

Mobile Social Media for Sri Lankan Public and Private Higher Educational Institutions

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Abstract

The growth of the social media is unbelievable in recent years. All possible uses from social media are analyzed carefully by organizations seek competitive advantage; look for the offers from it. Obviously, the most significant benefit of social media is providing connectivity and communication among the people. In Sri Lankan point of view, the major question is whether all public and private higher educational institutions are adapting these changes. Our study investigates among the public and private institutions in Sri Lanka about the purpose of social media is business or educational based. In the other hand based on the literature review we had, most of the educational and business organizations trying to get maximum usage of social media. For professional purposes, we discover a diverse of feeling about the usage of socially-focused technologies. Further, those technologies are not used entirely to gain full potential in any institutions. The study explores the potential benefits from the social media usage in an institution, and its practicing recommendations are made. The study discovers that there is no direct relation in between the use of social media and the IT expertise level. In most of the institutions fixed line internet connections are lack and become the main challenge. But considerable amount of people access social media through wireless internet connections with their mobile devices. In Sri Lanka, the usage of mobile devices increased considerably in recent years. Such mobile devices offer better access to internet and therefore replace the fixed connection. Since the people use mobile devices regularly to communicate with others, the access of social media through such devices comes almost naturally. It increases the ubiquitous access of social media, their connectivity is realistic and on time which provide so many opportunities for all types of higher educational institutions in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Social Media, Competitive Advantage, Mobile Devices

1. Introduction

The usage of internet is expanding globally. It has been expanding and changing as it derives new capabilities. The usage of it is increased more than 294% and 50% in developing and developed nations respectively [1]. Especially, after the invention of Web 2.0 whole range of social platforms and respective technologies are evolved. More people using internet purely for educational purposes but unfortunately the purpose of using internet among majority of youths and teenagers is get access of social media. Social engagement of people around the world is the main focus of social media. In recent years, social media become vital and inseparable from day to day life. The phenomenon behind social media is quite simple and understandable, it generates associations and communication among individual which provides web based facility to build profiles to enable connectivity. This connectivity is enabled after the registration and then they can involve in posting thoughts, information and news including images and videos [2, 3]. Such social media sites hosted by several international companies and they get benefit of advertisements.

Meantime, over the past 20 years, we have undergone a radical revolution in the way education is conducted and how pupils interact. In most cases evolved technologies assist the educational activities. Even though internet is a golden egg, in past few years the social media become more dangerous within teen community [4]. More and more researches support this community degradation caused by social media. Even though it opens up new opportunities to support educational activities, in most cases it creates undesirable impacts. Anyhow social media is unique because of its ubiquitous and pervasive nature [5]. Most of the organizations focus on identifying the way of using social media profitably [6]. It became one of the main responsibilities of executives today. It is applicable for all kind of educational institutions around the world and Sri Lanka as well. Since the reach of social media is incredible, it has been adapted widely by educational institutions. In digital world, Web 2.0 developments also supports with high speed and developing new ones at no time while moving across computing categories. This positive move should be adapted by private and public educational institutions in productive manner. The potential of social media should at least tap by up to date current trends. It gives quality as well as competitive advantage over existing educational institutions. Public educational organizations mainly target the quality of education as the output rather than income. On the other hand private educational institution's intention is income generation while providing best quality education. In Sri Lanka, there is no subsidy given to private institutions. Because of that they mainly focus on their income generation that anything else. Therefore, private institutions should up to date the current technologies to keep up

with other competitors. Public institutions have to be in current trends to compete with private institutions. Overall both public and private institutions should reshape their plans as supports world changes for the purpose of engaging the students to world as critical and informed people.

