

# Activities and Reasons for Using Social Networking Sites by Research Scholars in NEHU: A Study on Facebook and ResearchGate

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## Abstract

*The paper has made an attempt to study the activities and reasons for using Social Networking Sites (SNS) by the research scholars of North Eastern Hill University (NEHU). For that the study has covered two social networking sites namely Facebook and ResearchGate based on popularity and widely used by research scholars. a self administered questionnaire was distributed among the research scholars of NEHU. And the primary data gathered through questionnaire were analyzed and discussed in accordance with the objective of the study. Here it is found that most of the scholars from social science background use SNS from education and research point of view; on the contrary scholars from pure science think that SNS has no role on research and education. They use SNS just for entertainment. The paper concludes with some suggestions given by the respondents for making SNS better research tool.*

**Keywords:** Social Networking Site, Facebook, ResearchGate

## 1. Introduction

Man is a social animal. A social animal is a loosely defined term for an organism that is highly interactive with other members of its species to the point of having a recognizable and distinct society. Can we imagine ourselves being completely alone, not getting in touch with anyone?

It is in our nature to mingle with people, we depend on one another, in many ways.

It is the human nature. The creation of social networking sites are also result of the social nature of human being.

A social networking service is an online service, platform, or site that focuses on building and reflecting of social networks or social relations among people, who, for example, share interests

and/or activities. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events, and interests within their individual networks. It is also used in today's modern times to meet new people and form relationships (Wikipedia). In the words of Boyd and Ellison (2007), "Social networking sites, or SNS are web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connections, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system". SNS began with SixDegrees.com, launched in 1997, and "allowed users to create profiles, list their Friends and, beginning in 1998, surf the Friends lists" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 214). In an article written by Phyllis A. Peterson, states that Social networking sites can be defined as an online service that focuses on the building of social networks for people who share a common interest, lifestyle, and/or activity.



Most social networks consist of the same ways to interact; chat, video chat, email, comments, messaging, blogs, discussion groups, forums, and file sharing. "Social Network is social structure made up of individuals (or organizations) called "nodes", which are tied (connected) by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, kinship, common interest, financial exchange, likes/dislikes, or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige". (Anjali Abhyankar)

Thus social networking sites help in creating virtual communities driven by end users. Through social networking, groups of people can focus on one problem and come up with a solution together.

## 2. Objective of the Study

The objective of this proposed study is to make an attempt to find out the activities and reasons for using Social Networking Sites (SNS) by the research scholars of North Eastern Hill University (NEHU).

## 3. Research Question

The study was motivated by two primary research questions: What activities do researchers perform on SNS? How SNS are related with research?

## 4. Methodology

For the survey of the primary data questionnaire method was adopted. For that a questionnaire was prepared on the basis of the objective of the proposed study and was distributed among the randomly selected research scholars under the study. The only criterion in selecting the sample was that the respondent should have account either on Facebook or ResearchGate or on both.

## 5. Data Analysis

During the survey, 135 questionnaires were administered to randomly selected research scholars. Out of which 100 research scholars had responded by giving a response rate of 74.07 %. However, the non respondents constitute 25.93% in total. The data were tabulated for analysis in accordance to the objective of the study. Some respondents furnished some valuable comments in the space provided for the purpose; those comments were incorporated in the study at the appropriate places.

The study has covered two social networking sites namely Facebook and ResearchGate based on popularity and widely used by research scholars. Information from this survey is relevant to concerns about role of SNS in research.

### 5.1 Basic Information of the Respondents

The Table 1 furnished below gives a brief account of the basic information of the respondents of the study. Here it is seen that out of 100 respondents 56 are female and 44 are male. Similarly out of 100 respondents 88 come under 25 to 30 age group and 12 come under 30 to 35 age group. Again out of 100 respondents 69 are from Arts stream and 31 are from Science stream. In case of research experience, 44 respondents fall under 1 to 2 years of experience, 31 fall under 2 to 3 years of experience, and 25 fall under 3 to 5 years of research experience. Similarly, in case of number of publications, 25 respondents have no publication yet, 67 have 1 to 5 publications, 7 have 6 to 10 publications and only one respondent has more than 10 publications.

