

Will such Information Technology as Facebook Become Regular Mean for Study Process?

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Abstract. Looking at Facebook's growing popularity in all the world and among students we raise the question: will Facebook become regular mean for study process? In this paper we present results of the research, describing Facebook's usage reasons by university students and students' opinion of its use in study process. Results showed that explored students are not very positive for Facebook's usage in study process especially of course information posting in Facebook. However they are more positive to use this space for communication with other students and with professors in study process. To conclude we could say that it seems Facebook will be a regular mean in study process in future decades.

Keywords: Facebook, information technologies, students, study process, Lithuania.

1. Introduction

Growing importance of globalization of knowledge and information technologies (IT) make us to understand the importance of lifelong learning, modern technologies, and knowledge spread (Kumpikaite and Ciarniene, 2008). The first priority in education is to prepare people to integrate into information society. New media have already begun to develop by adoption of improvements in computer and information processing to communication technologies since the 1970s (Kumpikaite and Duoba, 2011). However use of the computer increased markedly in the last decade of the twentieth century. The actions, which take place in virtual extent, such as corresponding via e-mail, chatting on MSN or Skype, using Social networks such as Myspace or Facebook, searching information on websites, e-shopping, playing digital games, using mobile messenger, and the iPod, have been taking hold of the time and the place traditional media occupies in our daily life and have become a natural part of our lives (Kumpikaite and Duoba, 2011). At the same time IT play an increasingly significant role in the lives of today's undergraduates, who use technology extensively in course, job, and recreation activities (Salaway *et al.*, 2008).

The purpose of this paper is to look at possibilities of Facebook to become regular mean for study process.

The structure of this paper is as follows. The first part describes a theoretical framework of Facebook phenomena and its usage in study process. In the second empirical research on Facebook use in study process and its results are presented. And finally, conclusions and further research proposal are presented in this paper.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Facebook's Phenomena

Facebook is essentially an online social network site in which individuals can share photographs, personal information, and join groups of friends with one another (Buckman, 2005). It was originally created in February 2004 as a Harvard online social networking site but had opened its site to the general public in

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2006 (Sheldon, 2008; Urista *et al.*, 2009). In December 2006, Facebook had more than 12 million users, and by July 2010, the number of active users increased to 500 million (Facebook, 2011).

Facebook is generally considered the leading social networking site used by college students (Educause, 2006; Stutzman, 2006; Golder *et al.*, 2007). It serves not only as a primary tool of communication but also electronic socialization. As Hew (2011) present that surveys reported the use of Facebook is now nearly ubiquitous among students in the USA, with over 90% participation among undergraduate students. Salaway *et al.* (2008) affirm the same. Indeed, the vast majorities of college students have a Facebook account and are spending a considerable amount of time logged in (Salaway *et al.*, 2008)

2.2. Facebook as mean for studies

Bosch explains that, in 2007, Facebook experimented with adding an online version of Blackboard CMS that allowed 95 percent of Blackboard's functionality to migrate to a Facebook environment. This experiment was quickly "phased out" in 2008 and Facebook is said to be currently working on other educational platforms for its web site. To date, several other outside vendors such as Podcast have created applications that provide instructors with CMS options that synchronize with Facebook. Looking at surveys provided in FB usage in study process the main moments were disclosed:

- Selwyn (2009) survey provides just only 4% of a total of 68,169 Wall postings were related to education-use. He also found no significant difference in terms of education-related Facebook activity by students' gender, year of study or assessment marks.
- Bosch (2009) found in his study that students used FB for academic purposes to share ideas about projects and lecture/study notes, to inform lecturers which topics they would prefer an instructor to cover.
- Ninety percentage of undergraduates reported using FB as compared to 22% of graduates/professional students (Stutzman, 2006).
- Communication with friends was the most common type of activity, followed by communication with family. Most students (85.5%) reported that they had never used FB to communicate with an instructor. Few students reported using FB for school tasks (Ophus and Abbitt; 2009).
- Students joined FB to make new friends at the university, to keep in touch with known friends and family at home, and to plan social events. Students perceived FB was used most importantly for social reasons, although it was sometimes used informally for learning purposes (e.g., for revision, arranging group or project work, that was often initiated by students themselves and not part of the course formal requirement) (Madge *et al.*, (2009).
- First-year students were more likely than seniors to have an account. The mean number of references to learning was 0.4. Overall, profiles (n = 339) averaged 1.37 references to alcohol, drugs, or partying (Kolek and Saunders; 2008).
- FB users reported having lower grade point average (GPA) and spend fewer hours studying per week than non-users. FB users reported studying in the 1–5 h/week range, while the non-users in the 11–15 h/week range. Relationship between FB use and GPA and hours spent studying does not depend on whether the participant is an undergraduate or a graduate student. Nor is it dependent on the student's major field of study (Kirschner and Karpinski; 2010).
- More that 85% of respondents participate in one or more of networks such as Facebook or MySpace. Usage, however, is quite sensitive to age. Almost all respondents 18-19 old use social networking sites (95.1%), while only 37.0% of respondents aged 30years or older do so. Facebook is the most popular social network site, used by 89.3% of the undergraduate students. Half of students who use social network sites do so to communicate with classmates about course- related topics, only 5.5% use them to communicate with instructors about course-related topics. (Salaway *et al.*, 2008).

