Fostering the Use of Social Media towards Students' Learning

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Abstract. Social media applications have become indispensable in the university students' life. Thus, instead of prohibiting the use of social media in teaching learning activities, teachers should continuously find a way to integrate its use to enhance students' learning. This paper presents research focused on the students' experience in using the social media platform and their mobile device in communication and learning. The educational objective of this study is to increase students' participation and enhance their use of social media for learning. The data for this study was taken from a questionnaire given to 40 English Department students. Data collected from the questionnaire allowed the researcher to observe the students' engagement in social media. Results showed that students were familiar with social media but they mostly used it for communication, not for learning. However, they also showed their willingness to use the social media in education. A number of implications for students' learning and future research were also discussed.

1. Introduction

In this millennium era, university students' life cannot be separated from the digital world. Since 2001, Prensky [1] defined today's students as digital natives because "they spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, video games, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age". As the technology is advancing, students have become more expert in digital world. Bauman [2] even mentioned that students know nothing other than a life with the internet. They have been 'born into a world woven from cabled, wired or wireless connectivity.

The advancement of internet technology has borne the appearance of social media. Social media is defined as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundation of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content [3]. Since Web 2.0 appeared in the market, there have been a lot of social media tools created such as Facebook, Instagram, My Space, etc. Unfortunately, when they were created, social media tools were not developed for learning purposes [4]. Social media were mostly created as communication tool as well as for entertainment. For example, Facebook was first created by Mark Zuckerberg as a means of communication among students in his university.

There are some features of social media that actually similar to Course Management System (CMS) used in the university, such as for communication, disseminating course materials, etc. Therefore, social media has a big potential to be used as learning tools. With its interesting interface, social media can increase students' engagement in learning [5]. They will be more involved and develop their self-regulated learning. With social media, students can be 'active co-producers' of knowledge rather than 'passive consumers' of content [6].

As social media have not been properly utilized for learning purpose, this paper intends to find out how students utilize and optimize the use of social media to enhance their learning. There will be two research questions which will be discussed in this article:
1) What are the patterns of social media usage of the university students?
2) How do they regard social media as learning tools?

To answer the questions, students were given online questionnaire regarding their social media use. The answer to the questioner will hopefully shed a light on the social media tools that the students use and from there suggesting on the type of social media that can be used to increase students' learning.

There were several studies which discuss students' opinions on the utilization of social media. One of the studies was done by Olutola, Olatoye and Olatoye [7] who assessed students' social media utilization and study habit of tertiary institution in Katsina State, Nigeria. Using USMQ (Utilization of social media questioner) and SHQ (Study habit questioner), they found a significant influence of students' level of social media utilization on their study habit. They also found that the more students used social media, the better their study habits were. In summary, students who used social media have good study habits compared to those who did not.

Another study was done by Husain, et al. [8] in which they studied 450 Pakistani students. They also used questioner to obtain students' opinions on the use of social media as learning technology. They found that social media technology was significantly promoting opportunities for virtual interactions among university students, instant access to multiple, latest, reliable and students' preferred sources of learning.

Social media also has capability to shape mechanism for supporting peer learning and peer assessment [9]. All the above studies suggest that social media can be used as learning tools because they can increase the students' participation. The possibility of using social media as learning tool has not been discussed much in the context of Indonesian university students. Thus this paper will fill the gap in the literature regarding social media usage for learning purpose, especially in Indonesian context.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants. The participants for this study were chosen using purposive sampling method based on the availability and the familiarity of social media use. The participants were 40 English Department students of Binus University, consisting of 11 male and 29 female. They were all in the fifth semester. Their average age was 20.275.

2.2. Instrument. The instrument for this study was an online questionnaire, titled "Social Media Usage Questionnaire" (SMUQ). This questionnaire consists of 3 demographic questions regarding name, age, gender and year of study and 18 questions relating to the pattern of social media usage and social media as learning tool. The questionnaires were administered digitally using Google forms.

3. Results and discussion

In this paper, only selected data are reported. The patterns of social media usage presents the data on students' adoption of social media tools, the most frequently used and the least frequently used social media and the reasons for their choice, and the purpose of using social media. The second part, social media as learning tool presents data on students' willingness and ideas of using social media to enhance their learning.

