User Perception of Social Networking Sites in the University of Swaziland: A Comparative Study of the of Health Science and Agricultural Science Students

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ABSTRACT

Internet has experienced tremendous growth in today’s world and social networking sites have become highly significant in our lives. The present comparative study between the students of Agriculture and Health Science concentrate more precisely on the students who come to the library. The research explores how the students create identity for themselves in the virtual world and how they relate to others online. It analyzes the cultural differences from the youth perspective and discusses whether social networking sites isolate youngsters from the society or help them to build relationships; the participation in these sites is also explored. The study is based on a survey. Students completed a questionnaire which assessed personal use of social media when communicating with friends and family. The findings disclosed that social networking is gaining popularity among them. Facebook is the most popular and used social networking site followed by WhatsApp and Google plus.

Keyword: Agricultural Science, Facebook, Google Plus, Health Science, Social Media, Swaziland, User perceptions, WhatsApp

INTRODUCTION

Social Networking refers to a process of relationship building among a group of people who have a common interest. As social media sites continue to grow in popularity, it is our premise that technology is a vital part in today’s student success equation. Social networks have privacy controls that allow the user to choose who can view their profile or contact them. Social networking sites are used for social activities by organizations, academia and the general public especially the youth around the world. In the present era the younger generation comes to work with their social relationships and networks already intact.

The present study is an attempt to understand the use of social networking sites by the students of Health Science and Agriculture at the University of Swaziland. The students at UNISWA actively interact and use social networking sites for different purposes. So it was felt to conduct a study on the use of the social networking sites. Questionnaire was the main instrument for

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data collection. Four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire were distributed randomly to the target audience who come to library. A total number of 328 (82%) copies were returned and used for the study. The findings reveal that the respondents consist of all the Academic Departments in the two faculties, while the most used social networking site is Facebook followed by Google Plus and then by Whatapp.

**Objectives**

The objectives of the study are:

- To find out the most popular use social networking sites among the users under the study;
- To know the purpose of using social networking sites by the users;
- To know the awareness of social networking sites among the students;
- To find out the frequency of use of social networking sites;
- To identify problems and risks associated with the use of social networking sites;
- To discover the problems they have been able to solve using social networking sites.

**Review of Related Literature**

Use of social networking site is growing rapidly as new technology becomes available. Computer-mediated communication allows young adults to interact over social media with family and friends. A number of research studies have been done on the use of social networking sites but a thorough literature search did not find similar research done in Swaziland. Establishing a network is important. Social network sites is a public web-based services that allow users to develop a personal profile, identify other users (“friends”) with whom they have a connection, read and react to postings made by other users on the site, and send and receive messages either privately or publicly. Individuals may choose to send private messages, write on Boyd and Ellison (2007). However, users can limit themselves on what information they would like to share publicly with others. Some items they may choose to include are: pictures, favorite books and movies, birthday, relationship status, and location (Tufekci, 2008).

Social networking sites are becoming more widely used than they have been before (Olusegun…et al., 2009). Use of social networking sites has been studied but there seems to be less research done on this field. The study will provide an insight into the perception and use of social networking sites in the University of Swaziland in Health Science and Agriculture.

**Research Methodology**

To ensure that the perceptions of social media are based on diverse population of users a structured questionnaire was prepared for collecting the data. A total of four hundred (400) questionnaires were distributed to the students who visited the library and it was found that the whole academic community was involved in the survey. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

**Findings and Discussion**

Table 1 shows the gender of the respondent. Out of the 328 respondents it was found that 158 (48%) were male and 170 (52%) were female. The overall response rate is 82%.

The faculty of Health Science (Table 2) has (4) Academic departments i) Community Health Nursing Science, ii) Environmental Health Science, iii) General Nursing Science and iv) Midwifery Science. From the above analysis it is seen that students from all the four departments took
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