Social Media and Higher Education Students communication preferences

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Abstract: We humans are social animals and being social, we always believe in communication to build up our relationships. Social media allows users to create and share content, build relationships, and allow collaboration and communication regardless of location barriers. The rapid spread of online social networking is changing the very essence of organizational communication. Existing studies focused on applications of social media in higher education and also necessitate of more research in this area to make use of social media more effective. In present study, it was tried to study the relationship between demographic profile of students and their preference in use of social media using chi-square (χ2) test of independence. The results of the study will help in developing an engaging and effective social media presence by higher education institutes.

Keywords: Social Media, Higher Education Institutes, Demographics & chi-square (χ2) test.

I. INTRODUCTION

Any organization having public and social constituency and has multiple stakeholders, needs public relations. To keep all stakeholders intact there must be positive relationship. Social media sites provide a distinctive technology to communicate which creates more opportunities and relationship building between various stakeholders of institution and public. It is popularity in all age groups and among youth it's taken with huge enthusiasm. Social media offers several opportunities like easy access to information, ability to express, create social groups, pictures and videos sharing, learning opportunities, seeking and maintaining relatives and friends etc. Social networking and social media used by business houses, corporate, institutions for reaching to prospective clients and building relations.

Compared to people in other age segments, college students are keen in working in advanced technology in each area. The technology transformation is changing the ways students collaborate, communicate and learn. Colleges and universities particularly higher education institutes have also taken a keen interest in this trend. They are using social media to communicate many types of contents to engage students. Using social media creates numerous opportunities for institutions of higher education to embrace it in order to continue their learning and teaching activities. To reap maximum benefits in use of social media by higher education institutes, it requires to study social media surfing patter by student of higher education institutes.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Higher education institutions outperformed the traditional Fortune 500 organizations and the quickly expanding Inc. 500 enterprises in the first study on the usage of social media to engage with clients (i.e., students) (Barnes et. al. 2010)[12]. Kabilan and Abidin (2010)[18] found facebook as the most accepted social media site among higher education students. (Davis et. al- 2012)[13] carried out a poll in the USA to understand social media technology and apparent benefit and found that most community college administrators have usually observed the usage of social media. Saravanakumar & Lakshmi (2012)[8] mentions that social media has become need of the hour in present century and organizations need to have a well-drawn plan for social media campaign strategy and without it, they have little chance and would find it difficult to establish themselves in the rapidly changing digital environment.

Constantinides & Stagno (2012)[28] mentioned that social media is a web 2.0 applications where we can collaborate, make one to one contact, engage with others and create content our self. As part of the marketing toolkit, and curiosity of higher education institutions in social media is increasing and the role of social media to influence prospective students in choosing course & university needs to be known. Sadaf et al. (2012)[33] opined that as web 2.0 tools are usually low-cost or freely available, effortless to acquire and learn, so teachers need to have enough knowledge and experience to take advantage of these tools. Rithika & Selvaraj (2013)[37] researched the influence of social media use on student's scholastic performance and academic system as students are spending a lot of time on social media sites.

Palmer (2013)[38] in his study to investigate the use of the twitter by Australian universities has found that universities are using social media platforms for a multiple purpose. Use of social media can create value for an organization. Rani (2014)[10] made a study to identify dominating factors which make people use social media sites to study the effect of age and gender on the usage of social media sites. Hafeez (2014)[44] found social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter & LinkedIn as valuable tools for information

dissemination to target audiences such as students, alumni, faculty, parents and staff etc. The social media activities became sluggish after sometime, therefore needs effective strategy for producing relevant content to increase interaction.

Kelly (2014)[46] researched to discover how higher education institutions use social media to connect university offices and students in new ways. The study explored trends being followed by different institutions to reach target constituents. Study revealed that institutes were using an array of social media platforms as each platform provides a unique means to communicate with their stakeholders. Sobaih et.al (2016)[57] carried out a study for finding value in social media usage as an active educational and knowledge resource in developing countries' higher education setups. The survey results found increasing use of social media by higher education students in developing countries and it requires more interest from both researchers and strategy makers.

Despite many studies on use of social media by higher education institutes, Peruta and Shields (2018) found it difficult for social media teams to create matter that can serve to all kind of audiences. Huebner, 2021 suggests a dire need to examine and identify which elements significantly impact a student's choice of a degree. Alison & Peruta, 2018 also found dearth of literature on how higher education institutions use social networks in their marketing and communication activities. Bonilla et al., 2019 suggested the importance of content in post generated on social media.

Hence from the available we can access that though there are many studies on social media use of social media still the desired results are not achieved and it required to study more about the target audience (i.e. students). Keeping this thing in mind it was planned to study the demographic profile of target audiences and their social media usage habits. Based on the discussion, the following hypothesis was proposed to test.

H$_0$:   There is no significant relationship between demographic profile of students and channel inclination for social media communication.

Objective of the study

To study the association between demographic profile of students and preference towards use and purpose of social media.

III.   RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The objective in this present research study is to examine preferred social media sites for students, regarding their visit frequency and surfing pattern. A comparison of the demographic profile of students and social media surfing pattern was made. "Chi-square (χ2) test of independence" was applied to test the hypothesis. The surfing pattern of the students is also studied to achieve the objective.

Scope of the study

The study focused on uses of social media by higher education students. The study required a field survey in selected universities of Punjab. The study was conducted in the state of Punjab and data was collected from students from different courses enrolled in universities. The respondents were randomly selected and were approached through online (Google forms) or physical questionnaire. The respondents were administered a structured questionnaire which was developed on the basis of identified attributes through literature review, brainstorming, expert opinion and pilot study.

