

Perceived Effects of Facebook on Academic Activities of Agricultural Students in University Of Port Harcourt

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Abstract: *The study assessed the perceived effects of Facebook on academic activities of Agricultural students in the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Data were collected with the use of structured questionnaire from randomly selected 80 agriculture students and analyzed using descriptive statistical tools namely frequency, mean and percentages. Result shows that 64% of the agriculture students were females and fall mostly (87.4%) within the age brackets of 21-30years. Facebook (94%), blackberry messenger (90%) and Whatsapp (72.5%) were found to be the most frequently used social media by the students. Result on frequency of use of facebook shows that students visit facebook page mainly once in three days (60%). Majority (60%) spends an hour or less on Facebook daily while the major action mostly performed is chatting (36.25%). The agriculture students agree that facilitation of networking with other agric students (Mean = 3.00), collaboration with other students (Mean = 3.00 and ease of information flow (Mean = 3.41) were the major effects of facebook on their academic activities. The overall rating of effect of facebook shows that facebook affect the academic activities of agriculture students positively (67%). Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that the positive effect of facebook among students should be encouraged while the excessive use of facebook for recreational purposes should be discouraged.*

Keywords: *Facebook, perceived effects, agriculture students*

I. Introduction

Social media simply refers to the means of interaction among people in which they create, share, exchange and comment among themselves in different networks. Andreas and Michael (2000) defined social media as a group of internet based application that builds on the ideological foundation and allows the creation and exchange of users – generated content. Similarly, Junco, Helbergert, & Loken (2011) defined Social media as Internet-based tools that promote collaboration and information sharing while Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin (2010) added that it can be used in academic settings to promote student engagement and facilitate better student learning.

Social media includes a variety of web-based tools and services that are designed to promote community development through collaboration and information sharing (Arnold & Paulus, 2010; Junco, Helbergert, & Loken, 2011) as well as provide opportunities for individual expression and interactions with other users. They include: blogs, wikis, media (audio, photo, video, text), sharing tools, networking platforms (including Facebook), and virtual worlds.

Facebook is a social media that is widely used in Nigeria by both students and non-students. The increased usage of Facebook and other social-media in the country is facilitated by the improvement in the communication industry in the country especially in the aspect of mobile telephony. This gives students easy access to internet network even on their mobile phones making accessibility to Facebook easier. Facebook is regarded as the largest social network currently accommodating over nine hundred millions of active users of which more than half of this users access Facebook website on their mobile device. (David, 2012). It allows registered users to create a personal profile, add other users and groups as friends and exchange messages including auto device notifications when they update their profile. Users may join common interest group organized by work place, schools or colleges and categorize their friends into list such as close friends (Wikipedia 2013).

The increased usage of Facebook by students in higher institutions of learning has generated serious concern among stakeholders in the education sector in the country. Many are of the opinion that Facebook usage affects the academic performance of students negatively while some opine that it positively affects them. In view of this debate and bearing the enormous role of agriculture in the nation's economy, this study examined the effects of Facebook usage on the academic activities of agriculture undergraduates in the University of Port Harcourt.

Specifically the study examined the demographic characteristics of agriculture undergraduates, identified the perceived effects of Facebook usage on agriculture students in the University of Port Harcourt and identified the frequently used social media by agriculture students in the university and the duration of time spent on Facebook by the agriculture students.

II. Methodology

The study was carried out at Faculty of Agriculture, University of Port Harcourt. Sampling random sampling was used to select 80 agricultural students for the study. Four students were randomly selected from each level of each department in the faculty given a total of 80 students for the study. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the study and analyzed using descriptive statistical tools namely frequency, percentages and mean.

III. Results And Discussion

Demographic characteristics of agricultural students

Table 1 shows the socio economic characters of the agriculture students. It was shown that majority (64%) of the agriculture students were females. This could mean that there are more females in the faculty of agriculture than males. Majority (96.2%) of the students were 30 years and below. Furthermore, it was shown that the social media mostly used by agriculture students are Facebook (94%), blackberry messenger (90%), Whatsapp (72.5%), 2go (60%), Twitter (52.5%) and Skype (50%). According to their order of preference, Facebook (49.0%) was preferred to other media followed by Black berry messenger (28.8%). This corroborates with Asemah, et.al. (2013) which found out that students use Facebook more than other social media in Kogi State University.

Table 1: Distribution of agriculture students according to their social-economic characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	29	36.2
Female	51	63.8
Age (years)		
≤20	7	8.8
21-30	70	87.4
Above 30	3	3.8
Social media you have account with		
2go		
No	32	40.0
Yes	48	60.0
Blackberry Messenger		
No	8	10
Yes	72	90
Facebook		
No	5	6
Yes	75	94
Skype		
No	40	50
Yes	40	50
Whatsapp		
No	22	27.5
Yes	58	72.5
Twitter		
No	38	47.5
Yes	42	52.5
Linkedin		
No	72	90.0
Yes	8	10.0
Youtube		
No	58	72.5
Yes	22	27.5
Google		
No	67	83.8
Yes	13	16.2
Tango		
No	78	97.5
Yes	2	2.5
Viber		
No	76	95.0
Yes	4	5.0
Ovoo		
No	80	100
Yes	nil	nil
Badoo		
No	55	68.8
Yes	25	31.2

