Web 2.0 Usage by Saudi Female Students for Information Sharing in Public Sector University: A Pilot Study

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the authors explore the usage of Web 2.0 by Saudi female students for their information and knowledge sharing. The results are based on a survey conducted in one of the public sector universities in Saudi Arabia. Questionnaire is developed to get insight about the usage of social media by female students. The results highlighted that Web 2.0 applications are widely adopted by students for their academic collaboration and information sharing. This pilot study advocates for a more rigorous study to validate the findings across the country.

KEYWORDS

E-government, Public Sector Universities, Social Media, Social Networking, Web 2.0

INTRODUCTION

Web 2.0 (cf. Lauren et al. 2016) is considered as a platform that is meant to facilitate communication and connect many devices independent of their operational system. Web 2.0 has changed the socialization practices of people (cf. Xin et al. 2014). Instant, free and wide availability of web 2.0 applications has resulted in enormous presence of masses in these applications (cf. Salamon, 2003). This increased presence of public started using these applications for other than socialization purposes such as to conduct business and academic learning. Social networking and Web 2.0 tools let the user to play with the online content in different ways i.e. user can do posting, collaboration, sharing and communications etc. (cf. Macaskill, 2006). The horizon report describes that user can create online content using web 2.0 tools in collaboration with social networking using mobile phones that has high impact on their education (cf. Horizon Report 2010). Another interesting fact file given by Uzunboylu et al. (cf. Uzunboylu 2009) is about the pros of web 2.0. According to them web 2.0 technologies has manifold advantages ranging from cost reduction, instant and easy access, flexibility in choosing of technology to platform independence. Other advantages are low level skill needed by the users, easy sharing of information, resources and experience. They also discuss flexibility, accessibility and many ways of creating digital media as some benefits of using web 2.0 for learning.

According to Freeman et al. (cf. Freeman 2009), in today’s world government sector organizations can provide better services to their users using more interactive social networking and web 2.0 tools. Danis et al. (cf. Danis 2009) argues that governments can use social networking websites to acquire all types of resources they need by creating an effective environment of cooperation. Romsdahl (cf. Romsdahl 2005) is of the opinion that the use of social media and web 2.0 for policy making process by government helps to build a healthy relationship between government and the citizens.

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A comparative study conducted by an institution Accenture (cf. Bernard, 2014) to assess the use of social media and e-government services in 10 countries showed that about 81% of the users are of the opinion that there should be more e-government services provided to them, while most of them also like to use social media for their communication with public sector institutions.

Bhatt (cf. Bhatt 2008) is of the opinion that scientists are using different social networking tools to exchange knowledge and their ideas. In this way they can provide profound comments and feedback to other researchers.

Another research conducted by DeRosa et. al. (cf. DeRosa 2010) shows that wide range of student is adopting the social networking sites for information sharing and knowledge management especially in university libraries. Researchers mentioned Facebook and MySpace as the most widely used websites for library usage and referencing. Tyagi (cf. Tyagi 2012) conducted a research study in six Indian Universities to investigate the use of web 2.0 technology in the academia for knowledge and information sharing. Survey instrument was used as a tool to gain viewpoint of about 300 respondents (Professors, Associate Professors, and Assistant Professors). It was concluded that the use of web 2.0 technologies in these universities of India is still under progress and is facing a lot of obstacles, risks and challenges. But in spite of these facts most of the faculties members are using web 2.0 for majorly three purposes: for web based teaching, research and to keep themselves up to date on related topic of interest. In addition to faculty members, students are also getting manifold benefits in their studies and research by the use of social media. According to Atik K.et al. (cf. Atik 2014) social media usage can boost student’s motivation, help them achieve their academic and educational goals easily and effectively, change and improve the methods of learning and gain of knowledge, easy and time independent access to information, multitasking and collaboration.

Mohammed A Balubaid (cf. Balubaid 2013) carried out a research to examine the use of Web 2.0 technology as a tool and platform for knowledge sharing in one of the departments of King Abdulaziz University. Survey instrument was used to carry out the research and results were formulated by getting 77 valid responses from the users. According to the survey conducted it was found that most of the students are of the opinion that current knowledge sharing process i.e. the use of notice boards is acceptable one but there should be a wide spread mechanism, so that knowledge will be shared with more students. Among web 2.0 technology Facebook was placed at number 1 position by gaining the vote of 70% students as the best medium for knowledge sharing, Twitter and Google+ were placed at second and their rank.

Abdelsalam et al., (cf. Abdelsalam 2013) have looked at the usage of web 2.0 applications to foster research collaboration in Egyptian public universities. They found huge benefits of web 2.0 applications in creating and sustaining academic collaborations. Atik et. al. (cf. Atik 2014) through their research in some of the public sector educational institution in UK are of the view that social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube LinkedIn are the widely adopted tools for information and knowledge sharing among students in UK. Keeping this in view, we wanted to explore the role of web 2.0 applications by students in Saudi Arabia. We were mainly interested to know the level of Web 2.0 usage by students, in Saudi Arabian University.

**METHODS**

The empirical data was collected using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was mainly extracted from an earlier similar conducted in Egyptian public sector universities (cf. Abdelsalam et al., 2013). The questionnaire was distributed among undergraduate female students of University of Dammam, Saudi Arabia during the month of December 2014. Survey questionnaire was validated and tested by authors before dissemination to respondents. In order to explain the research context one of the author briefly explained the objectives of conducting research to respondents and mainly most of the students/participants are having computer science as their major, so they already have knowledge about web 2.0 applications. We received 144 responses and analyzed them by clustering data into graphs to understand the findings.
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