Sampling Plan

Population of the study-The population under study consists of all respondents (sampling unit) who were registered in a course in the university.

Sampling Unit-Each student registered with the university is sampling unit for the study.

Sampling Technique-Cluster convenience sampling method has been used to select the sampling units. Clusters are based on course and university of the student. Since subject population was readily available, we adopted convenience sampling method for data collection.

Sample Size- The sample size of the 400 respondents is constituted for the study.

IV.   DATA ANALYSIS

After finalizing the questionnaire and data collection, the data has been classified, tabulated and subjected to the statistical computations. To understand the variation in surfing pattern of social media sites, it required the study of association between demographic profile of students and social media site surfing pattern. To test and to evaluate two mutually exclusive statements about a population we used chi-square (χ2) test of independence and formulated hypotheses to test statistically significant relationship. The data was tested for suitability before applying the test.

The sampling in our case is simple random sampling and variables for relationship i.e. demographic profile and social media surfing pattern are categorical in nature. The frequency distribution of demographic profile of students has been represented in following table no. 1.

Table 1- Demographic Profile of Students

Demographic Profile of Students		No of Respondents	
		Frequency	Percentage
Course	Engineering	104	24.19
	Commerce & Management	114	26.51
	Arts	102	23.72
	Sciences	110	25.58
Gender	Male	205	47.67

	Female	225	52.33
Age Group	Less than 22 years	260	60.47
	More than 22 year	170	39.53
Residential status	Urban	315	73.26
	Rural	115	26.74
Annual Family Income	Up to 2.5 Lakhs	175	40.70
	2.51 -5 Lakhs	121	28.14
	5.1-10 Lakhs	81	18.84
	More than 10 Lakhs	53	12.33
Parents Education	Up to Secondary	185	43.02
	Graduate	131	30.47
	Post Graduate	114	26.51
Family Size	Up to 4 members	234	54.42
	More than 4 members	196	45.58
Primary family Occupation	Service	195	45.35
	Agriculture	86	20.00
	Business	149	34.65

Data was also collected related to students' preference towards use and purpose of social media. The resulting frequency distribution of 'Students preference towards use and purpose of social media' has been represented in following table no. 2.

Table 2 Students Preference towards use of Social Media

Students Preference towards use of Social Media		No. of Respondents	
		Frequency	Percentage
Daily time spend on Social Media	Less than 1 hour	108	25.12
	1-3 hours	232	53.95
	More than 3 hours	90	20.93
Factor led to join Social Media	To know about each other	48	11.16
	To connect and keep in touch	183	42.56
	To connect and gather information	199	46.28
Contents & practices liked by students	Student Forums & Groups	47	10.93
	Pictures & Videos	94	21.86
	Messages etc	52	12.09
	Events/Contests	82	19.07
	Study material	84	19.53
	University/Institute news	71	16.51
Make students respond on Social Media	Humor/Entertainment	224	52.09
	Personal	135	31.40
	Offered	71	16.51

Table 3- Association of Demographic Profile and Social Media Surfing Pattern

Demographics	Daily time spend on social media	Factors led to join social media	Content & Practices liked on social media	Makes to respond
Course	**15.021 (0.020)***	8.396 (0.211)	**30.550 (0.010)***	12.091 (0.060)
Gender	1.203 (0.548)	**7.462 (0.024)***	5.247 (0.387)	0.652 (0.722)
Age	**6.192 (0.045)***	0.855 (0.652)	9.877 (0.079)	3.573 (0.168)
Residential Status	4.413 (0.11)	**9.065 (0.011)***	**17.667 (0.003)***	**13.441 (0.001)***
Annual Family Income	5.258 (0.511)	6.815 (0.338)	23.970 (0.066)	**19.481 (0.003)***
Parents Education	3.391 (0.495)	0.689 (0.953)	11.129 (0.348)	6.686 (0.153)
Family Size	3.11 (0.164)	**7.131 (0.028)***	6.102 (0.296)	0.933 (0.627)
Primary Family Occupation	2.275 (0.685)	1.098 (0.895)	9.013 (0.531)	4.404 (0.354)

*Significant at 5% level of significance (Significance values of chi-square (χ^2) are given in parenthesis)

Results

Test results are shown in table no. 3, revealed that demographic variables of residential status and course enrolled were found to have significant relationship with channel preference of social media communication.

V. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

We can analyze from above table that the null hypothesis is partially rejected and demographic variables of residential status and course enrolled of students has strong association with parameters related to joining and surfing social media sites by students. Gender, age, annual family income and family size also have significant association with parameters related to joining and surfing social media sites by students. Parents' education & family occupation found to have no significant association with parameters related to joining social media sites.

We can infer there is relationship between student's residential status and enrolled with particular course are using social media for communication in comparison to other students. Students of other residential areas and courses need to be identified and more efforts are needed to make students join social media by posting related educational and course related activities. The universities can reach these students and make them aware about their social media presence and benefits in using social media.

VI. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study will be helpful in developing higher education institutions' engaging and effective social media presences. According to research, students enjoy using social media to communicate. Administrators at institutions of higher education now have a platform to interact with students. The study's findings will aid institutions in developing a framework for policy regarding target-oriented content for a particular class or group of users for a course or university on social media.

VII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The current study is being done on a sample of university students only in the state of Punjab. Additional research may broaden or adopt a more varied perspective on sample selection. The sample used for the study is thought to be representative of the general population. The population may be more accurately represented by a big sample. Future research may also adopt a more thorough perspective of a particular university or course to gain in-depth knowledge of a particular field. To increase the generalizability of the results, comparable research can be carried out in different geographical regions.

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