2. Research Problem

The introduction of social media technology and received attention from various industries accelerate the use of it in any kind of organization including educational institutions. It cannot be left behind and may have the similar impact on educational activities now and into the future. Generally, the overall success of an individuals or company basically depends on their expertise in using social media and its success [7]. In recent years, many researchers have a tendency to focus on social media in marketing perspective. Their main idea is to analyze the marketing opportunities provided by social media. The significant marketing benefit of social media is achieved by the connectivity and communication provided to people across borders. The social media is an important element of millennial's culture. Social media learning is obviously real. The pace of change cannot be keep up by content push model which suggest traditional training. The research question here is whether public and private higher education institutions in Sri Lanka are keeping up with these potential changes. This research study targets at determining the status of social media used at public and private higher education institution in Sri Lanka. The piloted investigation embraces the present adoption of social media in public and private institutions, as well as the recommendations and observations of both staff and students for current and future use.

3. Social Media for Educational Institutions

Education is essential for each and every individual. For every teenager, education is more essential than any other needs. Now teenager shows much interest to spend time with social networks but Social Networks affect education both positive and negative ways [8]. There are five interconnected literacies related to educational activities supported by social media. Those are; attention, participation, collaboration, network awareness and critical consumption [9]. Initially, the social media viewed diversion in classes by business schools in Europe, but after some time that attitude is changed and most of the schools have realized the significance of Web 2.0 and the major invention of it, the social media. Integration of social media in their course unit, do researches and teach about social media are already familiar to schools in Spain and France. According to the literature survey in Sri Lanka, 100% of higher educational institutes use at least one kind of social media for their day by day activities. Earlier researches show that more than 90% of university students use social networks all around the world [10, 11]. Even though higher educational institutes have been publishing materials on web through CMS, those systems are not harvesting the benefits of social media yet. More digital content can nudge into open web with our awareness of full-blown social media. It provides a base platform for association outside traditional institutional boundaries. Knowledge of the crowd to solve problems can be distributed and shared using social media, which is one of the great benefits of it. Another benefit is the rapid increase in penetration of mobile devices, especially in Sri Lanka, which is also motivating the use of social media. Using social media with mobile devices is already more popular than using computers to access. Facebook says, more than 200 million active users using mobile devices to access Facebook, and they are active on Facebook more time than non-mobile users. Continuous advances in mobile technologies assist in making always connected and associated society. In parallel to the advance of mobile consumption devices, social consumption shows potential increase among societies. Internet and social media cannot be blocked off or ignored anymore because of it is integrated into society. So it is the time to participate and not to remain as spectator. While become a part of it the dangers and challenges should be analyzed in a way with respect to social media and mobile usage. Security aspects are one of these, as mobile platforms are new and open to external attacks. On the other hand social networks are becoming the new hotbed of cybercrime in various ways. The significance of mobility and connectivity are a main contemplation for companies after 2000. Therefore, the challenges are like nothing with comparing the realities of social media and its benefits, especially with the integration of mobile devices.

4. Research Approach

4.1 Scope of the study

The scope of the study has not been limited to the educational institute's social media marketing only. This study has been confined to the country Sri Lanka which is located in South Asian region as this area has greater internet penetration and plenty of social media users.

4.2 Aim

- Discover the penetration or usage of social media at public and private higher educational institutions in Sri Lanka.
- Identify the perception of using social media at higher educational institutions for both educational and business purposes.

- In Sri Lankan context, discover the potential of using social media in higher educational institutions.

4.3 Data collection

Totally five hundred and seventy questionnaires were distributed among human subjects; all are completed and received back. This questionnaire contains questions about general demographics. It includes the usage of social media in higher educational institutions for business and educational purposes. It was distributed among selected public and private higher educational institutions all around Sri Lanka. Most of the selected institutions exist for more than ten years in service. Totally, selected institutions employ about a 7 thousand staff members who fulfill different roles in each institutions. There are science and non-science institutions included, offered courses vary based disciplines. All together more than 40 thousand students are enrolled. This study concentrated on all universities and private institutions. Currently all institutions have their own active websites and all have dedicated CMS developed using open source platform Moodle. The questionnaire is responded by variety of stakeholders in order to ascertain the opinion.

