



Participation of Students in Social Media- An Analysis

A. Dharanipriya ¹ and C. Karthikeyan ²

¹Ph.D Scholar, Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology,

²Professor, Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology,
Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore- 641 003.

Social media is gaining increasing popularity among colleges students as it is being incorporated into their daily routines. Hence, a study was conducted to assess the social media participation of students. A sample of 60 students of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore campus irrespective of their degree programmes were selected using simple random sampling method. The study revealed that majority of the respondents were involved in more than two social media sites. Whatsapp and Facebook were most commonly accessed by the respondents through smart phones by spending around Rs. 200-300 per month and 2.5 hours of time per day. Majority of the respondents had groups in Whatsapp and Facebook subscribing to entertainment and informational groups. The study emphasized that students must be encouraged to participate in communities that are supportive and educative as they could provide insights into vistas of knowledge to improve the social and professional life.

Key words: Social media, Participation, Students, Education, Information.

Social media has originated since human beings started to communicate with each other. With change in demand for faster transmission of messages, men have come out with numerous innovations with new forms of associations to facilitate information exchange among the people. Social media is one such innovation which is now widely being used by people around the globe to connect with their peers and share information across wide range of platform in different forms such as text, video, photos, audios facilitated by different social media applications.

Social media is described as modern communication channels through which people connect to one another, share ideas, experiences, pictures, messages and information of interest. They are interactive networks which information and communication technology (ICTs) bequeath to the modern society through the instrumentality of the Internet and the telecommunication gadgets (Eke et al, 2014). Social media has been the fastest adopted media technology in the world as it took around 38 years for Radio, 13 years for Television, 4 years for iPod, 3 years for internet but one year for Facebook and 9 months for twitter to reach 50 million users (Chui et al, 2012). Social media is now everywhere used by all age group of people in every walk of life as it has revolutionized the means of communication. It has engrossed the attention of millions of internet users as it is the fastest and cheapest means of communication brought about by the advancements in IT infrastructure.

There were 2.46 billion users of social media tools around the globe during 2017 (www. statista. com, 2017). India's internet users grew by 40 per cent while globally the growth was of 9 per cent, making

the growth 4 times higher in India (ETtech, 2016). Social media penetration is 14 per cent while growth of social media users in 2016-2017 have been 40 per cent (55 million), which is second highest in the world (We are social, 2017). Over 60% of active social network users are college going students. It is evident from the recent trends that social media is gaining increasing popularity among colleges students as it is being incorporated into their daily routines. Despite entertainment, students are also using social media for educational purposes as it has brought substantial changes in the way teachers and students exchange information.

As social media becomes the part and parcel of student life, it has the potential to shape the personality of students in the society. Hence, it is imperative to study the participation of the students in social media.

Material and Methods

Ex-post facto research design was used for the study. The study was conducted among the students of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University. Tamil Nadu Agricultural University offers Undergraduate, Masters and Doctoral degree programmes for the benefit of the students covering its 15 constituent colleges. Coimbatore campus students were purposively selected for the study as the strength of students is high in this campus compared to others. A sample of 60 students irrespective of their degree programmes were selected by using simple random sampling method. Questionnaire method was used to extract data on the social media profile of the students. Simple percentage analysis and chi square tests were performed for the meaningful interpretation of the results.

*Corresponding author's email:

Results and Discussion

Participation of students in social media

In this study, social media participation of the students were measured by twelve components viz., social media involvement, participation, awareness on terms and conditions of using social media applications, purpose of utilization, mode of access, smart phone possession, expenditure incurred, time spent in social networking sites, extent of anonymity in social networks, readiness to accept information, group affinity and evaluation of contents in the social media.

Social media involvement

Social media involvement is operationalized as the total number of social networking sites used by the students for varied purposes and the findings are available in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents based on their social media involvement (n=60)

No. of Social Networking sites	Frequency	Per cent
One	16	26.7
Two	14	23.3
More than two	30	50.0
Total	60	100

From the Table 1, it could be seen that half of the respondents (50.00 per cent) had profile in more than two social media sites followed by little more than one- fourth of the respondents (26.70 per cent) had profile in only one social media site and 23.30 per cent of the respondents had their profiles in two social media sites respectively. The result implies that the students are actively involved in the social media. Infrastructure development and access to internet facilities at affordable rates made way for the social networking sites to rule the world.

