

Assessment of Utilization and Challenges of Social Network Media Usage Among Universities in Tanzania.

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ABSTRACT

This research was purposely conducted to assess the utilization of social networking media (SNM), and to determine the challenges of SNM in selected Universities in Tanzania. The descriptive survey research design was used, and the respondents were students who were selected randomly. The main instrument was a questionnaire which was distributed to the respondents. The researcher collected 30 completed questionnaires which was the sample size. Data were analyzed using frequency, tables, and percentage.

The findings showed that utilization of SNM in the selected Universities was primarily for communication, online learning and research work. Twitter was the most appropriate media used by the respondents followed by facebook and skype/google among others. Slow Internet connection was found to be the key challenge when using SNM. Lack of IT skills to access the media, and misuse of personal information by others were among the challenges in SNM utilization. It is therefore recommended that the University management should give a hand on support to the utilization of SNM, and be willing to recognize the challenges students face and to provide the necessary policy and practical support to help overcome these challenges in order to promote the good use of SNM.

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Introduction:

Social networking media (SNM) are being used for interacting with people within the institutions and beyond it, depending on their field of interest. Development and delivery of knowledge are some of the major functions of a university. For any University to achieve this, it must accept the offers and opportunities made available by the deployment of ICT. Such knowledge is expected to be transformed into concepts that address the problems of the society skills of IT. The Internet is the latest in a series of technological breakthroughs in interpersonal communication, following the telegraph, telephone,

radio, and television. It combines innovative features of its predecessors, such as bridging great distances and reaching a mass audience. For the above to hold, universities should be able to understand the issues and problems of their immediate society and propose/develop curriculum that can tackle such, appropriately. Since the human environment is consistently changing, the needed tools to tackle them will also have to change as soon as possible (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Social network sites (SNSs) such as Face book, Friendster, twitter, and MySpace allow individuals to present themselves, articulate their social networks, and establish or maintain connections with others. These

sites can be oriented towards work-related contexts (e.g., LinkedIn.com), romantic relationship initiation (the original goal of Friendster.com), connecting those with shared interests such as music or politics (e.g. MySpace.com), or the college student population (the original incarnation of Facebook.com). The online social network application in this paper, Facebook, enables its users to present themselves in an online profile, accumulate "friends" who can post comments on each other's pages, and view each other's profiles. This leads to increase in immoral act among youths and other user. Participants may use the sites to interact with people they already know offline or to meet new people.

Development in the internet, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, digitalization, social networking, communication devices, etc is revolutionizing how we relate. Teaching is a form of communication. There is no teaching without communication. This same process applies to the university environment. Commonly people now have devices that send and receive email on the go. Such devices are also used, in most cases, for voice communication, data communication, instant messaging amongst others. Members of many University communities now share real time resources including lecture podcast, university mail system.

A higher number of any University communities are the students and therefore generalizations on University issues should be centered on them. Sometimes ago, internet services were considered a slot for a category of people who can afford it. Then, it was viewed as something very special which is made available to only wizkids. Now it has become part of everyday life. People routinely integrate it into the ways in which they communicate with each other, moving between phone, computer, and in-person encounters. For this, this paper marks down on the use of social networks brought about by the availability of internet and its implication on academic performance.

Although social networking is possible in most places, especially in the workplace, universities, and high schools, it is most popular online. This is essential because in most universities internet is used by people who are interested in meeting other International Journal of Computer Trends and Technology. Issues on social networking are numerous as the factors to consider, the application are web based and they run on the internet as websites. They are often called social sites which functions like ordinary web pages. Social networking websites function like an online community of internet users. Depending on the website in question,

many of these online community members share common interests in hobbies, religion, or politics. Once you are granted access to a social networking website you can begin to socialize. This socialization may include reading the profile pages of other members and possibly even contacting them. This same thing occurs within the University where student have the freedom to belong to any community on the web.

Most Tanzania Universities now provide computing equipment and access to the internet to enable staff and student carry out their work for the University. But due to the interwoven system of social network and their cooperate branding status, most universities do not block access to them. Communications among internet users are always high. This is due to the constantly growing number of user. It is observed that most internet facilities come with readymade social network platform that by itself encourages users of internet infrastructure to use these networks. Most mobile phones now accept multimedia and data services with pre installed Social Network services link. Some earlier study have attributed the use of social network to high performance but in this paper we evaluate the performance of our respondents and deduce that the performance varies due to some factors such as course of study, parental background, region of study etc and however in the Tanzania context, it's a source that can be attribute lowering grades.