It includes;

- Students
- Lecturers
- Administrative staff
- Non-academic staff
- Student advisors
- Managerial people
- Others (respondents who did not specify their role)

The information collected through the questionnaires was taken in to consideration and analyzed in the way outlined in section 4.3.

5. Findings

5.1 Results

5.1.1 Social media usage:

Only 16.2 percentage respondents from all institutions has indicated that they do not use social media, while 83.8 percentage participants admitted using social media. That 16.2 percentage participants include the respondents did not specify the detail about social media usage. The following pie chart describes the frequency of usage.

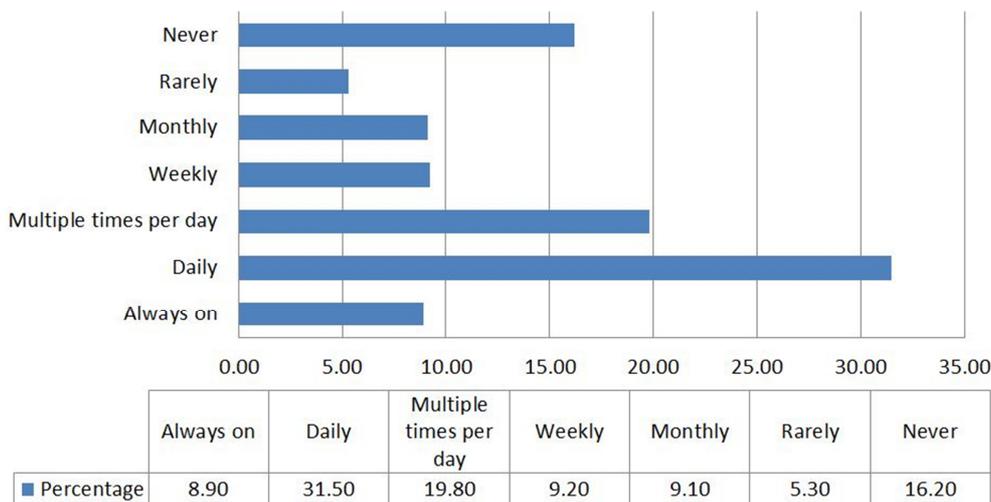


Figure 1. Social media usage

There are some interesting reasons stated by non-social media users for not using it: No internet access, knows nothing about social media, not like to use it, think like a time waste, no free time to use it. Interesting point about the responders who do not use social media is all of them are above 30 years old with 1 exceptional case. Always on, daily and multiple times per day users are more dominant users of social media. The distribution of those three categories is given below in Table 1.

Table 1. Age range distribution of severe social media users

Age range	Percentage
Less than 20	21%
Between 21 and 25	33%
Between 26 and 30	34%
Over 30	11%
Not specified	1%

While considering the IT expertise level, significant number of the respondents stated that they assumed their IT expertise level as average. Furthermore, 32 percentage participants from those who considered themselves as experts either do not or rarely use social media. But, only 4 percentage novice users never use social media. On the other hand, 41 percentage novice users are always get connected to social media. From those who did not specify the IT expertise level, 81 percentage respondents use social media on regular basis, ranging from daily to always on. From those who specified their IT expertise level as minimal, 54 percentage respondents use social media multiple times per day. The percentages of each expertise level respondents are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The percentage of respondents in each IT expertise level

IT expertise level	Percentage (%)
No answer	2
Expert	9
Good	38
Average	24
Minimal	16
Novice	11

5.1.2 Accessibility of social media:

Access location and medium used to access internet are two important factors. The Figure 2 and Figure 3 express how the respondents access social media and where they like to access the social media respectively.