Social media participation

Social media participation is operationalized as the involvement of students in different social networking sites and its results are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents based on social media participation(n=60)

Types of Social Media	Frequency	Per cent
Facebook	44	73.3
LinkedIn	25	41.7
Google+	38	63.3
Whatsapp	54	90.0
Instagram	22	36.7
Pinterest	17	28.3
Telegram	1	1.67
Twitter	10	16.7

(Multiple responses obtained)*

Results from Table 2, shows that an overwhelming majority of the respondents (90.00 per cent) were using Whatsapp followed by Facebook (73.30 per

cent), Google + (63.30 per cent), LinkedIn (41.7 per cent), Instagram (36.7 per cent), Pinterest (28.3 per cent), Twitter (16.7 per cent) and Telegram (1.67 per cent) respectively. This implies that Whatsapp and Facebook were popular among the student community compared to other social networking sites. Due to its varied features viz., instant messaging, voice and video call, Whatsapp is mainly used by the students as a medium of information exchange to facilitate their day to day interactions among the classmates. This is in line with Bounnik and Deshen (2014) who reported that WhatsApp is simple to use and provides privacy along with low cost application when compared to other social networks. Further the results indicate that LinkedIn has quiet fewer users among students despite its wider utility in professional development.

Awareness on terms and conditions of using social media applications

This was operationalized as the degree of awareness of students on terms and conditions applied when installing any social media applications in their smart phones. If the students failed to read the terms and conditions while installing any app, the chance of getting their private information being available to the public is more. Hence, it is very much needed to be aware of terms and conditions.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents based on awareness on terms and conditions (n=60)

Particulars	Frequency	Per cent
Aware	23	38.3
Not aware	37	61.7
Total	60	100

From Table 3, it was seen that a little more than three-fifths of the respondents were not aware of the terms and conditions whereas the remaining 38.30 per cent of the respondents were aware of it. The results indicate the negligence of the students towards the negative side of social media.

Purpose of social media utilization

The information on purpose of social media utilization were collected, analyzed and presented in the Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents based on the purpose of social media utilization (n=60)

Purpose	Frequency	Per cent
Academic purpose	38	63.3
To socialize	29	48.3
Entertainment	41	68.3
Make professional Contacts	17	28.3
Updated knowledge	27	45.0
Relaxation	30	50.0
Social Pressure	3	5.0

(Multiple responses obtained)*

The above Table 4, indicates that more than three-fifths of the respondents (68.30 per cent)

and (63.30 per cent) were using social media for entertainment and academic purpose followed by half of the respondents (50.00 per cent) using social media for relaxation. A little less than half of the respondents (48.30 per cent) and (45.00 per cent) used social media for socialization and to update their knowledge followed by 28.30 per cent and 5.00 per cent to make professional contacts and due to social pressure. Rapid expansion of social media together with their affordances has triggered its usage among students for not only recreational activities but also education (Thongmak, 2014; Manasijevic et al, 2016). Use of social media for educational purposes may bring significant improvements in the students' academic performances. Tuan & Tu (2013) reported that students using Facebook has substantially improved their grades.

Mode of access to social media

The findings on mode of access to social media are given in the Table 5.

Table 5. Distribution of respondents based on their mode of access to social media (n=60)

Mode of access	Frequency	Per cent
Laptop	21	35.0
Smartphones	56	93.3
Personal computer	3	5.0
Tablet	0	0.0
Total	60	100

Table 5, revealed that an overwhelming majority of the respondents (93.30 per cent) used smart phones to access social media followed by 35.00 % and 5.00 % of the respondents used laptop and personal computers respectively. Most of the social media platforms were made available through android mobiles and were found to be more users friendly.

Table 6. Distribution of respondents based on smart phone possession and social media usage(n=60)

	Duration	Social Media usage				Total
		Under one year	1-2 yrs	3-4 yrs	Above 5 yrs	
Smart phone possession	Under one year	1	1	2	0	4(6.66)
	1-2 yrs	3	5	3	2	13 (21.67)
	3-4 yrs	1	3	19	7	30 (50.00)
	Above 5 years	0	1	4	8	13 (21.67)
	Total	5 (8.33)	10 (16.67)	28 (46.67)	17 (28.33)	60 (100)

Chi- Square = 27.862*

Further, as most of the respondents stated socialization as one of their main purpose of social media utilization and mobile phones are the widely used tool to socialize, majority of the respondents used smart phones to access social media. Deshmukh *et al.* (2014) also reported that most of the youngsters use smartphones for accessing social networking sites.

