


UGT-Based Study of SM Use Among Undergraduates in UAE and Kuwait: Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The technology is getting advanced and likewise the social media is gaining maximum attraction of individuals. The trends of the world are changing day by day so that the impacts are also changing as per needs and demands of the world. Social media has made the changes in the process of interaction between the public and government officials. Middle East communities have great access to new technologies and internet, especially, the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC) that are recognized by advanced infrastructures. Therefore, a sharp increase in social media use is noticed in the area particularly the youth who are more attracted to these platforms. This paper focus on Uses and gratifications of social media use among college students in United Arab Emirates and Kuwait for three social media sites: Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Mixed methodologies are applied (quantitative and qualitative) to explore various use and gratifications factors as well as other social factors among youth that contributes in the adoption of these social network sits (SNSs). Moreover, several statistical tests were performed to analyze the collected data. Few research articles have been published about new and social media platforms use in the region; however, comparative studies were rarely noticed regarding this subject. The survey includes (N=190) samples between Kuwaiti and Emirati students. The study reveals that entertainment is the major use and gratification reason for using the three platforms, while the main social factor is identification. Social media is vital when it comes to the issue of the national, political, and business life.

KEYWORDS

GCC Youth, Kuwait, New Technology Challenges, Social Media, UAE, Uses and Gratifications Theory

INTRODUCTION

Technological developments and innovations have had a massive impact on the information and communication system (Kosyakova et al. 2020; Widjaja et al. 2020). Such technological advancement is important in the use of the internet to foster information dissemination and reception (Blok et al. 2020; Rzhetskyyi et al. 2020; Sarti et al. 2020). The social medium which has established several

DOI: 10.4018/IJeC.2021010103

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networks have gained admiration and receptiveness over the years (Killian et al. 2019; McClure and Seock, 2020). “The concept of Social Media (SM) has been on top of the agenda for many business executives” (Pourkhani et al., 2019, p. 2).

In a general term, Social media are websites and internet-based applications that permit users to produce and share information. (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Chiu et al., 2013) Individuals utilize social media websites such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc. to build and maintain relationships or reconnect with lost companions (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Alwagait et al. 2015; Michikyan et al. 2015; Nasrullah and Khan, 2019). These social media collect personal data from users in the form of profile data as a requirement for establishing connection link (Pempek et al. 2009). However, social media communication is not only formed via individuals representing themselves by creating their profiles, but also those individuals are allowed to generate their own contents, display, and interact with the contents other, friends or other online users (Ding and Jiang 2014; Spasojevic et al. 2014; Zarrinkalam et al. 2015; Raghuram et al. 2016; Seghouani et al. 2019).

Social media has become an addiction to the users (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Elantheraiyan and Shankarkumar, 2019; Nasrullah and Khan, 2019). It has been researched that use of Facebook comes on the second number after the use of several addictive substances such as alcohol, cigarettes, and others where the individual finds it difficult to break the usage (Juergensen and Leckfor, 2018). Social media does not only seem to have effect on our society but it actually has changed our lives (Ariel and Avidar, 2014), even our way of thinking is changed due to the social websites. Social media has changed the way people behave (King, 2015). Social media has had impact on individuals (Chen et al. 2019; Talwar et al. 2019; Alalwan, 2018) and communities (Simon et al. 2013; Kamboj et al. 2018; Wang et al. 2019), organization (Namisango and Kang, 2019; Ihm, 2019; Steffens et al. 2019; Sideri et al. 2019), and politics (Hong and Nadler, 2012; Anim et al. 2019; Miller, 2019; Crilley and Gillespie, 2019). These are some of the several examples where social media has strong influence.

Social media uses are widely common among youth including universities' students (Ahmad et al. 2019; Alnjadat et al. 2019; Feng, 2019; Köse and Doğan, 2019; Saide et al. 2019; Izuagbe et al. 2019; Pew Research Center, 2015) In the United States, Smith and Caruso (2010) stated that around 97% of University students are actively using SNSs in daily basis. Another recent study in UK noted that college students spend up to six hours on SNS, in particular Facebook, per day. While it is possible that higher rates of SNS use might exist in other regions in the world among college students which have not been recorded yet (Daily Mail, 2014). As of January 2018, the social networking site usage penetration in UAE and Kuwait is 99% and 98%, respectively. Qatar also has a high 99% penetration rate, whereas Bahrain has 92% penetration rate, and Saudi Arabic has only 75% penetration rate (statista.com, 2019). This indicates that in UAE and Kuwait, nearly everyone uses SNSs. As stated earlier, the main SNSs are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and also LinkedIn. Authors such as Hawi and Samaha (2017) indicate that as of March 2016, there were 1.09 billion daily active users. The statistics for Instagram stood at 400 million monthly active users. At the same time, Twitter had 310 million active monthly users and LinkedIn had 433 million active users (Hawi and Samaha, 2017). These statistics indicate the high usage of Facebook and also the addiction of Facebook users.

This high level of SNS use and the addictive influence of these sites by university students raises concern among social sciences scholars worldwide (Koc & Gulyagci, 2013; Hawi and Samaha, 2017; Jasso-Medrano and López-Rosales, 2018; Köse and Doğan, 2019). For that reason, this research explores the theory of uses and gratifications with regard of SNS use to investigate the reasons behind their adoption and continue use among university students in two countries: UAE and Kuwait. Numbers of factors are presumed to influence student's behavior towards adoption and use of SNS. These include purposive, self-expression, entertainment, social interaction and other social reasons such as compliance, internalization and identification. The paper uses both quantitative and qualitative methods: surveys and interviews, respectively.

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