Purpose of Study:

This study explored the usage of social networking media among Universities in Tanzania. Its purpose was to assess the utilization of social networking media among Universities in Tanzania. Accordingly, the following research questions guided the study;

- i. What are the main reasons of utilization of social networking media among the Universities in Tanzania?
- ii. What are the challenges of social networking utilization to students Tanzanian Universities?
- iii. What are the possible remedies which can be used to overcome challenges the utilization of social networking media among Universities in Tanzania?

The study used Tumaini Makumira University, Open University of Tanzania, and Kampala International University- Dar es salaam College to represent universities in Tanzania. These Universities were chosen because they are well recognized institutions in Tanzania as far as quality education, student population and ICT utilization is concerned.

Literature Review

To Assess the Usage of Social Networking Media:

When it comes to communication in the sciences, authors have always emphasized that communication is the essence of science (Garvey, 1979) and that without communication there would be no science (quoted in Lacy & Bush, 1983). Such assumption is applied to humanities and social sciences, as well. Moreover, social learning theorists believe that the link between communication and human behavior is, in a way, that human behavior itself is learned through interaction with and observation of others in a social context (Bandura, 1986). Today, social communication affected by the merge of new technologies and new mediums, is collectively called social networking software. With such developments, the concept of invisible colleges is shifted to be invisible communities of the current era. Here, people, whether in science or humanities, are generally interacting to exchange information, brainstorm ideas, search for new friends, and share everyday news. In the academic environment, more investments have been introduced to link those new online developments (namely Web 2.0 applications) to learning, teaching and researching. Scholars communicate to share knowledge, deploy new theories and learning models, formulate new research initiations, disseminate their final results, solve experimental or theoretical problems, and get critiques and feedback

Uysman and Eulf (2006) analyzed the related literature and derived that SNM is a pervasive phenomenon among today's university students and that such networks can result in the creation of social capital. Other studies indicate that students' current social structure is habitually linked to the era's communication tools. Our era now highly depends on the Internet, and online communication and group knowledge sharing leading to instrumental outcomes.

According to Bonk & Graham (2006), Internet integration in higher education has stimulated high expectations, especially regarding accessibility, interactivity and opportunities for improved instruction. However, it has not reached its full potential. Faculty members use the web as a content supplier rather than a facilitator of educational novelty.

Huron (2012) stated that U.S. libraries of all types are turning more and more to social media and Web 2.0 applications and tools, using a wide range of applications to connect with customers. Facebook and Twitter in particular have proven themselves as useful tools not only in publicizing the availability of online

collections, but also in building trusted relationships with users. He further stated that in US, Social networking is used to publicize library events such as gaming nights; to alert users to additions to collections; to provide links to articles, videos, or Web content that might prove relevant or helpful to patrons; and to provide a conduit for community information. Social media also play an important role in fostering relationships with the community by allowing patrons to ask questions or provide feedback about library services.

Simon (2013) argued that neither Japan nor Korea was a 'Facebook market. According to their previous report Korea's primary social network was CyWorld, while Japanese social media users appeared to prefer Twitter but the rapid growth of newer chat platforms might scupper the world's favorite network's plans to grow in these countries. However, social media penetration has fluctuated around the region in the past few months, with a number of 'mature' markets – including Brunei, Singapore and Hong Kong registering a drop in penetration as the frequency of Facebook usage begins to slow.

Zakaria, Watson, and Edwards (2010) studied the use of social media by Malaysian students and found that students have been using the Internet applications specifically social media for both formal and informal types of learning. The general opinion gathered about the integration of social media tools into learning is positive although some degree of inexperience and hesitancy was noted in particular tools. Students also appear to be passive in the context of content construction but they regularly obtain or download information. The data analyzed raised hope that social media implementation in Malaysia may yield similar benefits with their other counterparts from different countries.

When examining usage patterns in light of Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory, it seems that innovators and early adopters are using social media to revive their efforts in terms of public relations, fundraising and increasing the community, while the majority of organizations lag behind (Waters, 2010).

Andre (2010) in his study stated that in Africa, social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are amongst the most visited websites in Africa (Andre, 2010). Recent rankings show Africa is the continent with the most dynamic Facebook growth rates, its user numbers having doubled in the past six months.

Erik (2011) found out that Egypt, but also Nigeria and South Africa are amongst the countries with the most rapid uptake. The Twitter micro-blogging service is also gaining importance as a communication tool despite its short and dramatic history in Africa having dropped its SMS services in 2008, the company has recently reintroduced them in some countries and is looking to expand.

