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Can students be the catalyst in digital education in agriculture and allied fields for food and nutrition security?

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Abstract

Today in the age of Information and Technology, students of the College are usually found using social sites in their daily living. A study conducted with 200 college students (100 boys and girls each) from College of Agriculture and College of Home Science respectively by stratified random sampling by Drawing sample of 25 college students from each year (1-4th year). An questionnaire designed to elicit information on the profile of the college students and their social networking behaviour was studied. The data analysed on Microsoft excel found that the parents of the students were literate with majority of the parents being higher secondary educated, monthly income below 25000 (38.5%). The social sites used by college students were What's app (43%), Facebook (36%), Twitter (16%). Students used the social sites for socialization i.e., maintaining relationship (18%), for career (26.5%), connect with friends (20.5%), Post political opinions (16.5%). The frequency of use of sites reported to be permanently connected (33.5%), Several times a day (29%), 1-3 times a day (15.5%), 4-5 times a week (9.5%), Rarely (12.5%). The findings of the study suggest that the interest of college students towards the utilization of digital media to be connected with the community and the world should be well utilized to promote and educate rural youth and women. The behaviour and inclination of the College students towards use of social media frequent and wider connectivity can be tapped to provide digital education to rural people and farming community to enhance food security through promoting benefiting activities in agriculture and allied field.

Keywords: Social networking, frequency of use, college students, Eastern U.P.

Introduction

The world of technology especially information technologies have paved way for faster development as the information can now penetrate into unreached areas and in every persons hand. Recent developments and initiatives taken by the government of India in connecting India with Wi-Fi, availability of internet facility at a no cost or minimal cost and popularity of web sites especially the social media sites have reached a large number of persons in both rural and urban areas of the country. Social media networks have created a phenomenon on the internet (Boyd and Ellison, 2007) ^[1]. Social media employ mobile and web-based technologies through which the individuals share, create, discuss and modify user-generated content (Kaplan and Haenienin, 2010) ^[2].

Jenkins *et al.* (2007) ^[3] commented that social networking sites can facilitate learning and skill development outside formal learning environments by supporting peer-to-peer learning of knowledge and skill, collaboration, diverse cultural expression, the development of skill valued in the modern workspace. Ellison *et al.* (2007) ^[4] found that social networking sites help young people who had recently transitioned from high school to university to develop new relationship while maintaining their high school friendships.

Studies indicate young people access quality internet at home (67%) while broadband was used for connectivity in 78 per cent households. Mobile phones was owned by 97 per cent persons of which 64% were internet capable (Nielson, 2010). India today is moving forward in digitalization with Government initiatives to manage the information of its 1.3 cores population.

Digitalization has seeped into all social system whether ministries for the e governance, education, extension and development and designing. The technology shortens the distance of communication through Social networking sites. Therefore a study was conducted to know the behaviour and utilization of the social networking sites among college students undertaking undergraduate programme.

Methodology

The study was conducted with 200 College students taking their four year undergraduate degree programme in the respective fields in College of Home Science for girls and College of Agriculture for boys. A sample of 100 students from each college was drawn by randomly including 25 students from each year/batch. These students recorded their information through a questionnaire eliciting information on their personal profile and use of social sites for various activities. The data was analysed and discussed.

Results and Discussion

The profile of the students

Most of the college students belonged to nuclear family (38.5%), family size varying from 5-8 members. Parents of the students were literate with 68.5 % each primary and higher secondary educated, graduate and even post graduated. The monthly family income reported by the family was below Rs. 25000/- (36.5%), Rs. 25000-35000/- (32%), Rs. 35000-50000/- (19%), Rs. 5000 and above (12.5%).

Table 2: Class wise frequency of visit to the preferred social network sites by the College students of a University

Frequency of visit to social network sites	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	4 th year	Total
Permanently connected	14(28)	9 (18)	21 (42)	23 (46)	67 (33.5)
Several times a day	14 (28)	16 (32)	11 (22)	17 (34)	58 (29)
1-3 times a week	9(18)	13 (26)	4 (8)	5 (10)	31 (15.5)
4-5 times a week	4 (8)	9 (18)	2 (4)	4 (8)	19 (9.5)
Rarely	9 (18)	3 (6)	12 (24)	1 (2)	25 (12.5)
Total	50	50	50	50	200

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

It was found that among the students who were in their first year of college education, majority of the college students were visiting the social networking either permanently (28%), several times a day (28%), 1-3 times a week (18%). A few (8%) visited social site 4-5 times a week. There were 18 per cent students who visited the site rarely.

Among the 2nd year students, majority of the college students were connected social networking sites 32 per cent were several times a day on social networking sites, 18 per cent each connected several times a day and 4-5 times a week, 1 to 3 times in a week (26%), 18 per cent 4-5 times a week. A few (6%) visited rarely.