Smart phone possession and social media usage

The information on smart phone possession and social media usage were collected, analyzed and presented in the Table 6.

From Table 6, it could be seen that half of the respondents (50.00 per cent) possessed smart phones since 3-4 years followed by an equal per cent (21.67 per cent) of them possessed smart phones since 1-2 years and above 5 years respectively. Only a meager (6.66 per cent) of the respondents were possessing smart phones since a year ago. Regarding social media usage, nearly half of the respondents (46.67 per cent) were using social media for about 3-4 years followed by more than one-fourth of them (28.33 per cent) using social media for more than 5 years. About 16.67 per cent and 8.33 per cent were using social media for about two years and on year respectively. This finding is in line with Alsaif (2016) who reported that majority of the students had been using social media for more than 5 years. Chi square test was conducted to find out the association between smart phone possession and social media usage. The probability value was 0.033 which is less than the level of significance ($P < 0.05$). This indicates that there was a significant association between the smart phone possession and social media utilization. Hence, it is inferred that the advent of smart phones has triggered the use of social media applications among students.

Expenditure on social media

The findings pertinent to the expenditure range of the respondents on social media usage are given in Table 7.

Table 7. Distribution of respondents based on the expenditure on social media (n=60)

Expenditure (in Rs)	Frequency	Per cent
50-199	25	41.67
200-349	26	43.33
350-500	9	15.00
Total	60	100.0

Table 7, shows that more than two-fifths of the respondents (43.33 per cent) had spent around Rs. 200-349 per month for getting access to social media followed by 41.67 per cent and 15.00 per cent of them having spent around Rs. 50-199 and Rs. 350-500 per month respectively. The reason for varied levels of expenditure on social media might be due to the different offer rates provided by network providers.

Time spent in social networking sites

Time spent on social networking sites was measured in two dimensions viz., periodicity and duration of social media usage. The findings pertinent to the periodicity and duration of social media usage of the respondents are presented in the Table 8 and 9.

Table 8. Distribution of respondents based on periodicity of social media usage(n=60)

Particulars	Frequency	Per cent
Constantly logged in	13	21.7
Several times a day	33	55.0
Once in a day	6	10.0
Occasionally	8	13.33
Total	60	100

It could be inferred from Table 8, that more than half of the respondents (55.00 per cent) had logged into the social media sites several times a day followed by 21.70 per cent had constantly logged in and 13.33 per cent had occasionally used social media. Remaining 10.00 per cent of the respondents used social media only once in a day. As social media applications are readily available on smart phones, users were highly prone to view the social media sites as and when they view mobile phones.

Table 9. Distribution of respondents based on the duration of social media usage (n=60)

Particulars	Frequency	Per cent
Less than 2.5 hours	34	56.7
2.6 to 5 hours	16	26.7
More than 5 hours	10	16.7
Total	60	100.0

Table 9, shows that more than half of the respondents (56.70 per cent) used social media for about 2.5 hours a day followed by 2.6 to 5 hours (26.70 per cent) and more than 5 hours (16.70 per cent) a day respectively. This is in accordance with Maqableh et al. (2015) who reported that students spend more over an hour daily and more than 10 hours per week in Facebook. The probable reason for spending more time in social media might be because of free internet facility available at hostels and attractive data offers being provided by the mobile network service providers might. The results incur that students were diverting their valuable time towards social media.

Extent of anonymity in the networks

The extent of anonymity in the networks was operationalized as the degree to which the members connected in social networks were known to each other. The results are given in the Table 10.