To Determine the Challenges encountered in using Social Networking Media:

A review of literature reveals that these emerging technologies are increasingly being implemented in academic institutions and may have a major challenge on existing teaching and learning practices (Espinoza, 2008). For IT departments, this unfolding and rapidly evolving environment is fraught with challenges. It's critical to build an IT architecture that supports social media tools and extends them to mobile devices. It's also crucial to cull unstructured social media data and plug it into existing databases and systems in order to support advanced analytics.

There are cultural issues to consider and security challenges to address. "It's an area that no company can ignore," A company's ability to meet fair competition guidelines can be jeopardized by employees using social media on behalf of the company; for example, if an employee, whilst representing the company, takes matters into their own hands and uses social media unethically, to discredit the reputation of their employer's competitors (Nestle, 2007). Alternatively, employees might post negative comments about the company on their personal social media profile. This is harder for companies to control. Similarly, students can use information about their colleagues to commit crimes.

What may be the most concerning aspect of social networking platforms is that they encourage people to share personal information. Even the most cautious and well-meaning individuals can give away information they should not; the same applies to what is posted on company-approved social networking platforms. Employees may not be aware of how their actions online may compromise company security

Possible Remedies Used To Overcome Those Challenges

There are various initiatives, practice and strategies used to address those challenges so as to improve the usage of SNM. According to Tidio & Browne,(2005) and Sharma, (2009) those strategies invite teacher professional development on the use of technology,

sharing of content and information through education network, private and public partnership in ICT funding and development of quality education online resources in local languages.

In Tanzania, there is an emphasis on ICT training to staffs but there is no coordinated efforts at university level to encourage students and instructors to use computer and internet for instruction. It is the task of an individual instructor and students in their course (Nihuka, 2008).

Methodology:

The research design was descriptive survey research design which systematically describes the details and characteristics of a population. A self-designed questionnaire was used to collect data from the 30 respondents selected randomly from four (4) Universities in Tanzania.

Table 1: Distribution of the sample of the study

University	Number	Percent (%)
TumainiMakumira University	08	26.7
University of Dar es salaam	10	33.3
Open University of Tanzania	07	23.3
Kampala int'l University- Dar es salaam College	05	16.7
TOTAL	30	100

Closed questionnaire was designed to collect data on opportunities, challenges and remedies used to overcome challenges faced in utilization of e-learning technology.

The face validity of questionnaire was established by giving the questionnaire to experts to comment on its validity. The questionnaire was administered to 30 University students by the researcher. The results are presented with tables and charts

Analysis of Findings

To Assess the usage of Social Media Network media

Below are the respondents' ratings on the assessment of usage of social networking media among Tanzanian University to know how they apply it in different situations.

Reasons for Using Social Media Network:

The result showed the respondents' ratings about the reasons for using Social Network Media. The findings indicate that 8 of the respondents (27%) prefer to use social networking media for communication. For the reasons of online learning and research work, there was equal number of respondents 6 shown by (20%) of the respondents as their favorite reasons for using SNM. However there were minor reasons as to what other respondents identified as the reasons for using social networking media These were shown by average number of respondents with 4 of the respondents (13%) using SNM for advertisement, 3 of the them (10%) were using SNM for the reason of finding jobs online, while 2 of the respondents (7%) used it for finding social contacts and 1 of them (3%) for the reason video conferencing. Therefore the highest number of respondents believed that communication is the key reason for using social networking media

Table: 2.Reasons for Using Social Media Network (N = 30)

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
For video conferencing	1	3
For advertisement	4	13
Finding social contacts	2	7
For online learning	6	20
For finding jobs online	3	10
For communication	8	27
For research work	6	20
Total	30	100

Source: Field data (2016)

The results therefore implies that the key reason for using SNM was found to be communication which offer links to people from different geographical locations as shown in the table 2 above.

Social Networking Media that are most often used

The respondents' ratings on how often the sampled social networking media were used in the selected Universities showed that more than half of the respondents (30%) preferably found it easy to use Facebook while some of the respondents (17%) indicated that Twitter is their most preferred social network media. The result also showed that a number of the respondents (13%) preferred to use Youtube as their preferred social networking media. They indicated that with Youtube, you are able to download electronic materials at your own pace and also enable them to

create their personal account with Youtube which provide video conferencing. It could also perhaps enable them to download videos and other digital materials which is important to them. And for Answer.com it was indicated by 3 of the respondents as their favorite SNM.

