Saudi Arabian Students’ Attitudes to and Perceptions of Social Networking for Educational Purposes

by

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Social Networking sites

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have opened up new opportunities for human communication, interaction and collaboration.

Under the platform of Web 2.0, they offer users the facility of self-creating content and sharing it in common interest groupings.
Social Networking Sites

Numerous sectors have co-opted these tools, including business, government and healthcare.

Social networking sites are also ideally suited to the ends of higher education: forming groups and networks, sharing ideas and materials, collaborative projects.

Widely used by “digital natives” (Prensky 2001)
Social Networking in Higher Education

Informal Usage: contacting peers, discussing learning experiences, moral/academic support

Formal Usage: incorporated into coursework for interaction between students and instructors, contribution, discussion and clarification of ideas, sharing resources, making announcements, self-reflection/publication
Social Networking in Higher Education

Social networking tools are increasingly being adopted as a teaching and learning affordance in universities in mainstream Western educational contexts but little is known about how they are used and perceived in non-mainstream geo-cultural regions.
The Context of Saudi Arabia

This study is part of a broader enquiry into how social networking might be harnessed for teaching and learning purposes at universities in Saudi Arabia.

The larger study seeks to explore what might constitute key critical success factors for implementing social networking in higher education in Saudi Arabia given its socio-cultural particularities.
Objective of Paper

In what ways do Saudi Arabian students use social networking in learning activities?

What are students’ attitudes to and perceptions of social networking for educational purposes?

Little published research on this topic and inconclusive evidence of whether and how social networking is used at universities in Saudi Arabia.
Focus Groups

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<th>Focus Group ID</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>University</th>
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<th>Female</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Percentage

Figure 1. Participants demographical information

4 universities – 2 government and 2 private
Focus Group Outcome

1. Saudi Arabian students are actively using social networking sites

2. Students are using social networking sites for learning purposes

3. Limitations
Focus Group Outcome

Saudi Arabian students are actively using social networking sites:
- Mainly Facebook and Twitter
- Social and entertainment purposes
- Work purposes
- Learning purposes
Discussion
Learning Purposes
• Mainly self-directed and informal activities:
  • Finding information
  • Working from home
  • Forming groups
  • Sharing resources e.g links
  • Questions and answers
  • New knowledge from video clips
  • Contact with lecturers
Discussion

• Enthusiasm for and desire to use social networking for educational reasons

but

• Limited formal inclusion of social networking sites as a planned pedagogical aid in university coursework
• Limited knowledge of range of social networking sites and usages
Initial Framework

• Findings of this focus group will be incorporated to refine the initial framework.

• Adopted changes will be published in future research.
Conclusion

• While there remain some barriers to uptake of social networking in the higher education sector, Saudi Arabia is ideally positioned to take advantage of the benefits of these applications
• High student acceptance
• Can look to world-wide best practice in this area
Thank you for listening
Feel free to email any of your feedback or question


References


References


[34] Z. Bulbulia and J. Wassermann, "Rethinking the Usefulness of Twitter in Higher Education," 2015.


References


References