**Activities and Reasons for Using Social Networking Sites..**

|                     |             |             |                  |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| Gender              | Female (56) | Male (44)   | Total (100)      |
| Age                 | 25-30 (88)  | 30-35(12)   | 35-40 (0)        |
| Stream              | Arts(69)    | Science(31) |                  |
| Research Experience | 1-2 yrs(44) | 2-3 yrs(31) | 3-5 yrs(25)      |
| No. of Publications | No Pub (25) | 1-5(67)     | 6-10(7) 10-15(1) |

**Table 1: Basic Information of the Respondents**

**5.2 Accounts on SNS**

Here respondents were asked about their existing account on Facebook, ResearchGate and on both. It was found that 34% respondents have account only on Facebook. Similarly, 8% respondents have account only on ResearchGate. And pleasingly 58% have account on both of the SNSs.

| SNS Account       | Only on Facebook | Only on Research Gate | On both | Total |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|---------|-------|
| No of Respondents | 34               | 8                     | 58      | 100   |

**Table 2: Account on SNS**

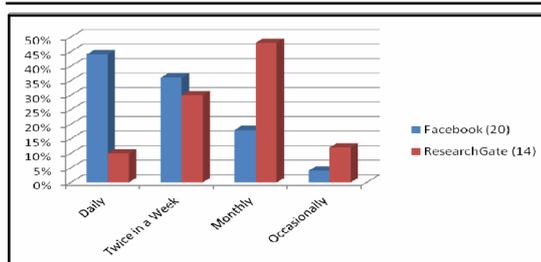
**5.3 Frequency of Using SNS**

At this point research scholars were asked about how frequently they use SNSs. Table-2 supported with Graph-1 point that out of the 92 Facebook user, 44% are using Facebook daily, 36% are using Twice in a week, 18% are using it monthly and the remaining 4% are using Facebook occasionally. Similarly in case of ResearchGate, out of the total 66 users, 10% use it daily, 30% use twice in a week, 48% use it monthly and 12% use it occasionally.

| Frequency of using SNS | Daily | Twice in a Week | Monthly | Occasionally |
|------------------------|-------|-----------------|---------|--------------|
| Facebook               | 44%   | 36%             | 18%     | 4%           |
| ResearchGate           | 10%   | 30%             | 48%     | 12%          |

**Table 3: Frequency of using SNS**

**8<sup>th</sup> Convention PLANNER 2012**



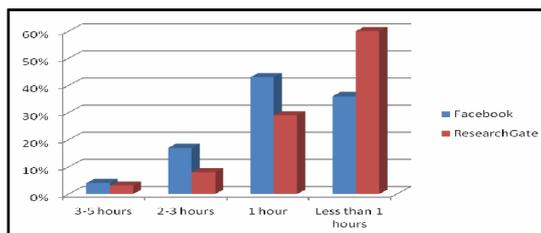
**Figure 1: Frequency of using SNS**

**5.4 Time Spent on SNS**

Respondents were asked how long they spent on SNS. Here it is found that in case of using Facebook, 4% spend 3to 5 hours, 11% spend 2 to 3 hours, 43% spend 1 hour and 36% spend less than 1 hour. Likely, in case of using ResearchGate, 3% spend 3to 5 hours, 7% spend 2 to 3 hours, 37% spend 1 hour and 17% spend less than 1 hour.

| Time Spent on SNS | 3-5 hours | 2-3 hours | 1 hour | Less than 1 hours |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|--------|-------------------|
| Facebook          | 4%        | 17%       | 43%    | 36%               |
| ResearchGate      | 3%        | 8%        | 29%    | 60%               |

**Table 4: How Often SNS are used**



**Figure 2: How often SNS are used**

**5.5 Activities do in SNS**

The below Table accompanying with Graph depicts a clear picture on various activities perform by the respondents on SNS. It shows that out of 92 Facebook users, 5% primely do “chatting”, 1% interested mainly in “meeting new people”, 16% “find untouched friend”, 29% busy with “sending/

reading message”, 3% “interacts with supervisors”, 24% “participate in discussion”, 5% share information regarding seminar/workshops”, 11% “share photos of attended seminars/workshops”, 3% “express creativity” and 1% comment on others’ posts”. On the other hand, out of 66 ResearchGate users 51% basically do “sending/reading message”, 25% “participate in discussion” and 11% “share information regarding seminars/workshops”. Of course, it is noticeable that no respondents use ResearchGate to perform activities like chatting, meet new people, find untouched friend, comment on others’ posts etc. Moreover 9% of the respondents use ResearchGate to interact with supervisor/teacher. The analysis shows that majority of the respondents perform sending/reading message in both of the SNSs.

