Chapter 10

Mobile Technology and Social Media Literacy: Exploring Architecture and Interior Architecture Students’ Practices

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ABSTRACT

Advancing information and communication technologies (ICT) are reshaping our daily lives. Mobile communication devices, especially the introduction of smartphones, changed the way we communicate both professionally and socially. Mobile technologies are spreading our daily lives with the help of social media applications. Implementation of social networks to the education programs may encourage students to reach information, share their work, get feedback more easily, and produce content that will build up their portfolios and professional identities for their future career. However, in order to achieve such a goal, it is quite important to understand their behavioural patterns on social networks and mobile technology use. In this context, this research tries to explore architecture and interior architecture students’ social network patterns under the social media literacy framework.

INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are restructuring our everyday daily life with an increasing pace. An important part of this accelerating change is driven by advancing mobile communication devices. Enhanced by the introduction of smart phones, mobile technologies are spreading our daily lives along with the social media applications. This technological advancement changed the way we communicate both professionally and socially. Mobile devices, especially smart phones are literally becoming our extensions and people who use them are being drawn in to these social media applications.
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as if they are neural networks of our natural bodies just as Marshall McLuhan predicted more than half a century ago in his book ‘Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man’ (McLuhan, 1964)

The generation born roughly after 1980 is called “generation Y”, “Millennials” or “Net Generation”. The Net Generation is considered to have grown up in an environment they were regularly exposed to computer based technology. Not surprisingly, technology marketing seems to aim more at the Net Generation as a substantial consumer group. Consequently, current higher education is being shaped by these tech-savvy millennials and the advent of web 2.0. Technology is a critical part of learning environments (Gikas & Grant, 2013), that is valid for traditional brick-and-mortar classrooms as well as e-learning settings.

Alter (2017) indicates that, the average time spent on telephone has increased from 18 minutes to an average of 3 hours a day and underlines the attribution of the social media applications on that change. Under the light of this substantial transformation, it is quite liable to acknowledge smartphones as the dominant driver of social media. However, there are some serious side effects of these technological advancement that should also be mentioned. Social media applications seem to be creating digitized medium for a virtual social life instead of boosting our personal social interactions that we used to have face-to-face. Similarly, Greenfield (2012) quotes the Internet as “… a socially connecting device that's socially isolating at the same time”. Social and technological existence that are all online increases the flow of information day by day and by the time you finish checking your e-mails and social networks, it is time to check your e-mail and social media accounts again. Alter (2017) call this a ludic loop that is a process that puts you into a state of serenity such as the soothed state people are in while playing slot machines at casinos. This state of comfort relieves the anxiety we live in and has a strong potential to drag us into an addiction if it begins to fulfil a missing psychological motive. The addictive use of Internet is not a new phenomenon. This condition is commonly cited as Internet addiction disorder (IAD) whereas there are other terms used such as pathological Internet use, Internet abuse, digital media compulsion and virtual addiction (Greenfield, 2012). It is considered quite similar to other addictions like drug, alcohol and gambling which results in social, academic, and occupational impairment (Young, 1998).

Although the debate about the definition and extent of IAD is still going on, studies reveal that young users are more at risk (Ferraro, Caci, D’Amico, & Blasi, 2007). Teenagers and young adults are among the highest percentage of smartphone and social media application users (Perrin, 2015). As an apparent result, colleges and higher education institutions are in a challenge to limit and control students’ smartphone and social network use as these practices are considered as distracting for the conventional education practices. On the other hand, academicians are tending to spend more time with their mobile devices and use social networks similarly. Moreover, we are on the verge of a connected world with the ‘internet of things’ that will be a breakthrough innovation in technological advancements and our digital environment. Under the light of all these forthcoming developments, it seems things will get tougher to leave these devices out of classrooms.

The idea of using mobile devices and social media applications for the benefit of education is being discussed by various researchers like Gikas & Grant (2013), Liu (2010), but research on using such tools and technologies for undergraduate architecture and interior architecture students is far from being extensive. Besides, existing data and insights are in line for becoming irrelevant with an unusual pace. It is essential to understand the nature of the social media context and to what extent students can reach, understand, practice and benefit social media applications in order to propose educational solutions using mobile technologies.
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