Which social media do you prefer?			
2go	2	2.5	
Blackberry messenger	23	28.8	
Facebook	36	49.0	
Skype	nil	nil	
Whatsapp	13	16.2	
Twitter	2	2.5	
Linkedin	nil	nil	nil
Youtube	4		5.0
Google	nil	nil	nil
Viber	nil	nil	nil
Ovoo	nil	nil	nil
Badoo	nil	nil	nil

Source: Field survey data, 2014

Frequency of use of Facebook by agricultural students

Table 2 reveals that 61.25% of the agriculture students visit their Facebook page daily. This is a great source of concern bearing student's non-chalant attitude towards academic activities in mind. This is an indication that students devote more time to activities on Facebook more than their primary course of study in the University. The Table also revealed that the major activity done by students on Facebook is chatting (36.25%) while 60% of the students spend approximately one hour on Facebook daily. Going by the findings of this study, one can say that Facebook constitute a major distraction to student's academic activities in the school as majority of them spend more time chatting on it than attending to their academic activities.

Table 2: Distribution of agricultural students according to frequency of use of Facebook

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1.	How often do you visit Facebook page		
	Daily	49	61.25
	Once in two days	14	17.5
	Once in three days	5	6.25
	Once in four days	1	1.25
	Once in five days	1	1.25
	Once in a week	10	12.5
2.	How much time do you spend on Facebook		
	≥1hr	48	60.0
	2-3hrs	22	27.5
	4-5hrs	4	5.0
	Above 5hrs	6	7.5
3.	Which of the action do you prefer on Facebook		
	Chatting	29	36.25
	Uploading photo	5	6.25
	Commenting	8	10.0
	Seeing what others are doing	18	22.5
	Academic activities	20	25

Source: Field survey data, 2014

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The major effects of Facebook on agricultural students in the University of port Harcourt is facilitation of networking with other agric students (Mean = 3.00), encourages collaboration with other students (Mean = 3.00) and ease of information flow (Mean = 3.41). This collaborates with Nelson Laird and Kuh (2005) which reported that students who use information technology for academics also have a higher likelihood of contributing and participating in active, academic collaboration with other students. Similarly, Asemah and Edegoh (2013), noted that young people prefer Facebook as a source of news and information, rather than listening to radio or watching television. That is to say that students depend mostly on Facebook as a source of information. This result also confirms that Facebook is a major means of collaboration and networking among peers and colleagues.

Table 3: Distribution of agriculture students according to the effects of Facebook usage on their academic performance

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Remark
1	Face book distract me from carrying out my academic assignment	9 (11.2)	4 (5.0)	42(52.3)	25(31.2)	1.96	
2	Constitute distraction to my private study	10(12.5)	15(18.8)	33(41.2)	22(27.5)	2.16	
3	It distract my concentration during lectures	9(11.2)	13(16.2)	13(16.2)	14(17.5)	2.08	
4	It facilitate my research work	16(20.0)	37(46.2)	13(16.2)	14(17.5)	2.69	
5	It facilitate networking with other agricultural students	16(20.0)	53(66.2)	6(7.5)	5(6.2)	3.00	
6	It encourages collaboration with other agricultural students	19(23.8)	46(57.5)	11(13.8)	4(5.0)	3.00	
7	It increases access to my lecturers	6(7.5)	21(26.2)	35(43.8)	18(22.5)	2.19	
8	It encourages better relationship with my lecturers	4(5.0)	19(23.8)	29(36.2)	28(35.0)	1.99	
9	Facebook serves as arelevant tool in some courses like Agric journalism	18(22.5)	35(43.8)	19(23.8)	8(10.0)	2.79	
10	It offers pictorial sand diagrammatic representation of my course	16(20.0)	21(26.2)	24(30.0)	19(23.8)	2.42	
11	It eases information flow	48(60.0)	24(30.0)	1(1.2)	7(8.8)	3.41	

Source: Field survey data, 2014

Overall rating of effects of Facebook usage on academic activities of agricultural students

Table 4 shows the overall rating of effect of Facebook, it was shown that Facebook affect the academic activities of agriculture students positively (67%), while 33% indicated that Facebook affect their academic activities negatively.

Junco (2012) and Junco et al., (2011) noted that students who participate in coursework that utilize social media demonstrate an increase in overall GPA when compared with students who do not participate in social media. This is an indication that the use of social media in academic coursework can increase the learning achieved by an individual student.

Similarly, research indicates that social media usage within the academic setting not only increases students' GPA, but also facilitates peer feedback on assignments and thoughtful student reflections on course content because of the ability for students to openly communicate with each other and develop strong relationships among peers (Arnold & Paulus, 2010; Ebner, Leinhardt, Rohs, & Meyer, 2010; Kuh, 1993). Furthermore, it noted that using social media fosters long-term retention of information and develops a deeper understanding of content that is discussed in a class (Chen & Bryer, 2012; Heafner & Friedman, 2008).

On the contrary, Asemah, et.al. (2013) found that the use of Facebook affect the academic performance of Kogi state University negatively.

Table 4: Distribution of student according to overall rating of effect of Facebook on academic activities of agricultural students

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1	Facebook affect my academic activities positively	83.8	67
2	Facebook affect my academic activities negatively	13	33

Source: Field survey data, 2014

IV. Conclusion And Recommendation

The study concludes that Facebook affect the academic activities of agricultural students positively. Based on the finding of the study, it was recommended that the positive usage of Facebook like collaborative research and study should be encouraged while excessive usage in recreational purposes be reduced to the barest minimum.

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