Among 3rd year students of the college 42 per cent were permanently connected on social network sites while 22 per cent visited the sites several time a day. Students who visited the site rarely were (24%). A few visited their preferred 1 to 3 times a week (8%) and 4-5 times (4%).

College students (46%) remained connected permanently on social sites while 34% visited their sites several times a day.

Utilization of Social networking Sites

The type of social media used by the College students of the University is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Type of Social networking sites used by the college students

S. No.	Social networking sites	Girls	Boys	Total
1.	What's app	40	46	86 (43%)
2.	Face book	50	23	73 (36.5)
3.	Twitter	09	24	33 (16.5)
4.	My space	0	04	04 (02%)
5.	All of the above	1	03	04 (2%)

Irrespective of the sex of the students, What's app was the most popular social networking site (43%), Facebook (36.5%), while 16.2% students used Twitter and a few (2%) preferred My Space network site. There were a few (2%) who used multiple sites of the media. More College boys students than girls used What's app while face book was used more by girls than boys.

Class wise preferred social site among College students

The college students (33.5%) were reported that they remained connected to social networking sites while 29 per cent visited their preferred sites several times a day. Social sites were visited at about 1 to 3 times a week (15.5%) and 12 per cent visited rarely. Rest (9.5%) visited sites only 4 to 5 times in a week. Table 2 presents the year wise / class wise frequency of visit to social sites.

There were a few college students who reported that they visited 1-3 times a day (10%), 4-5 times a day (8%) and rarely (2%).

It was hypothesized that there is no significant association between frequencies of visit to social networking sites with class/year of the under graduate students. The chi-square calculation found that the calculated value (48.91) was greater than the table value (26.217) at 12 degree of freedom at 1% LS. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, we may say that there is significant positive association between frequency of using social networking sites with class/year of the under graduate students.

Socialization through social networking sites

It was revealed that majority of College students use social networking sites for maintain relationship (18%), moving new career direction, for connecting with friends (20.5%) and post political opinions (16.5%). Only a few (1%) students use the site for all the mentioned purpose.

Table 3: Socialization through social networking sites

Socialization	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	4 th year	Total
Maintain relationship	4(8)	7(14)	13(26)	12(24)	36(18)
Moves in new career direction	15(30)	16 (32)	14 (28)	8 (16)	53 (26.5)
Connected to friends	6 (12)	19 (38)	8 (16)	8(16)	41(20.5)

Post political opinion	6 (12)	3 (6)	9 (18)	15 (30)	33 (16.5)
Multiple use	18 (36)	4 (8)	6 (12)	5 (30)	33 (16.5)
Any other	1 (2)	1(2)	0 (0)	5 (10)	33 (16.5)
All of the above	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (4)	2 (1)
Total	50	50	50	50	200

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

The table 3 presents that among 1st year students 12% college students that they were using social networking sites for posting political opinion, moving towards new career direction (30%), connecting with friends (12%) and a few (1%) had other purpose than above. Majority of the 2nd year College students (38%) used social sites for being connected to their friends, 32 per cent used the sites for knowing about new careers, maintain relationship (14%), to post political opinion (6%) and a few (2%) used for all purposes.

Among 3rd year under graduate students, majority (28%) connected at social sites with regard to new career direction for their future, maintaining relationship (26%), to post political opinion (18%) and connecting with their friends (16%). Rest (12%) use sites for multiple purposes. The 4th year students (30%) posted political opinion on the social sites, maintained relationship (24%), regarding new career directions and connecting friends (32% each). A few (10%) used for multiple reasons.

It was hypothesised that there is no association between use of social network sites for socialization by class wise college students. The chi-square value was calculated. The calculated value (43.37) was greater than the table value (34.80) at 18 degrees of freedom at 1% LS. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, there was significant association between the year of their degree programme and use of social networking sites. This implied that as the class in which students studied increase the frequency use of social site increased.

Conclusion

It is concluded that both boys and girls college graduate students were frequently using social media sites varying from continuously on the site, several times a day, 4-5 times a week, 1-2 times a week and rarely. There was positive association between the Frequency of use class wise. Thus there were more students in their final year remained connected to their preferred social media site. They connected to social media for maintaining relations and friendship, sharing their career knowledge and political opinions. The behaviour of the students and their inclination towards online activities should be tapped to make them more responsible citizens and their responsibility towards the rural community at large and agrarian community in particular. Therefore, effort should be made to sensitize the graduating students of different technologies and ICT and user friendly applications so as to digitally educate the rural community especially farmers and farm women. This could fetch them a wider scope and extended horizon for improving their quality of life. It is recommended that the media to attempt making the tool of social media for extension of knowledge and technologies for food security as presently there are a number of software and applications that provide support to the user in knowledge in security of food and nutrition.

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