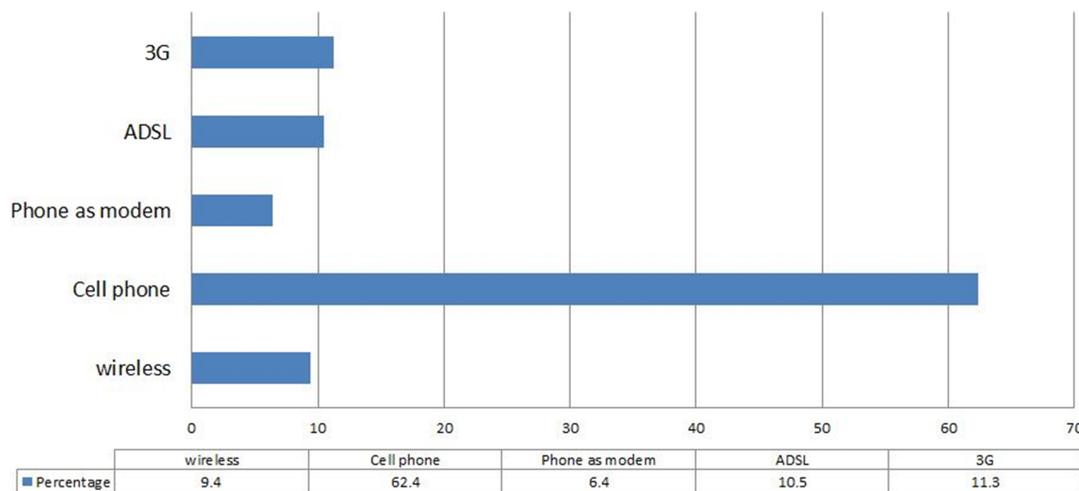


Figure 2. Medium used to access social media

As indicated by Figure 2 most of the respondents' access social media using their mobile phones and considerable amount of people use wireless and 3G mobile networks. Few respondents stated as they are using ADSL fixed line to connect. It means most of them connect to internet using wireless connection such as Wi-Fi, mobile networks, 3G and phone as modem. It expresses the dominance in mobile access of social media usage. As indicated in Figure 3, majority of respondents directly access the social media mostly at university and at home. Furthermore, most of the social media users from the respondents stated that they are using social media for more than 1 year, means most of them already have enough experience to tackle the problem caused in it.

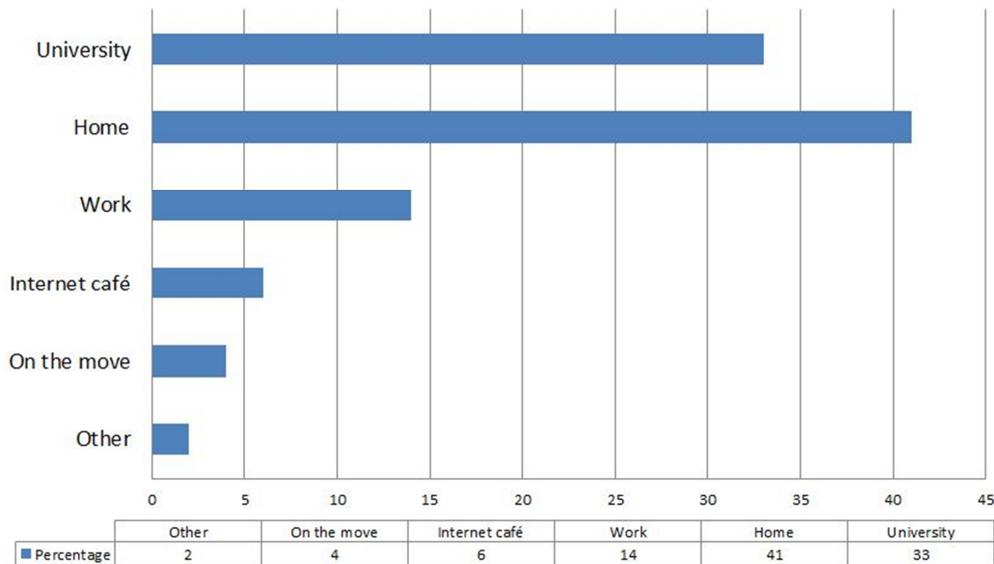


Figure 3. Internet access locations

5.1.3 Challenges

Most dominant challenges to use social media stated by the respondents are: The destructive nature of social media; Accessibility problems; Lack of knowledge and exposure; Privacy and security issues; Lack of interest; Lack of computer resources in institution; Ethical challenges; Assumption as addiction and time consuming; Misuses and abuses of it; Most of the social sites being blocked inside institution; Lack of direct communication and education; Limited internet connectivity and bandwidth; Information overload; Quality control problems; Constant changes and Reliability.