3. Empirical Research and its Results

3.1. Methodology of the Research

The survey was based on previous studies results presented in theoretical background of this paper.

The main purpose of the survey was to find out students' opinion and their Facebook use in study process.

Looking at literature review and earlier researches in this study we tried to find out:

1. For what reasons students use computer in daily life?
2. How often students use Social Networking in their daily life and in study process?
3. Students' opinion on communicating with students and professors in Facebook and posting study material in this Social network.
4. Connection between FB use and students' GPA.

5 point scale was used for evaluation. Calculated statistical means were used for the analysis of data in this paper. 510 university students studying Economics, Management and Finance from Lithuania participated in the poll. The survey was provided in April – May of 2011.

78.4% of respondents were females and 21.6% males. Undergraduate and master students took part in this study. Their activity was following: 1st year students -35.3%, 2nd -17.1%, 3rd- 25.9%, 4th – 9.8%, and Master students: 1st year – 9.8% and 2nd -0.5%.

3.2. Study Results

It was not found statistical significant difference between Facebook use and GPA in this study on the contrary of survey by Kirschner and Karpinski (2010). No statistical differences among gender or study course and study program and Facebook use were found too.

Looking for computer use in their daily life among explored students results were following: 77.6 percent of respondents use e-mail, Skype, MSN *et al.* for communication, 70.2 percent use it for information sourcing, 58.0 percent –for socialization (Facebook, MySpace etc.), 53.9 percent - for studies, 35.5 percent - for work, 27.6 percent – for entertainment and 18.8 percent for electronically services (e-banking, shopping etc.) every day.

Results of computer use for studies every day are given in Figure 1. The most popular are chat means such as Skype or MSN messenger which allow to communicate writing and speaking and to share files. 73.2 percent of respondents use it every day in their studies.

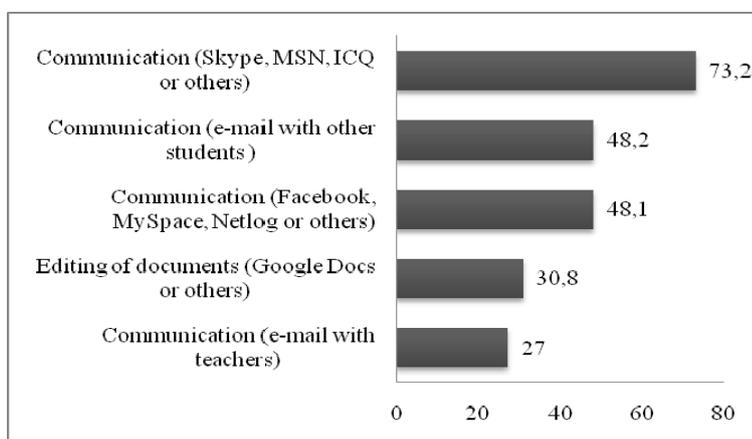


Fig. 1: Reasons of students' IT use almost every day in study process by percent.

Undergraduate and Master students were asked about using social networks in daily life and study process. The results are shown in Figure 2 (5 means using social networks every day; 1-never at all). As we see from the results, the usage of social networks in daily life as well as in study process is decreasing for upper course students. Most students are using social networking every day (Mean 4.05) while usage of it in study process every day is lower (Mean 3.27) but still higher than average. So it could be forecasted increasing importance of social networks such as Facebook in study process in the future.