3.1. Patterns of Social Media Usage

First of all the students were asked which social media apps that they use. There were seven social media tools presented in the survey: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp, YouTube, Pinterest and Other (in which the students can fill the other social media tools that have not been stated. The results can be seen in figure 1 below.
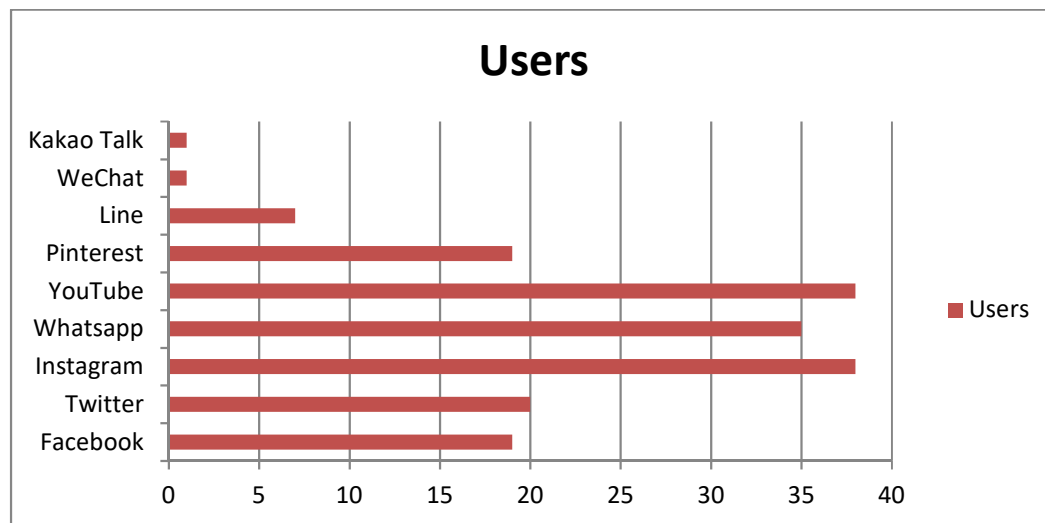
Figure1. Social media account

In figure 1, it can be seen that the number of students who used Instagram and Youtube were the same, i.e. 95 %, followed by Whatsapp by 87.5 % of the students. Twitter users were 50 % of the students, followed by Facebook and Pinterest with 47.5 %. 17.5 % of the students used Line and each 2.5 % used Kakao Talk and We Chat. The results indicate that most students used social media tools that mostly present visual and audio visual data such as pictures and video. The students' choice of social media can be used as a consideration for implementing social media in teaching learning practice as Liu [10] said "their readiness needs to be warranted before the deployment." That means, before teachers design or determine which social media to use in teaching and learning activity, they have to know which ones students actually use.

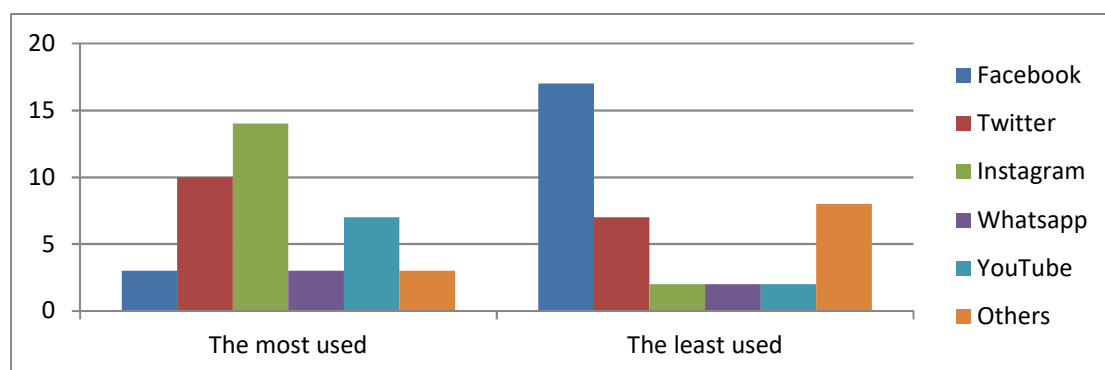The second figure presents data on the most frequently used social media and the least used social media.

Figure 2. The most frequently used and least frequently used social media tools.

Figure 2 shows that 35% of the students chose Instagram as the most frequently used social media app. The second best social media according to the students was Twitter. This result is in line with the survey done by Napoleon cat regarding the social media users in Indonesia in 2018. It was found that there were 60,970,000 Instagram accounts consisting of 49.5 million women and 50.5 million men. For the age of 18-24, which is the age range of university students, the users reached 39 % consisting of 19.7 % male and 19.7 % female.

Reasons for choosing Instagram vary. Students considered Instagram as fun and interesting as well as entertaining. The main reason was that Instagram contains lots of visuals in the form of pictures.

Besides giving visual data, the content (probably the text or caption) is short. Moreover, students were using Instagram because Everyone use it, my friends and family use it too." So, Instagram is getting more familiarity among young people.

On the contrary, unlike the popular belief, Facebook was found to be the least used social media among students. There were 42.5 % of the students who admitted that they did not use Facebook frequently, even though they still have the account. In Indonesia, there are 130 million accounts of active users of Facebook, 16 million of which stay in Jakarta. Meanwhile, the users of Facebook among the 18-24 year old range were only 32.7%, consisting of 14.8% female and 17.9 % female.