5.1.4 Types of social media currently used

The Figure 4 specifies information regarding the types of social media currently in use based of the respondents who provided information regarding the social media. Social networks and video sharing are the most popular used social media types in Sri Lanka as illustrated in Figure 4. The intention behind the social network and the most dominant reason for using it is mostly socially oriented than any other social media types. At the same time Facebook is most popular among students in Sri Lanka [12]. Because of the widely use of Youtube, video sharing slotted in second position.

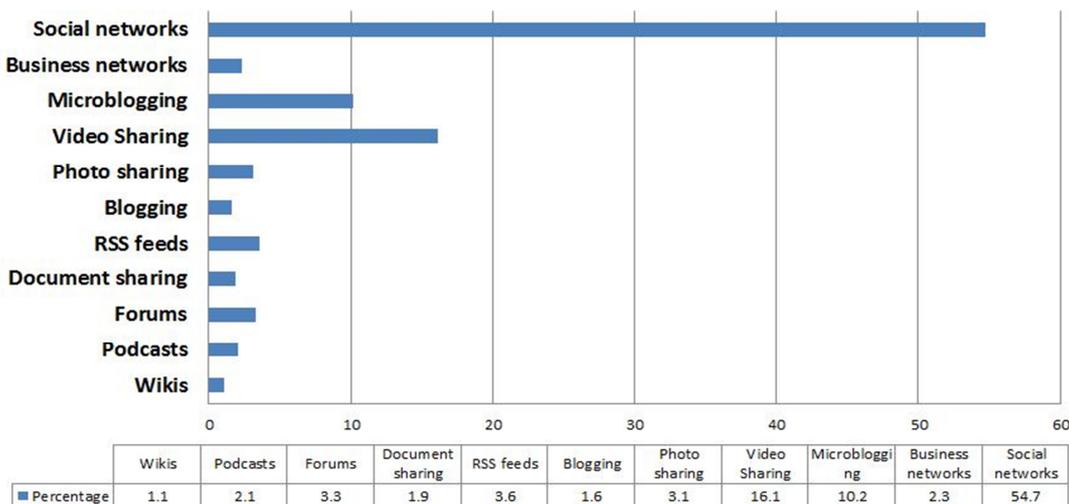


Figure 4. Types of social media currently used

5.1.5 Recommendations for using social media at the institution

Based on the recommendations made by all respondents those who use social media in higher educational institutions, using social networks are the most dominant one. Further, some of the most recommended uses of social media are expressed in Figure 5.

