

Social Network Sites and Their Usage Pattern among College Going Students in Aizawl

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Abstract

A social network is a network of people. People within those networks are connected when they have certain relationships together (Haythornthwaite, 1996). Social Networking Sites are well-liked nowadays. Except texting and calling, Social Networking Sites are one of the popular and easy ways to keep in touch with a person. Communication is imperative to keep the friendship and the closeness of people. If you have not communicated within the day, within the week, within the month and within the year, it will have an effect on the closeness. The Educational project developed by Ligorja and Van der Meijden (2007) state that social networking sites also allow users to exchange information and ideas not only within the boundaries of a classroom, but across schools, districts, states and the world. The youth of today would use social networking sites in order to pour out all their ideas and emotions. No doubt, Social Networking Sites are of great help in the youth's daily life.

Key words: Social network sites, communication, friendship, exchange of information, ideas, and emotions

Introduction:

“Man is a social animal”. Human beings cannot live without social activities, as they want to interact, share and learn which bring changes in them and in their lives. There are different media to interact and share like some people likes to interact by calling their loved ones, some write letters to each other, some like to meet face-to-face and now most of the people go for internet as a medium to share as it is the latest, easy and affordable. In recent times, people are attracted towards the new medium to interact i.e. Social Networking Sites.

As we are living in the global village, a social network is the network of people. People within these networks are connected when they have a certain relationship together. According to Raacke & Bonds-Raacke (2008), Social Networking Sites are online virtual spaces where people of related interests gather together to share ideas, have discussions, and further the pool of individuals from whom they have access to communicate with.

People within those networks are connected when they have any certain relationship together says

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Haythornthwaite (1996). Boyd and Ellison (2007) comment that in the past decade social networking sites have become the mainstream cultural phenomenon. They have proved useful for everything from keeping in touch with friends to dating, research collaboration, education and political activism.

The contemporary period has come to be labeled variously as an information age, communication age and cyber or networking age say, Keval J Kumar (1994). According to Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia, there are more than 300 Social Networking Sites and 1.5 billion members worldwide (www.en.wikipedia.org).

Social networking is the combination of two words. The first one is social which means that human society and the other word is networking which means the act of meeting new people in a business or social context. The history of social networking is very old but the new shape of social networking in this era is a service that focuses on building and reflecting on social networks or social relation among peoples. It is just a kind of social structure, in which people love to interact and communicate with their loved ones.

Social Networking Sites have also been defined as: “An online space that allows people to connect, share, communicate, establish or maintain a connection with others” (Cain, 2008).

Need for Social Networking Sites:

Today social networking sites are being used in innumerable areas and ways

to conduct personal learning. These sites allow in different ways for one to grow in knowledge:

Popularity: Social media has been adopted by a critical mass of the population which means it is important for organizations to have a social media presence. Generally, some official presence is better than none even if a specific strategy has not been defined.

Advertising: Social media is an enormous advertising platform. Organizations are able to target individuals based on specific interests shared on social media. For example, if an individual watches a YouTube Video about jogging, a shoe company can serve in ad or a coffee company can target ads to individuals who post that they are tired on social media sites.

Social Networking Sites are well-liked nowadays. Social Networking Sites are one of the popular and easy ways to keep in touch with a person. Communication is very imperative to keep the friendship and the closeness of people. If you have not communicated within the day, within the week, within the month and within the year, it will have an effect on the closeness.

Social Networking Sites are the easy and best way to communicate for such people. It is an excellent way of communicating with the people we recognize. We can also have the possibility of meeting new friends. They can be from within our country, or even from dissimilar parts of the world. These

websites help us cooperate with people from distant places. We mail them, we make conversation with them, and even play games with them. Social Networking Websites recommend people to be in touch, exchange contact information, sending an immediate message, and stay up to date on friends' activities and what they are doing. In a similar fashion as blogs, Social Networking Sites allow individuals to present themselves to other users using a variety of formats, including text and video. Just like chatting services, Social Networking Sites incorporate a list of other users with whom individuals share a connection. But unlike any other web service, Social Networking Sites allow individuals to make visible their list of connections to others and to traverse their social networks (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Social Networking Sites have a tendency to share some conservative features. For the most part, individual users are encouraged to make profiles enclosing a variety of information about them. Users can frequently upload snaps of themselves to their profiles, post blog access for others to read, search for other users with comparable interests, and gather and share lists of associates. In addition, user profiles often have a segment dedicated to comments from friends and other users. To guard user privacy, social networks usually have controls that allow users to decide who can view their profile, contact them, add them to their list of contacts, and so on. In the life of today's youth, virtual

communities known as Social Networking Sites play a vital role. According to a research, more than 90% of teenagers have access to the Internet and more than half use Social Networking Sites (Moreno, Stoep, & al, 2009).