| Favourable activities on SNS                   | Percentage of Respondents (Facebook) | Percentage of Respondents (ResearchGate) |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Instant message (Chat)                         | 5%                                   | 0%                                       |
| Meet new people                                | 1%                                   | 0%                                       |
| Find untouched friends                         | 16%                                  | 0%                                       |
| Sending/Reading Message                        | 29%                                  | 51%                                      |
| Interact with supervisor/Teachers              | 3%                                   | 9%                                       |
| Participating in Discussions                   | 24%                                  | 25%                                      |
| Sharing information regarding Seminar/Workshop | 5%                                   | 11%                                      |
| Sharing Photos of attended Seminar/Workshop    | 11%                                  | 3%                                       |
| Sharing personal/public photos and videos      | 2%                                   | 0%                                       |
| Express creativity                             | 3%                                   | 1%                                       |
| Comment on other’s posts                       | 1%                                   | 0%                                       |

Table 5: Activities on SNS

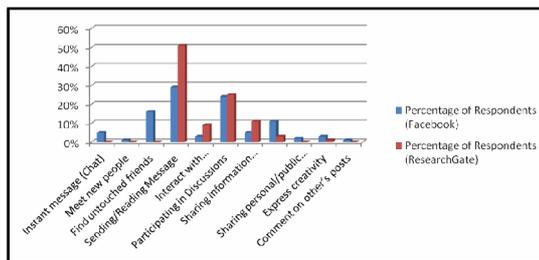


Figure 3: Activities on SNS

### 5.6 Reasons for using SNS

Here respondents were asked why they use Social Networking Sites. Table-6 along with the Figure-4 reveals that out of 92 Facebook users, majority of the users (40%) use it “to be up to date”. On the other hand, out of 66 ResearchGate users 24% use it “to know other’s field of research”, 31% use it “to be up to date” and 37% use it “to form study groups”. Moreover, it is noticeable that no respondent uses ResearchGate for “entertainment”.

| Reasons for using SNS             | Percentage of Respondents (Facebook) | Percentage of Respondents (ResearchGate) |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| To share research activity        | 9%                                   | 6%                                       |
| To know others’ field of research | 2%                                   | 24%                                      |
| For entertainment                 | 29%                                  | 0%                                       |
| To be up to date                  | 40%                                  | 31%                                      |
| To form study groups              | 17%                                  | 37%                                      |
| Friends use the same site         | 3%                                   | 2%                                       |

Table 6: Reasons for using SNS

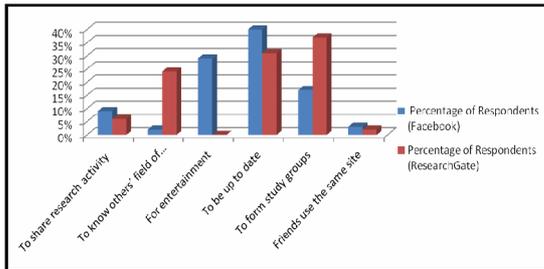


Figure 4: Reasons for using SNS

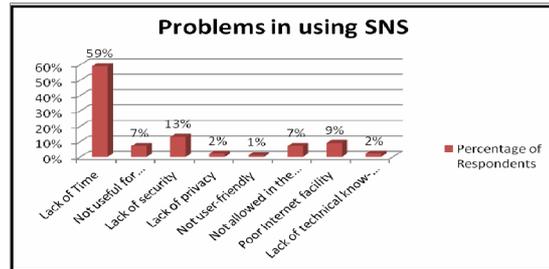


Figure 5: Problems in using SNS

5.7 Problems in using SNS

The below Table accompanying with Graph depicts a clear picture on various problems face by the research scholars in using SNS. Ofcourse, majority of the respondents (59%) expressed that they are not facing any problem in using Facebook or ResearchGate except “Lack of Time”

| Problems in using SNS                       | Percentage of Respondents |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Lack of Time                                | 59%                       |
| Not useful for research/educational purpose | 7%                        |
| Lack of security                            | 13%                       |
| Lack of privacy                             | 2%                        |
| Not user-friendly                           | 1%                        |
| Not allowed in the department               | 7%                        |
| Poor Internet facility                      | 9%                        |
| Lack of technical know-how                  | 2%                        |