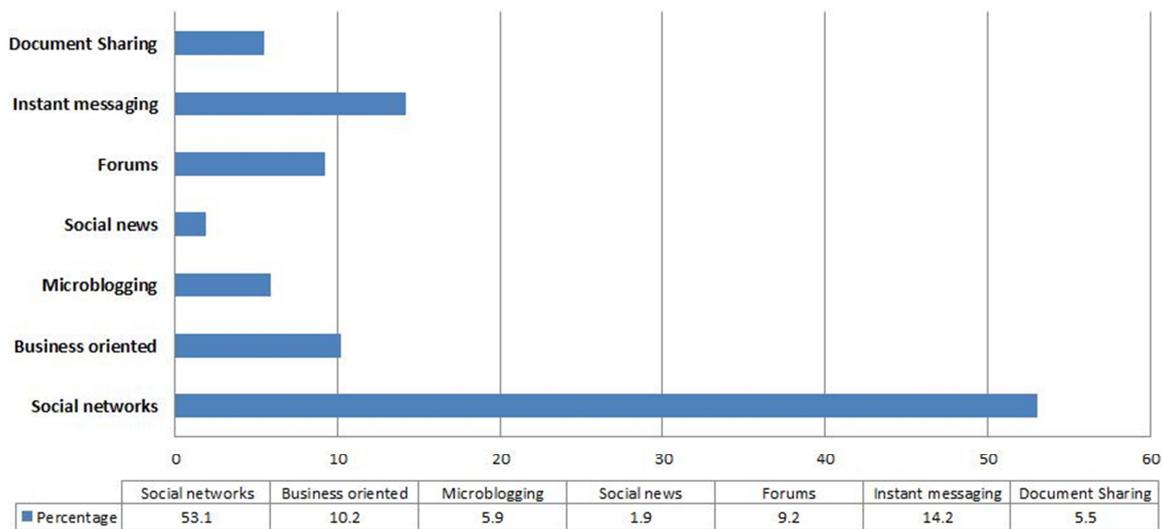


Figure 5. Social media recommendations

Based on the respondent suggestion the following recommendations for using social media at the higher educational institutions derived as: Share course materials such as lecture slides, articles and supportive documents; Send timely notifications about lecture, events, exams, course updates and assignments; Information can be passed to students' mobile phones; Real time Q&A and problem solving is possible; Improved communication is possible in between lecturers and students; Enlarged exposure for students and staffs to technology, information and industry experts; Spreading news and other information; Connecting alumni; Formation of groups for different purposes; Efficient utilization of internal resources; The main reasons for endorsing the use of social media for educational purposes in any higher educational institution are that it is measured inexpensive, ease of access, ease of use, and its reachability.

5.2 Discussion

A correlation is there between the age of the respondents and the use of social media indeed. Most of the younger participants are more frequent users of social media. In contrast, aged participants are either lite users or non-users of social media. There are some assumptions like the use of technologies fully depend on the IT expertise level, but according to our research, since novice and expert users are connected to social media equally, even novice users more than expert users. More expert level users either rarely or never use social media than low expertise users. Further, respondents with minimal level of IT expertise fall more in multiple times per day users of social media. It clearly express that using social media is never been requires something that needs IT expertise. Those who are unaware of IT involved more in using social media which is known as pervasive computing. Another thing that can contribute to the pervasiveness of technology is more respondents use their mobile phones get access to social media at any time. Some serious challenges listed are knowledge and exposure, privacy and security problems, internal block of access, internet connectivity and lack of resources. Most of the users mentioned as critical challenge is lack of knowledge and exposure, unreliable internet connectivity. Some other common defies are social orientation, abuses and misuses, perception, time consumption and the lack of control. Apart from these challenges still there is a strong recommendation to use social media in higher educational institutions is exist. In those recommendations, most aim at targeting on the collaboration strengths, communication capability of social media.

6. Conclusion

To harness the openings of social media for public and private higher education institutions in Sri Lanka means capitalizing the very realistic challenges and issues presented by it. In Sri Lanka, the narrow bandwidth amount of internet and increased cost are most serious challenges. The lack of computer resources and accessibility to computers also one strong reason for the rapid increment of mobile internet usage and access of social media through mobile devices. In both public and private institutions in Sri Lanka, use of mobile phones to access social media is in penetration and it seems to be the answer for social media access. Social media presence in both public and private institutions supports both teaching and learning activities. Further, mobile social media access support such activities by increases the mobility. Therefore, teaching materials must become digital and communication between lecturers and students should never be a problematic thing with all the potentials social media combined with mobile devices present. At the same time, considering the fact that education should support our students with serious minds that are equipped to meet an ever evolving world, using all possible

technological advancements such as social media for educational and business drives should not be considered casually. It is clear that most of the educational institutions are not yet using social media for business purposes rather using it for educational purposes. However, the research advises that the time for private and public higher education institutions in Sri Lanka to realize the benefits of social media through mobile phones is now.

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