational communication	Daily	53	50.96%
	Weekly	51	49.03%
Social media platforms used for formal educational communication	WhatsApp	49	47.1%
	Google Meet	77	74.0%
	YouTube	20	19.2%
	Zoom	32	29.8%
	Facebook	13	12.5%

It's noteworthy to note that while all of the participants in this survey used social media for official educational communication, only 50% of students at this university use it daily, while the other 50% use it weekly. The most popular platform for formal academic contact among students was Google Meet (77%). WhatsApp (49%), Zoom (32%), YouTube (20%), and Facebook (13%) were the next most popular services.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

S. No.	Particular	Independent-Test Results	Hypotheses (Accepted/ Rejected)	Findings
1	Techniques of instruction and learning	t(199)= 1.133, p>.05	Null hypothesis is accepted	There is no significant differences were found between students' perspective of both universities regarding teaching and learning.
2	Student assistance activities	t(199)= 1.695, p>.05	Null hypothesis is accepted	There is no significant differences were found between students' perspective of both universities regarding student support activities.
3	Establishing online community	t(199)= 0.306, p>.05	Null hypothesis is accepted	There is no significant differences were found between students' perspective of both universities regarding building online communities.

4	Marketing and promotion program	$t(199) = -0.067, p > .05$	Null hypothesis is accepted	There is no significant differences were found between students' perspective of both universities regarding program marketing and promotion.
---	---------------------------------	----------------------------	-----------------------------	--

An impartial sample t-test was performed to compare how the students at the chosen universities used social media for official academic communication. The result shows that there is no significant differences found between the students of the two universities regarding technique of instruction and learning ($t(199) = 1.133, p > .05$) and regarding student assistance activities ($t(199) = 1.695, p > .05$) and regarding establishing online communities ($t(199) = 0.306, p > .05$) and regarding marketing and promotion program ($t(199) = -0.067, p > .05$).

Students from both universities reported nearly identical high mean scores for using social media as a learning platform, for student assistance activities, for establishing online communities, and for marketing and promotion programs. But the choice between the learning platform was different between the students of both universities.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study has a number of ramifications for academics, educators/instructors, politicians, and pupils in post-secondary education. As a swift and effective response to the social transformation, management and regulatory bodies in public higher education in many emergent nations have embraced a new environment of virtual learning using free internet platforms and social media. Public higher education institutions must take the initiative and create a suitable policy that supports long-term virtual learning. This strategy should encourage using social media for official educational communication. The policy includes a toolset and an action plan for how students can use social media for official communication. Collaboration is required among policymakers in public higher education with the telecoms sector, especially in poor countries, to ensure that faculty members and students have access to reliable internet services to support their virtual learning environment. Institutional heads play a crucial role in putting policies into practice and making sure that students are given the right kind of support. For instance, they ought to set up an IT department to advise and assist students and staff members with any technical issues as needed. This unit might offer professors and students online training and workshops to guarantee the proper use of social media and other online platforms. It's crucial that they keep an eye on appropriate social media usage through online class observation. The use of social media for official academic communication should be governed by a code of ethics that is established and made public among teachers and students. Faculty members need to focus more on community building, student assistance, and interactivity. Freshmen who are unfamiliar with college and online learning must receive extra help and consideration. Also, professors must evaluate the content, voice notes, and narrative. Feedback from students must be appreciated. On the other hand, students must comprehend that they must use appropriate language when communicating in formal ways on social media. The delay in responding to their inquiries does not indicate ignorance or disdain, as they initially believed. Students should also recognize that faculty members have distinct obligations at their universities. The study makes a significant point to academics: greater investigation is required into the possibility of using social media as an official educational communication medium. Yet, new studies employing social media as an official online forum for educational discussion could address this pattern change in learning. When employed as an official academic communication tool, social media can have an impact on students' learning, satisfaction, and educational accomplishment. Researchers need to be aware of how professors and students use social media differently and have different needs for academic communication. This study found that social presence, social learning, and online learning are all improved when social media is used as an official educational communication medium in higher education.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted in response to the effects that social media platforms have had on universities, particularly public universities in developing nations. Institutions have been obliged to switch from traditional to online learning as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Despite this, many public institutions of higher learning lack complete access to online LMS. By focusing on the students of the top two state institutions in Haryana, the study intends to analyze the real usage of social media for promoting formal, isolated and official, educational communication in universities, colleges, and post-secondary institutions

The study's four primary research objectives were as follows. In answer to the first research objective "how much do students at state public universities utilize social media to maintain formal educational communication", The study revealed that students had made SNSs an official forum for educational communication, particularly for formal education, and that utilization levels were large or high. The two social media sites that students used the most were Google Meet and WhatsApp Groups.