Table 7: Problems for using SNS

5.8 Level of Satisfaction

The scholar has displayed the level of satisfaction of the respondents regarding the use of both Facebook and ResearchGate under Table-8 affixing data in Figure-6 for a clear understanding. Here the researcher made use of four-point scale. The scale ranged from “Highly Satisfied” (1) to “Not Satisfied” (4) for all items associated with each variable.

| Level of Satisfaction | Percentage of Respondents (Facebook) | Percentage of Respondents (ResearchGate) |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Highly Satisfied      | 13%                                  | 2%                                       |
| Satisfied             | 59%                                  | 56%                                      |
| Partially Satisfied   | 23%                                  | 35%                                      |
| Not Satisfied         | 5%                                   | 7%                                       |

Table 8: Level of Satisfaction in using SNS

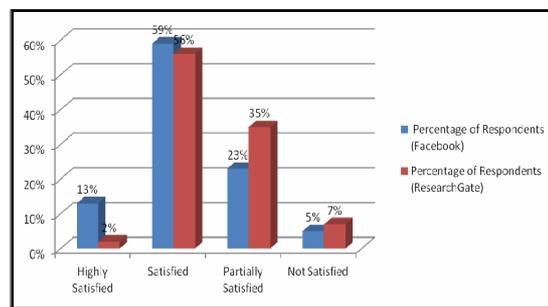


Figure 6: Level of Satisfaction in using SNS

Here, out of 92 Facebook users, 13% have remarked it highly satisfied; 59% have mentioned as satisfied; 23% have commented it as partially satisfied. Only 5% have mentioned that they are not satisfied with Facebook. Similarly, out of 66 ResearchGate users, 2% are highly satisfied; 56% are satisfied; 35% are partially satisfied and only 7% are not satisfied in using researchGate. However, it is seen that the majority of the respondents are satisfied with Facebook and ResearchGate.

### 5.9 Reliability of SNS

At this point respondents were asked what they feel about the reliability of the information uploaded in Social Networking Sites. Out of 100 respondents 22% replied that these are reliable; 71% replied that these are partially reliable and only 7% think that these are not reliable.

| Reliability of SNS | Percentage of Respondents |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Reliable           | 22%                       |
| Partially Reliable | 71%                       |
| Not Reliable       | 7%                        |

Table 9: Reliability of SNS

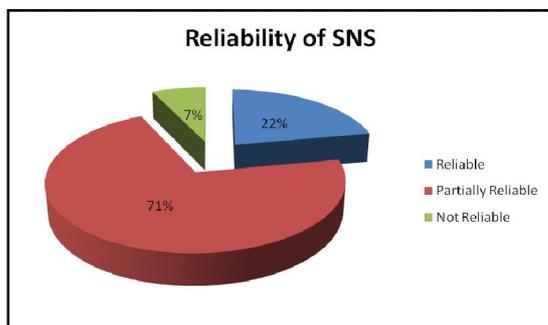


Figure 7: Reliability of SNS

### 5.10 Future of SNS

Here respondents were asked to express their perspectives on the future of social networking sites. And it is found that majority (59%) of the research scholars responded positively. On the contrary only 6% has responded negatively regarding the future of SNS. And 35% respondents have no idea about this.

| Future of SNS | Percentage of Respondents |
|---------------|---------------------------|
| Positive      | 59%                       |
| Negative      | 6%                        |
| No idea       | 35%                       |

Table 10: Future of SNS

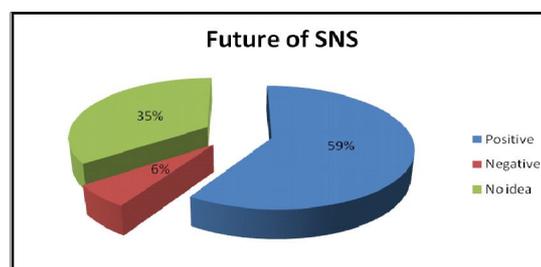


Figure 8: Future of SNS

### 5.11 Importance of SNS in Research

At this point respondents were asked what they think about the importance of SNS in research. Here it is found that almost 70% respondent (majority are from social science background) claim SNS as a research tool; on the contrary remaining 30% respondent (majority are from pure science background) think that SNS has no role in research and education. They are not ambitious about SNS. Some of their comments on the importance of SNS in research are –