Table 10. Distribution of respondents based on the extent of anonymity in the networks (n=60)

Particulars	Frequency	Per cent
My social network consist only those I have met face-to-face	25	41.7
My social network also consist of people who I have not met but known to me personally	32	53.3
My Social network consist of people those I have not met at all and unknown to me	3	5.0
Total	60	100

Table 10, shows that more than half of the respondents' (53.30 per cent) social networks consisted of persons whom they had known but not met personally followed by little more than two-fifths of respondents' (41.70 per cent) social networks with persons whom they had met personally and 5.00 per cent of the respondents' social networks with persons who were unknown to them. The results implied that these virtual networks enable people to come in contact with the persons whom they had not known in person.

Readiness to accept information in social networking sites

Social media has triggered the freedom of expression. It is flooded with loads and loads of information being posted and shared every day. But, the credibility of that information available in social media is a major concern, as one message can influence the perception of many other people when it gets shared. This may lead to serious repercussions. The findings are given in the Table 11.

Table 11. Distribution of respondents based on their readiness to accept information available in the social networking sites (n=60)

Particulars	Frequency	Per cent
Trust all information posted in social networking sites	1	1.7
Trust information only if it comes from my known friends	32	53.3
Trust information only if it comes from professional communities	19	31.7
Never trust information posted in social networking sites	8	13.3
Total	60	100

From Table 11, it could be inferred that more than half of the respondents (53.30 per cent) trusted information only if it was shared by their known friends followed by respondents who trusted information from professional communities (31.70 per cent), never trust information posted in social networking sites (13.30 %) and trust all the information available in social media (1.70 per cent) respectively. The results implied that majority of the respondents were very cautious in accepting the information from social media. At the same time, we cannot ascertain that the information shared by their known friends and professional communities will be Cent per cent true. Hence, awareness should be created among the students to be critical to the information available in social media.

Group affinity

As social media is widely used for networking, social networking sites provides for the association of users through forming groups, communities, etc. Hence, the users join in different virtual communities to cater to their diverse needs and interests. This emphasizes the need to find out the nature of groups to which more people are associated with. Based on the interests/purpose of the users, the groups were categorized as educational, entertainment,

informational, social and spiritual groups. The findings on the group affinity of the respondents were given in the Table 12.

Table 12. Distribution of respondents based on their group affinity (n=60)

Social networking sites	No	Per cent	No. of groups/ communities		
			<10	10-20	>20
Facebook	28	46.67	25(89.29)	2 (7.14)	1 (3.57)
Whatsapp	49	81.67	35 (71.43)	10 (20.41)	4 (8.16)
Instagram	7	11.67	7(100)	0 (0)	0(0)
LinkedIn	4	6.67	4(100)	0(0)	0(0)

*(Multiple responses obtained)

Table 12, shows that Whatsapp has been used by majority of the respondents (81.67 per cent) to associate with their peers followed by nearly half of them (46.67 per cent) using Facebook. Only a meager percent were using Instagram (11.67 per cent) and LinkedIn (6.67 per cent). Regarding the number of communities/ groups among the users in Facebook, majority (89.29 per cent) of users had less than ten communities followed by 10-20 communities (7.14 per cent) and more than 20 (3.57 per cent). In Whatsapp, nearly three-fourths of the respondents had less than ten communities followed by 10-20 communities (20.41 per cent) and more than 20 (8.16 per cent). As the respondents were students, they form groups in Whatsapp for easy and faster sharing of course materials and other communications as it has been emerging as a viable instructional technology in mediating teaching by the teachers. In Instagram and LinkedIn, all the users had less than ten communities. The reason for the use of Facebook is that it caters to all the interests of the users viz, educational (82.14 per cent), entertainment (53.57 per cent), informational (64.29 per cent), social (64.29 per cent) and spiritual (21.49 per cent) respectively. Whatsapp has also been used for educational (93.88 per cent), entertainment (77.55 per cent), informational (75.51 per cent), social (71.43 per cent) and spiritual (20.41 per cent) by the respondents. Instagram has been used by the respondents only for entertainment (71.43 per cent), informational and social (42.86 per cent) purposes respectively. LinkedIn was used only for educational (75.00 per cent) and informational (25.00 per cent) purpose. The results implied that only the inbuilt features of Facebook and Whatsapp supports all the interests of the users. This might be the reason for more no. of communities in these two social networking sites.