In response to question number two, "Are there any variations among the students of the two selected universities in when using social media as a formal communication channel?" In terms of techniques of instruction and learning, student assistant activities creating an online community, and marketing and promotion program, there were no significant differences between the students of the two universities. Students used social media sites to participate in their education, support one another, and create an online community.

The study's findings for the question third, "How does the use of social media affect on and students' patterns and practices of formal educational communication?" the research revealed that students' social media presence enhances communication for formal education usage. Pupils said social media platforms, like Google Meet, WhatsApp, and Zoom App, were a more successful form of communication because of their accessibility, usefulness, and involvement. They were successful in using social media to advance their education as a result.

About the fourth question, "What lessons and consequences could be learned for enhancing social presence and promoting online learning via social media"? The use of social media for official educational communication promotes social learning and social community. This study found that social connections among students from different universities lead to online contact and communication, which nurture social presence, cultivates online social involvement, and build a favorable learning culture. It is pivotal that collaborators and academicians in post-secondary education, particularly in poor nations, notice this pattern of change in learning and look into the factors that determine how social media should be used to sustain formal communication in this age of online networking learning.

REFERENCES

- Ahn, J. (2011). Digital divides and social network sites: Which students participate in social media?. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 45(2), 147-163.
- Bélanger, C. H., Bali, S., & Longden, B. (2014). How Canadian universities use social media to brand themselves. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 20, 14-29.
- Cao, Y., Ajjan, H., & Hong, P. (2013). Using social media applications for educational outcomes in college teaching: A structural equation analysis. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 44(4), 581- 593.
- Chahal, H., Wirtz, J., & Verma, A. (2020). Social media brand engagement: Dimensions, drivers and consequences. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 37(2), 191-204.
- Chahal, H., Wirtz, J., & Verma, A. (2020). Social media brand engagement: Dimensions, drivers and consequences. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 37(2), 191-204.
- Choudaha, R., & Kono, Y. (2012). Beyond more of the same: The top four emerging markets for international student recruitment. *World Education News & Reviews*.
- Hayes, T. J., Ruschman, D., & Walker, M. M. (2009). Social networking as an admission tool: A case study in success. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 19(2), 109-124.
- learning. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 16(2), 87-101.
- Linville, D. L., McGee, S. E., & Hicks, L. K. (2012). Colleges' and universities' use of Twitter: A content analysis. *Public relations review*, 38(4), 636-638.
- Maresova, P., Hruska, J., & Kuca, K. (2020). Social media university branding. *Education Sciences*, 10(3), 74.
- Motta, J., & Barbosa, M. (2018). Social media as a marketing tool for European and North American universities and colleges. *Journal of Intercultural Management*, 10(3), 125-154.
- Nkhoma, M., Cong, H. P., Au, B., Lam, T., Richardson, J., Smith, R., & El-Den, J. (2015). Facebook as a tool for learning purposes: Analysis of the determinants leading to improved students'
- Sobaih, A. E. E., Hasanein, A. M., & Abu Elnasr, A. E. (2020). Responses to COVID-19 in higher education: Social media usage for sustaining formal academic communication in developing countries. *Sustainability*, 12(16), 6520.
- Sobaih, A. E. E., Moustafa, M. A., Ghandforoush, P., & Khan, M. (2016). To use or not to use? Social media in higher education in developing countries. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 58, 296-305.
- Stojanovic, I., Andreu, L., & Curras-Perez, R. (2018). Effects of the intensity of use of social media on brand equity: An empirical study in a tourist destination. *European journal of management and business economics*, 27(1), 83-100.
- Tuten, T. L. (2008). *Advertising 2.0: social media marketing in a web 2.0 world: social media marketing in a web 2.0 world*. ABC-CLIO.