What is the prime and most important reason for today's youngsters to go to these sites? Due to the emergence of Social Networking Sites, a major paradigm shift has taken place among the millions of youngsters today. Why are these sites flowering among the students especially among the college students? The answer is quite crystal clear and vivid; it is able to find friends easily and from groups very easily according to the interest, college and business. It is very easy to upload photos, share views on different issues on politics, education, culture, cinema, sports, daily events and happenings.

Theoretical Framework:

Utility Theory, often known as the "Uses and Gratification Approach", offers another way of explaining why young people expose themselves to local networking sites, why they flock to these sites and what they learn from it.

Blumler and Katz's uses and gratification theory suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using media. Users take an active part in the communication process and are goal oriented in their media usage. Theorist says that media users seek to outsource that which best fulfills their needs. Uses and gratification theory assumes that users

have alternate choices to satisfy their needs (Griffin, 2000). The focus of this theory is that viewers attend, perceive and remember information that is pleasurable or that will in some way help satisfy their needs.

McLead and Becker (1981) and Haridakis and Whitmore (2006), classify Uses and Gratification theory like

- a) Be active and have goal driven media usage
- b) The media must possess the ability to fulfill a wide array of the users
- c) Audience must be cognizant and capable of communicating the specific motives for media selection and usage

The idea of media utility was further developed and expanded into two sub-categories: social utility and personal utility (Borton (2009)). He proposed that media users seek to find media that have personal utility and thus seek to obtain gratifications on an individual or specialized level.

Review of Literature:

Backstrom Lars et al., (2006) discussed some interesting factors about the emergence of online groups in web communities in social networking sites. The main objectives of the studies are:

1. The structured features that influence individual to join a community
2. The rapid growth of online communities

3. Change over in overlapping among the pairs of communication

The result shows that the individual who wants to join the communities and the rapid growth of communities do not depend upon the individual interest to join but also the individual seeks how the community friends are connected together with another member.

Topper (2007) discussed the social networking sites in a library. The focal points and objectives of the research are that how social networking sites library are useful among the students and those who are in the academic field. The major findings of Topper were that research and public are in social networking sites library for literature review and gathered material for their academic purpose. In general, the younger generation's idea about internet, and social networking sites technologies in particular, was identified from the research.

Kevin et al. (2010) conducted a study titled as "The Use of Alternative Social Networking Sites in Higher Education Settings: A Case Study of E-Learning Benefits of Ning in Education", on educational benefits associated with the use of social networking sites. The study focused on the graduate students enrolled in distance education courses using Ning in education, a non-commercial, educational-based social networking site. The study was based on the student's attitudes towards the sites as productive online tools for teaching and learning. The researchers found out that education based

social networking sites can be used most effectively in distance education courses. They are an excellent technological tool for improved online communications among students in higher distance education courses.

Shin and Kim (2008) in their research among the students say that social networking via Cyworld takes up the major portion of the time spent online, where meeting, dating and entertaining people online has become a social norm with over 20 million unique visitors a month, Cyworld's usage is actually greater than the registered user base.

Gill (2008) conducted a survey among the children and youth worldwide on the freedom of using social networking sites. He gives an interesting report that respondents have adopted social networking sites enthusiastically, partly because of the erosion of children's freedom in the physical world.

The Educational project developed by Ligorina and Van der Meijden (2007) states that social networking sites also allow users to exchange information and ideas not only within the boundaries of a classroom but across schools, districts, states and the world.

Raacke and Bonds-Raace's (2008) showed similar results from a study of 116 students of an East Coast University and found that 87.1 percent of the sample has

social networking sites account and 90.1 percent of those accounts were with *Facebook*. Ellison et al. (2007) found that 94 per cent of their 800 undergraduate student sample had a *Facebook* account. Stern and Taylor (2007) found that their sample of 532 students contained 70 percent *Facebook* users. This data makes clear that students are using other social networking site but dominant populations of students are using Facebook.com as their social networking site.

Objectives of the study:

1. To explore the usage of social network sites by college students.
2. To identify the reasons for the usage of social networking sites among the college students.
3. To learn how the youth value the social networking sites.

Methodology:

Quantitative research is applied, where Purposive Random Sampling Method is used for the best result of the study. A sample of 210 college-going students from different colleges within Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram was taken for the study. The sample total of 210 students consists of 105 females and 105 males, all are aged between 18 to 25 years. A structured questionnaire was distributed and collected for analysis of the feedback.