Why was Facebook becoming unpopular among young people (university students)? Some students mentioned that Facebook was for older people such as parents and relatives. Some other said the unfamiliarity of Facebook was because none of their peers used it anymore. Here we can see that students were influenced by their peers in choosing social media. There were others who pointed out the interface of Facebook, which was said to be boring and not interesting.

This finding is in contrast with Liu [10] who discovered that Facebook was the mostly used social media tool for several reasons such as social engagement, direction communication, speed of feedback, and relationship building. However, Liu's study was done almost ten years ago; thus, there has been a change in the students' preference. Nowadays, Facebook is mostly seen as obsolete and belong to the past generation.

3.2. Social Media for Learning Purpose

Before discussing how social media tools are used for learning, Figure 3 below will present students' purposes of using social media.
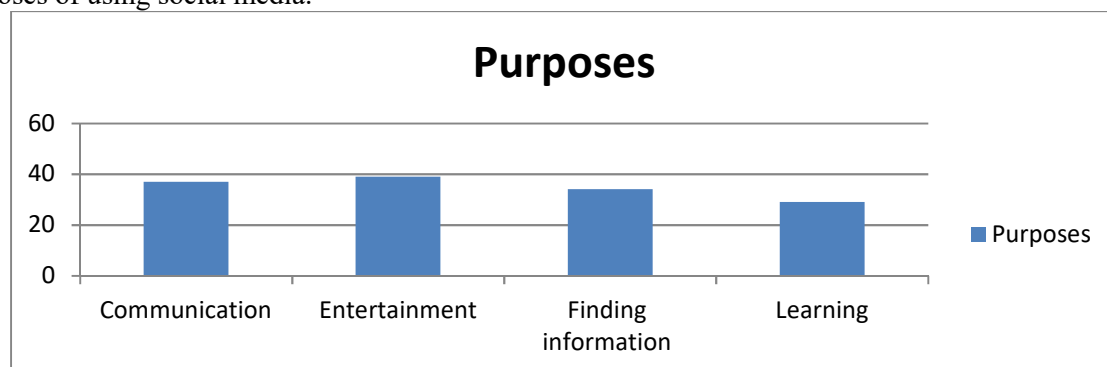

Figure 3. Purposes of using social media

From the figure 3, it can be seen that 92.5 % of the students use social media for communication. The mostly used social media for communication is Whatsapp and Twitter. 97.5 % of the participants used social media for entertainment. The social media that can be used for this purpose were mostly YouTube and Instagram. YouTube is one of the frequently used social media tool by the students because they can watch, share videos, answer questions and discuss contents [10]. The next one is for finding information, which was chosen by 85 % of the students. They usually used Twitter and Instagram for finding information. Yet, the purpose that is almost neglected by the students is for learning, which is only chosen by 72.5 %.

Learning related activities that can be done using social media, among others: communicating with fellow students and lecturers, having group discussion, sharing course related material, doing course assignments and many others. Unfortunately, some students prefer to use their social media for communication and entertainment.

When asked whether they will be using social media for learning in the future, 29 students (72.5%) said yes, while 11 others (27.5%) were still not sure, so they answered maybe. This result indicated that some students were not ready to change their social media usage habits. For them, the main function of social media is for entertainment.

However, students also shared their ideas on how to optimize the use of social media. Their first concern is self-control or time management. They admitted that social media often distract them to focus on learning. So they will divide the time for studying and for playing. They will also uninstall unnecessary apps. Another suggestion is by following some academic websites such as Ruang Guru. Interestingly, some students warned against the spread of hoax through social media, so they need to be extra careful and use social media wisely. The last suggestion is by joining study group through social media.

4. Conclusion

This study has found two important findings. First, most students have YouTube and Instagram accounts, while the most used social media tools are Instagram and Twitter. This finding indicated that most students nowadays prefer to use multimodal tools in the form of visual and audio-visual data. Moreover, the finding can also inform teachers on how millennial students learn. They would learn better using pictures and videos.

Nevertheless, some students still do not realize the potential of using social media tools to enhance their learning. They were mostly used social media for entertainment due to the unlimited amount of videos found in YouTube. Yet, the second finding gave some hope since 72.5 % of the students showed their willingness to use social media tools for learning.

For teachers and material developers, it is advisable that they make use of these findings to create learning activities and materials that can be shared through social media tools. In this way, both teachers and students can get benefit from social media. This will also reduce students' tendency to use social media for entertainment purpose only.

For the future research, the researcher would like to suggest a creation of teaching learning materials that can be disseminated through social media such as YouTube or Instagram.

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      Social Media Demographics