- i. Easy to interact other's research work.
- ii. Getting help from other researchers in the same area of study.
- iii. These are the source of tacit as well as explicit information.
- iv. Provides platform for sharing quick updates about recent developments in one's particular area of research.
- v. Increase the amount of interest in research
- vi. Always gives an easy access to get information about various vacant positions available in an institute through sharing of status.
- vii. Specifically helpful for group discussion.
- viii. Helpful to share research experiences.
- ix. Can interact with the research scholars from other universities.
- x. To share our research ideas
- xi. It can be helpful in interacting with others whereby we can share information.
- xii. Better platform for sharing one's own view without hesitation.
- xiii. Useful in knowing and learning new tools in research work.
- xiv. Interaction and correspondence with people who are related to the subject concerned.
- xv. To share our opinion in different fields.
- xvi. Networking, information collection, exploring and creating new ideas.
- xvii. We can share our thoughts, visions, problems that arise in the course of research with our friends. They give us suggestions/feedbacks on that.

- xviii. Alerts on subjects regarding seminars/conferences.
- xix. We can keep ourselves update what other friends are doing staying anywhere in the world. Visual sample can be identified by uploading it. Say, someone's friend in USA, who is a Botanist and you need to identify a particular species, upload the photograph of that and ask.
- xx. Useful to get answers from others.
- xxi. It helps to stay connected to our research partners from other states and communities.
- xxii. Update news like information about coming Seminar/Workshop inside or outside the country and different scientific awards notification is one of the most vital source to keep update oneself and others.

#### **5.12 To make SNS Better Research Tool**

In this study respondents were asked to provide some suggestions to make SNS better research tool. Some of their assumptions to make SNS better research tool are –

- i. Should create a new community only for research scholars
- ii. Should create a module/tab for uploading publication
- iii. Should create subject based SNS
- iv. It should facilitate to know about earlier researches have done on a particular area.
- v. Should improve research related sites
- vi. More options should be there to find people from same area of interest.

- vii. Should make research related sites like ResearchGate more attractive and interactive.
- viii. Researchers should participate in ResearchGate actively like Facebook.
- ix. Should make positive use of SNS.
- x. Accessibility to discussion forum and e-journals should be provided to interested people.
- xi. Should provide better security and privacy to users.
- xii. Conferencing provision like telephonic conferencing should also be provided
- xiii. Only the users can make SNS popular as a better research tool by making good use of SNS by sharing knowledge as well as research experiences and expert view points on topics on social importance.
- xiv. Should make more research groups available with good security and privacy tools so that a large section of researchers willingly get together and join them.
- xv. If everyone use SNS for good purposes like sharing knowledge about general awareness, research areas and any topic which are useful for gaining knowledge instead of just wasting time in passing silly comment on others posts, then SNS will serve as a very useful research tool.
- xvi. In case of ResearchGate the further categorization of particular disciplines and fields is important.
- xvii. The present sites can be upgraded with some more research oriented activities.
- xviii. Should be user-friendly and more reliable.

- xix. There should be more scholarly discussion rather than just uploading personal photos and videos. For that users should be mostly responsible and sincere.
- xx. Should introduce specific research based communities.
- xxi. Should have interactive discussion forum.
- xxii. Material sharing should be provided
- xxiii. Should give research updates, scientific discoveries over the world. Free access of journals is the most useful for research works.
- xxiv. Should be allowed in educational departments
- xxv. There should be some programme highlighting the updated events, techniques, research finding etc. on the SNS. Moreover, it should be fully protected from hackers.
- xxvi. Give awareness to the students about these networking sites.
- xxvii. To form groups initiated by experience people in the field of research, than share and discuss ideas and views.
- xxviii. Should link up important matters to different sites where information on particular issues can be better accessed.

## **6. Conclusion**

Technology innovations have always been perceived as either a boon or a curse to the mankind. The problem starts when, what, where and for what purpose the technology innovations are applied. There are always pros and cons to every idea, theory, invention and discovery. Every new concept

has adverse and beneficial effects over the way we live and enrich our lives. Social Network can be also weighed in the same balance where it has many perceived beneficial aspects as compared to some adverse effects to the overall well being. It is up to us, how better we handle these. You, I and all are rational people. Use it rationally. After all honesty is the best policy. Better thinking, greater development.

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