This findings is supported by the related literature for example in the study conducted by Drennan, Kennedy, and Pisarski (2005) who found that student satisfaction and academic is influenced by positive perceptions towards technology and by an autonomous learning mode especially by using social media such as facebook for communication and exchange of learning materials. They also found that the personality characteristics that the student brings to the use of these media, such as an internal locus of control, can have a direct effect on academic performance and satisfaction with the course.

Table:3.Social Networking Media that are most often used (N=30)

Sample SNM	Frequency	Percentage
Twitter	4	13
Answer.com	3	10
Skype/Google	2	7
Yahoo groups	1	3
You tube	5	17
Yahoo nswers	6	20
Facebook	9	30
Total	30	100

Source: Field data (2016)

This implies that it is simpler to understand and easy to use Facebook for making friends, communication among others as indicated also in table 3 above, so it facilitates exchange of ideas on a matter in the discussion. Facebook also enables students to share various links and communication with friends where they were able exchange ideas on a given subject area which can be discussed and solutions found.

Challenges Encountered in Using Social Networking Media:

The results for the respondents' ratings on challenges faced when using the social media network indicated mixed reactions from the respondents as shown in the table 4 below. The results showed that 33% of the respondents indicated highly that slow Internet connection was the key challenge when accessing SNM. However, 24% of the respondents indicated that lack of advanced IT skills to enable them utilize social media network such as conducting video conferencing, sharing links among others is a big problem to them. Where 13% of the respondents

indicated that misuse of personal information by others especially when finding community of interest was a challenge, 10% of them indicated that losing security when purchasing for electronic article online is a big risk, while 24% of respondents indicated that lack of advanced IT skills to enable them utilize social media network such as conducting video conferencing, sharing links among others is a big problem to them.

Table: 4. Challenges encountered in Social Networking Media (N = 30)

Challenges encountered	Frequency	Per (%)
The misuse of personal information by others	04	13
Afraid from losing security (as a result of hacking)	03	10
Receiving too many junk or unwanted messages	01	03
People can post whatever they want	05	17
Lack of advanced IT skills	07	24
Slow Internet connection	10	33
Total	30	100

Source: Field data (2016)

The researcher therefore observed that slow Internet connection was the key challenge as it was indicated by the highest number of respondents (10), as indicated in the table 5 above.

The finding in this study supports the hypothesis posited in Teare's (2000) study on the challenging effects of electronic media and electronic learning in higher education. His study suggested those students who participate in social networking and conducting online learning courses find the delivery of course content impractical and frustrating due to lack of IT skills, slow Internet and technological failures among others. These findings imply that the problems with social networking media are not the value of the delivery methods but the reliability of the media and technology supporting them

Remedies Used To Overcome Those Challenges:

The findings indicate that Social Network Media (SNM) is being utilized haphazardly. Although there is no fixed forum for successful implementation of SNM usage, innovative strategies provide useful guidelines that can assist in the effective usage of SNM. A centralized policy-making, or administrative structure, in Universities is critical to implementing SNM

program in a consistent, effective, and efficient manner. Although most universities have some form of a central strategy for SNM utilization, there is lack of guidance for lecturers as to how they could implement the strategies. It is clear that universities should align their strategies to incorporate SNM.

Recommendation:

The recommendation is put forward with regard to utilization of social networking media, and challenges of SNM were encountered.

From the findings which showed that the popularity SNM is average in Tumaini Makumira University, it is therefore recommended by the researcher that utilization of social networking media should be effectively implemented to the Institution. Nationally, adoptable policy concerning social networking media should be equally implemented throughout the entire learning institutions across the country. This would create equal awareness about the influence of social networking media in education.

The researcher also recommends the University management should willingly come up with a support of social networking media by practically finding the solutions to the challenges in utilization of SNM which have been discovered by this research. There is need for improvement in IT infrastructures and other necessary facilities which can be used to facilitate the effective utilization of SNM. It is also recommended by the researcher that students should be practically involved and oriented on IT and other related technologies to access social networking media.

Conclusion:

The study focused on social networking media with the following key variables; utilization of social networking media. The researcher concludes that the utilization of SNM in Tumaini University Makumira Dar es salaam College would establish connection with global friends which enhances good quality of education since these media are used for online learning, research work and communication. Despite the challenges involved in utilization of the media, there were believed that the institutions were making good use of SNM. Therefore utilization of the media was persistent. From the research findings, the researcher therefore concludes that Social Networking Media is a media which promote social relationships and social networking in a society and become successful for sharing ideas, cross cultural sharing and learning new ways of doing things.

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