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How students use social media for information searching?

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Abstract

This article deals with a research in progress conducted with private universities, located in São Paulo - SP - Brazil, in which were analyzed some aspects of the use of social media selected: WhatsApp, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter.The application used was SurveyMonkey for the preparation of a questionnaire to be answered by students of the universities. The primary research question is "How social media are most used by students". This research is in progress, but at the conclusion of the article are presented some preliminary results that can contribute to the clarify the primary research question.

Keywords: social media, universites students, common utilization

Introduction

Currently social media are present in the day-to-day reality of people in the greater part of their daily activities. There are several definitions for social media, being that second Kapoor et al. (2018) all consider social media as tools of communication supported by Internet-based technologies for dissemination of information and the majority of them recognizes the high concentration of user generated content on these platforms. Even as Kapoor et al. (2018), it was proposed the following definition: "social media is composed of multiple platforms geared to users that facilitate the diffusion of attractive content, creation of dialogs and communication to a wider audience. It is essentially a digital space created by the people and for the people, and provides a conducive environment for which the interactions and the network occur at different levels (for example, personal, professional, commercial, marketing, political and social)."

It should be noted that the increasing importance of social media as a means of communication in the routine of individuals, especially the new generations, has led to a considerable impact on the functioning of enterprises, in organizational decisions, individual and society itself.

The basic problem is to find out if these new communication tools are being properly used, in accordance with the objectives for which they were created. In this way, it is worth discovering as they have been applied and for what purposes.

Thus, it is interesting to analyze how this happens in the academic environment, where new generations of professionals are being trained and make use of social media on a routine basis.

The objective of this study is to evaluate how social media are used by a group of students from various private universities. It is intended to verify which are the most commonly used media and for which purposes are employed, for academic works and also for personal use

As Rabello and Gomes (2011), "the contemporary social relations also suffer the impact of digital networks of communication, making explode the phenomenon of social networks on the Internet, characterized by the relations between people of different social groups through a

social software that enables communication, interaction, sharing of information, experiences and documents". Also according to these authors, "in the contemporary scene changes, with constant need for innovation in processes of dissemination of information and knowledge construction, education is a favorable environment for a change of paradigms, where learning is no longer restricted to the school environment and/or the academy."

Research Methodology

In a literature review on the topic, searching the Web of Science with the topic "social media" AND universit*" and considering the years of 2014 to 2018, was obtained ninety eight results that were analyzed aiming to select those who were more aligned with the research. Thus, was acquired nineteen articles that meet the objectives of the study. It should be noted that a majority of the texts dealt with the use of social media by the student body. Highlight for the employment of Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp as tools most frequently used.

The study of Rasiah (2014) found evidence that the use of Facebook created a learning environment more positive and less threatening, which breaks the engagement of students and the learning experience, while at the same time created a stronger relationship between them and with the speaker. It was also found that Facebook has provided a rich learning environment based on team that was used to channel the creativity of students in a virtual environment.

The study of Adalberon and Saljo (2017), serves as an example of how students use Facebook groups as part of their studies. The results show that they are using Facebook as a space to share information predominantly practices. Although it may be a popular medium for many users in other activities, there seems to be a minority of users who actively participate in these groups generated by students. The proportion of discussions that relate to academic issues is low, and these discussions are not sustained for long periods of time. However, it is still an interesting observation that the students themselves create and use Facebook groups as resources to manage the university life. Thus, there is a perception of the necessity of such spaces based on courses in academic life, even if they may not become very active as the course continues, and even if they are not part of the academic institution or the discussion and learning of academic knowledge.

It is intended to study the use of social media by students of four private universities in São Paulo. To do so, it was used the survey methodology with questionnaires that were accessed by students via Internet.

Based on studies conducted by other authors, such as Hussain (2012) and Al-Rahmi and Othman (2013), the research questions are the following:

- The main issue of research: how social media are most used by students?

- Secondary issues of research are:

  - How often do you use social media?
  - For what purposes are social media used?
  - How are social media used? What are the most common activities?

About the survey data on social media, McKenna et al. (2017) pointed out that few qualitative studies uses data collected in social media. According to these authors, "Most of the quantitative researchers used data directly extracted from social media platforms." The types of quantitative

data varied, but included data such as message counts, messages are downloaded, count of friends, number of posts or level of participation. Only a few articles used quantitative data from online surveys. On the other hand, the majority of qualitative articles on social media did not use qualitative data extracted directly from social media platforms.