Content evaluation

Everyday numerous messages are posted and shared in social media. A message shared/posted in a group will get shared by many other members in a group. Likewise, the message set to reach millions of audience within a short span of time. But, the authenticity of the information shared is under question. Further, the credibility of the sender is also unknown as it is difficult to trace the sender of

the message. Hence, it is important to evaluate the content before posting or sharing it in social media, as our opinion may mislead others perception. The results are presented in the Table 13.

Table 13. Distribution of respondents based on content evaluation (n=60)

Particulars	Frequency	Per cent
Evaluate every content before sharing	33	55.0
Do not evaluate every content before sharing	27	45.0
Total	60	100

From Table 13, it was clear that more than half of the respondents (55.00 per cent) evaluate every content before sharing it in social media. Remaining two-fifths of the respondents (45.00 per cent) had not evaluated every content before sharing in social media. The results indicated that as majority of the respondents evaluate the contents to be shared, there is good scope to improve the authenticity of information posted or shared in the social media. The finding is in contrary with Alsaif (2016) who reported that 70 per cent of students do not evaluate the contents before publishing them in social networks.

Conclusion

The study revealed that majority of the respondents were involved in more than two social media sites. Whatsapp and Facebook were most commonly accessed by the respondents through smart phones by spending around Rs. 200-300 per month and 2.5 hours of time per day. Majority of the respondents had groups in Whatsapp and Facebook subscribing to entertainment and informational groups. Hence, it could be concluded that the students were spending much of their time in social media for seeking information and entertainment rather than educational activities. Hence, students must be encouraged to participate in communities that are supportive and educational as they may provide insights into vistas of knowledge to improve social and professional life. Further, most of the respondents were unaware of the terms and conditions in installing new applications and have contacts with those they have not met but known to them. This increases the chance of getting their private information being available to the public. Hence, students must be given guidance to avoid friendships with unknown persons and always be open to the information from the trusted sources. Telecasting of social media privacy violation issues/cases may also encourage the social media users to safeguard their personal information.

References

- Alsaif Abdulwahaab. 2016. Investigate the impact of social media on students. B.Sc. (Honours) in Business Information Systems Thesis, Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK.pp: 23-26
- Bouhnik, D and Deshen, M. 2014. WhatsApp goes to school: Mobile instant messaging between teachers and students. Journal of Information Technology Education: Research. 13:217-31.
- Chui, M., Manyika, J., Bughin, J., Dobbs, R., Roxburgh, C.,

- Sarrazin, H., Sands, G., and M. Westergren. 2012. The social economy: Unlocking value and productivity through social technologies, McKinsey Global Institute. Retrieved from http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/high_tech_telecoms_internet/the_social_economy
- Deshmukh Pooja, Deshmukh Sayali and Chandrashekhar Tathe. 2014. An impact of social networking sites on youngsters. *International Journal of Management*, 5 (12): 24-35.
- Eke Helen N., Omekwu Charles Obiora and Odoh Jennifer Nneka. 2014. The Use of Social Networking Sites among the Undergraduate Students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka, *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 1195, <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1195>
- ETtech. 2016. India's internet user growth rate is 4X of global rate: Mary Meeker's 2016 internet trends, <http://tech.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/internet/indias-internet-user-growth-rate-is-4x-of-global-growth-rate-mary-meeker/52550127>.
- Manasijevic, D., Zivkovic, D., Arsic, S. and I. Milosevic. 2016. Exploring students' purposes of usage and educational usage of Facebook. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 60: 441-450. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2016.02.087
- Maqableh, M., Rajab, L., Quteshat, W., Masa'deh, R.M.T., Khatib, T. and H. Karajeh. 2015. The Impact of Social Media Networks Websites Usage on Students' Academic Performance. *Communications and Network*, 7: 159-171. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/cn.2015.74015>
- Thongmak, M. 2014. Factors determining learners' acceptance of Facebook in a higher education classroom. *Knowledge Management and E-learning*, 6(3): 316-331.
- Tuan, N. and Tu, N. 2013. The Impact of Online Social Networking on Students' Study. *VNU Journal of Education Research*, 29(1): 1-13.
- We are social. 2017. Digital in 2017: Global overview, <http://wearesocial.com/blog/2017/01/digital-in-2017-global-overview>.
- [www.statista.com](https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/). 2017. Number of social media users worldwide from 2010 to 2021 (in billions), <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>.