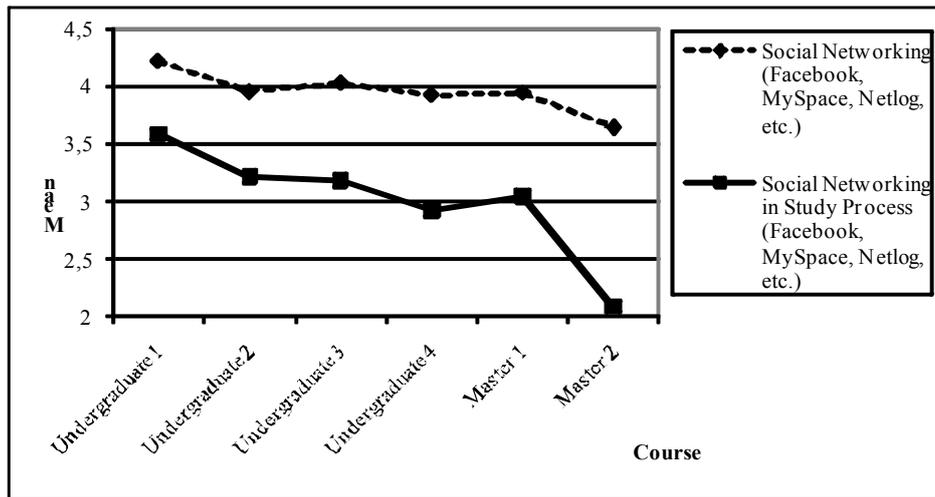


Fig. 2: Comparison of social networking in daily life and study process.

Students' opinion about implementing Facebook into study process (5-strong agree, 1-strong disagree) is shown in Figure 3. Situation is similar as it is shown in Figure 2. Students' opinion of using Facebook in study process is more negative among upper year students. We can see that more than a half of respondents are very positive about communication with other students in Facebook. However students are not so positive about communication with professors using Facebook even in the most cases evaluated mean is also higher than average. Looking at students' opinion about course information posting in Facebook we can see that just 1st year students more agree than disagree with this.

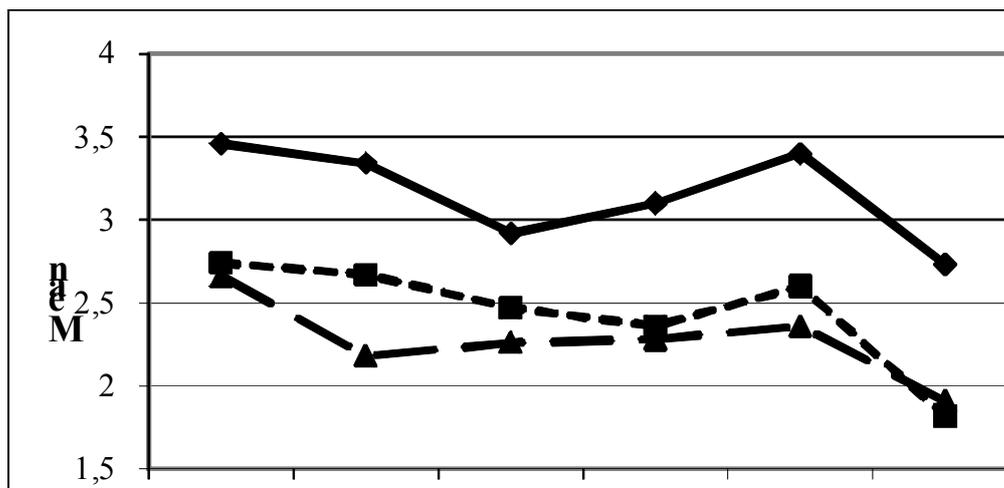


Fig. 3: Students' opinion about using Facebook in study process.

Looking at connections among Social Networking in daily life and FB use, significant statistical differences were found (see Table 1). Results showed that students who use social networking more often are more positive about communication with professors and students for studies and study course information posting in Facebook.

Table 1. Correlations

		Communication with professors about studies	Communication with other students about studies	Study information posting in Facebook
Social Networking (Facebook, MySpace, Netlog, etc.)	Spearman Correlation Coefficient	,342(**)	,438(**)	,328(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000
	N	510	510	510

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4. Conclusions

Information communication technologies have introduced a new set of educational opportunities for educators and students. Every person has different sets of goals and can be motivated if he/she believes in positive correlation between efforts and performance (Ciarniene *et al.*, 2010). Reviewed literature and provided research showed increasing popularity of social media and Facebook in students' daily life. Our survey results corresponded with Kolek and Saunders (2008) research which showed that younger year students were more likely than seniors to use Facebook. Results also showed that students (51.8%) are not willing to communicate with professors a lot through Facebook. However it shows that students are not so negative any more at least in explored group opposite to Ophus and Abbitt (2009) findings, which showed that 85.5% of their respondents had never used Facebook to communicate with their instructors.

Summarizing we could state that it seems that Facebook will become regular mean in study process in future decades.

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