Literature Review

According to Juliani et al (2012), "students are already familiar with social networks. Even if you don't want to mix education with pleasure, they already know how to use these tools, so it is easier to exploit its resources." On the other hand, there is a concern with the loss of focus on learning, caused by the constant use of social media and in most educational institutions access to these sites is blocked. As Juliani et al (2012), " it is expected to generate a self-promotion of the educational institution as the activities are published and the content is shared. In this sense, another higher result achieved by the use of social networks outside the virtual learning environments, lies in the fact that it is possible to involve other actors such as businesses, parents and the community itself where the institution is inserted".

According to Razmerita and Kirchner (2014), "the new generation of students defy the educators with low tolerance to long lectures, have a tendency for multitasking, are very pragmatic and less patient in the classroom. Therefore, designing new methods of teaching and learning is a continuous effort for educators. However, we still need an answer to the question about what can be obtained using the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) within the classroom and to deal with the problem of students' attention."

As Gikas and Grant (2013), in a survey on the use of mobile phones, smartphones and social media in higher education, there are positive and negative aspects in the employment of these artifacts. About the perceived advantages can be grouped in the following aspects: quick access to information, communication and collaboration in content, variety of forms of learning and contextualised learning. About the disadvantages, there are: teachers who are averse to these Technologies and this challenges the adoption of these technologies and the distraction caused by the use of the same.

According to Dwivedi et al. (2018), "the social media tools have helped to break down the geographical barriers that previously restricted communication and led to an explosion of electronic participation, virtual presence and online communities. The benefits of social media professionals include sharing information, advertising, and give and receive support and advice." Also according to these authors, "a radical transformation of communication which was enabled by social media presents a fascinating environment to scholars from all backgrounds. People navigate and contribute with their social media accounts regularly using smart devices; some people even prefer to communicate using social media instead of attending face-to-face interaction. However, the communication using social media can be more challenging, because emotions can be difficult to detect and understand.".

Run the search

In order to do the research, it was used the application SurveyMonkey because it is an appropriate tool for this task. The questions that were drawn were based on primary and secondary issues of research and dealt with the following social media: WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. The selection of these media was based on experience with the students and were also chosen because they have practical applications that can be used for academic, work or personal purposes

Each question had a goal to achieve. There are questions that measures the degree of relative importance of the social media studied. Other questions seek to evaluate the time of use for each media. Finally, it was evaluated which use was more frequent among some options.

The main questions used and answered the questionnaire were the following:

- On selected social media that you normally use, which ones do you use the most?
- For each of the selected social media, which is the most frequent use?
- For each social media selected, what is the most common weekly usage?

For this questionnaire were obtained ninety-seven responses for the four universities surveyed. There was some resistance to respond to the questions and continued encouragement was required to reach this quantitative response. After the deadline for the survey, the information obtained was analyzed.

Analysis of results

When verifying the answers to the questions presented, it was possible at the moment to obtain the following findings:

- Social media most frequently used was the WhatsApp, with a large advantage over Instagram and Facebook, which remained in second and third places respectively. What was perceived is that the WhatsApp has played a significant role in the communication between people in different social relationships with family, friends and colleagues at work and in the university environment.
- With regard to the most frequent use it is that::
    - WhatsApp is used for contact with friends, sending any type of message
    - Facebook is employed for fun and keep informed about the activity of friends
    - Instagram has the advantage of having access only with the photos and information from friends and of specific interest
    - LinkedIn is used to maintain the professional networking and the possibility of creating opportunities to provide service
    - Twitter is a social media very little used, according to this survey
    - YouTube is employed to obtain new knowledge in specific trainings and for entertainment with new videos
- Concerning the average weekly usage of social media verified that they are all used up to eight hours per week, with the exception of Twitter which is very seldom used.

With respect to what was observed in the survey, it appears that students use Instagram and WhatsApp for communication, whether for personal, work or academic. With regard to this last aspect, for academic purposes, the priority is to use WhatsApp. YouTube is used for entertainment purposes and for training in specific subjects. LinkedIn is employed solely for professional purposes, while Twitter is very little used.

The limitation for ongoing research lies in the fact that it was done in only four private universities, because if this research were enlarged it could have different results. On the other hand, if demographic data were available, it would be possible to obtain more stratified analyzes in terms of age, gender, income and other information of this type.

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