Analysis and Discussion:

Table: 1

Respondents' access to internet gender wise	Female		Male		Total	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Access to internet everyday	105	-	105	-	210	-

Table:2

Gender wise identification of favourite SNS		Female	Male	Total
Favourite site the respondents' access the most	Facebook	101	96	207
	Instagram	4	9	13
		105	105	210

Table Nos-1 and 2 shows that the college students in Aizawl have access to the internet and are rapid users of social networking sites. It is seen that both the females and males have no difference in accessing internet. Facebook is the most preferred site among the college students and Instagram is the next.

Socialnetworkingwatch.com (June 10, 2012) website gives an interesting fact that *Facebook* is eating the world, except China and Russia. *Facebook* is number 1 in 126 out of 137 countries that were analyzed. Europe has the largest users on *Facebook* with 232 million users, while North America has 222 million and the whole Asia boasts of 219 million users.

Table: 3

Reasons for accessing the Social Network Sites		Female	Male	Total
1	For Time pass	105	105	210
2	Upload and download pictures and videos	102	95	197
3	Browsing for assignments works	95	95	190
3	New friendship	95	70	165
4	Maintain old and new relationship	80	60	140
5	For updating latest news and information	60	65	125
6	Online discussions of various issues	58	65	123

The seven points show that social networking sites have an established place in the lives of college going youth. It can be seen that social networking sites are used as time pass, entertainment and also for gaining knowledge as well. It can be concluded that even though there might be many negative points there are many positive points as well for using social networking sites.

Table: 4

	Female		Male		Total	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Do you think social networking sites are an extra disturbance in today's life	-	105	-	105	-	210

Table:5

The youth of today would use social networking sites in order to pour out all their ideas and emotions. They would post or tweet anything that they have in mind as well as “like” or “share” posts, pictures or links which they think are interesting. All these activities may be a teenager’s way of releasing stress. It is also one way for sharing with others different knowledge which is not taught in school by sharing links, pictures or videos about details of a place, a thing, or a topic which has been overlooked during a discussion in class. They can even use these to cheer up friends who just had a bad day by posting something funny and then “tagging” their friends. Also, letting the youth share what’s in their mind in a public area can serve as a remedy for timidity because it helps them get used to telling

people what they think on a certain topic. Indeed, the youth are able to benefit from this feature of social networking sites; however, there are also negative effects which go with this. There are certain studies which show how that excessive expression of thoughts can lead to turning our youth vain and ego-centric. There are those who would take pictures of themselves just to post them on *Facebook* while there are others who tweet every action, every activity that they are doing on Twitter. It’s as if they are documenting their lives using these sites—like using them as their “public diaries.” Aside from this, there are also those people who post negative things about people whom they have had conflicts with. There are a lot of people who do not think thoroughly about what they are about to post. They tend to

prioritize what they feel than the effects of the act that they are about to do. Cyber bullying also emerged because of this. There are those who blackmail people by threatening them that they would post something embarrassing regarding that person if they don't abide by what the cyber bully wants.

Apart from expressing ideas and emotions, the youth use these sites in order to communicate with other people. They are able to keep in touch with their friends without having to exert money and effort in meeting up with them at some place. It is cheaper than using a cellphone because they wouldn't have to spend on load in order to text or call their friends using cellular phones and it is faster than snail mail because you wouldn't have to go to the post office to mail it and wait for a few days just so your friends can receive it. It makes communicating easier and faster. Also, one is able to communicate with their friends at any time of the day. They will be able to satisfy their immediate social needs at any given time in the comfort of their own homes. They wouldn't have to worry about spending money on transportation as well as on load just to meet up with friends. Also, they need not exert effort in going out of the house as well as worry regarding the

dangers which they may encounter outside of the house. This makes everything convenient for our modern youth; however, they should know how to use these properly. The youth of today tend to put this first before accomplishing home works and projects. They would rather spend their extra time in chatting with friends rather than studying their lessons in advance. Some would even opt to just forget about their projects and home works entirely in order to use these sites. Teenagers nowadays are sometimes inclined to satisfy their social needs first before accomplishing what it is they need for school.

Conclusions:

It is no doubt that Social Networking Sites are of great help in the youth's daily life; however, it has positive and negative effects which depend on how a person will utilize it. Social Networking Sites can benefit us in numerous ways and that it can make life easier for us; however, we should keep in mind that everything in life should be taken in moderation—in this case, done in moderation. We should always set our priorities straight and remember that despite being given all that we need, a little extra work wouldn't do us harm.

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Dr. Irene Lalruatkimi

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