

Use of Social Networking Sites by Research Scholars of Dibrugarh University: A Case Study

Trinayan Borgohain

Abstract

In this 21st century's changing environment, the worldwide population has seen a new wave of interpersonal communication in the form of social networking sites. With the rapid growth and popularity of social networking sites among the people of this era has given a new way of communication. This dynamic change provides the research scholars of the present period a new form of communication for their research work. The present study is to find out how the research scholars of Dibrugarh University use social networking sites for their research work purpose. This study also examines the personal and professional impact of social networking sites on research work. A structured questionnaire was designed and personally distributed among 150 respondents. Most of them are using these sites for their personal and a few used for research study. ResearchGate, Academia.edu and Facebook are the most preferred social networking sites for research purposes.

Keywords: Social Networking Sites, Communication, Research Scholar, Dibrugarh University, ResearchGate, Facebook

1. Introduction

In this modern era social networking site has become the new way of communication between people. With the increasing popularity of social networking sites, nowadays researcher also prefers to use these social networking sites to do research. Different social networking sites such as Facebook, ResearchGate, Academia.edu etc. provides the modern-day researchers to enhance the process of information procurement, sharing and dissemination among them. Many scholars believe that these social networking sites help students to cope up with the current trends in their respective fields. SNSs are profile-based websites that allow users to maintain social relationships by viewing, visiting, and sharing

their lists of social connections with other members (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

1.1 Dibrugarh University

Dibrugarh University is one of the leading universities of India located in Dibrugarh, Assam which was established in the year 1965. The territorial jurisdiction of Dibrugarh University covers seven districts of Upper Assam, viz, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Dhemaji and Lakhimpur. The University Campus extends over an area of more than 500 acres. The University campus hosts 17 Teaching Departments, 18 Centre's for Studies and one Institute of Engineering and Technology (DUIET) organized under five different schools of studies.



2. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are:

- ❖ To find out the use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) by research scholars of the Dibrugarh University, Assam.
- ❖ To find out the purpose of using SNSs by the research scholars of Dibrugarh University.
- ❖ To discuss the significance of SNSs in academic/research work.
- ❖ To find out the mostly access SNSs by research scholars of Dibrugarh University.
- ❖ To understand the obstacles of using SNS tools by research scholars of Dibrugarh University.

3. Methodology

To accomplish the study questionnaire method was adopted. By keeping in mind the objectives of the study a structured questionnaire was prepared and distributed randomly among the research scholars of Dibrugarh University. Only 150 questionnaires were distributed out of which 114 responses were received. The collected data was tabulated and then analyzed with the applications of statistical tools. So, the findings of this study are purely based on the responses given in the questionnaire returned from the respondents.

3.1 Limitations

Many studies are going on or have done on use of social networking sites for their research purpose by research scholars/academicians. The present study focuses only on the use of SNS tools by Research scholars of Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh, Assam. This study was conducted only in a single academic intuition, so findings may not be applicable to be generalized on all academic institution.

4. Literature Review

Many Studies are done on use of social networking sites among the students in Universities. Among them one of the studies was done by Ahmad, A.(2011) says use of collaborative technologies such as blogs and SNSs leads to instant online community in which people communicate rapidly and conveniently with each other and also “provide rich information about the person and his network, which can be utilized for various business purposes”.

Another study done by Bicen and Cavus (2010) evaluated the Internet usage of students in the department of computer education instructional technology. The study revealed use and sharing of knowledge on Internet is made integral part of our lives. Result shows that LiveSpaces and Facebook are common sites used by the students. Madhusudhan (2012) conducted a study at the University of Delhi and reported that the majority of respondents used SNS for “lurking,” or reading but not contributing to the discussion, and only a few used SNS for promoting one’s research. Mangayarkarasi & Sarangapani (2016) have observed that social networking sites help the research scholars to get up to date and recent information for relevant research and their study also proved that SNSs plays a predominant role in research activities. Another study done by Khot, N & Bansode N (2017) reveals that in the Shivaji University, Kolhapur 98.94% of respondents use social networking technologies for research purpose and 1.06% of respondents do not use social networking technologies for research purpose. Perryman (2011) stated that social networking is everywhere today and is being used by people of all ages and for the widest variety of purposes.

5. Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

A structured questionnaire was prepared and randomly distributed among 150 research scholars of different departments of Dibrugarh University. Among the distributed questionnaire only 114 research scholars (76%) have returned the questionnaire and 36 (i.e. 24%) respondent have not respond the questionnaire.

5.1 Demographic Characteristics

Data shows that out of 114 respondents 63 (55.27%) are men and the remaining 51 (44.73%) are women. Gender study is very much important when we conduct studies on social networking sites.

On the otherhand, the data shows the age distribution of respondents and which indicates that majority of respondents (33.33%) are from the age group of 31-35 years. Only 4 respondents (3.51%) are from 25 years or below and 23.69% are from the age group of 26-30 Years, 20.17% are from 36-40 years, 12.29% are from 41-45 years and lastly 7.01% are belongs to the age group of 46 or above.

5.2 Duration of using SNS

In this present era different social networking sites has become a mode of communication for university students. Data indicates that 67.54% research scholars are using SNSs from more than a year followed by 23.68% members who have been members between 7 months to a year.

It also shows that 7.90% respondents are using SNS from 1-6 months and only 0.88% of respondents use social networking sites less than a month.

5.3 Average time spent (Daily basis)

It is seen from the analysis that 58 respondents (50.88%) spent less than one hour on social

networking sites and 36 respondents (31.58%) spent 1 hour. It also shows that only 6 respondents (5.26%) used SNS for more than 5 hours and remaining 14 respondents (12.28%) used for 2-4 hours of their daily time.

5.4 Frequency to visit SNS

From the data we can say that 57 respondents (50%) visit SNSs on daily basis and 31 (27.19%) respondents visit twice in a week. It also indicates that 17 respondents (14.92%) visit fortnightly whereas 7 respondents (6.14%) visit occasionally. However only 2 respondents (1.75%) visit SNSs on monthly basis. From these statistics we can say that social networking sites have become an integral part of research scholar's daily routines.

5.5 Most Accessed SNS Tools

There are so many social networking sites available. People use different social networking sites depending on their need. All these social networking sites help people to connect with each other very easily. Figure1 shows that most of the research scholars are using Facebook (96.49%) which followed by YouTube (91.22%), wikis (86.84%), ResearchGate (82.45%), Academia.edu (78.07%), Linkedin (74.56%), Instagram (73.68%), Slideshare (42.98%), Blogs (34.21%), Twitter (31.57%), Bharat Student (20.17%), Flickr (16.66%), MySpace (12.28%) and Hi5 (5.26%).

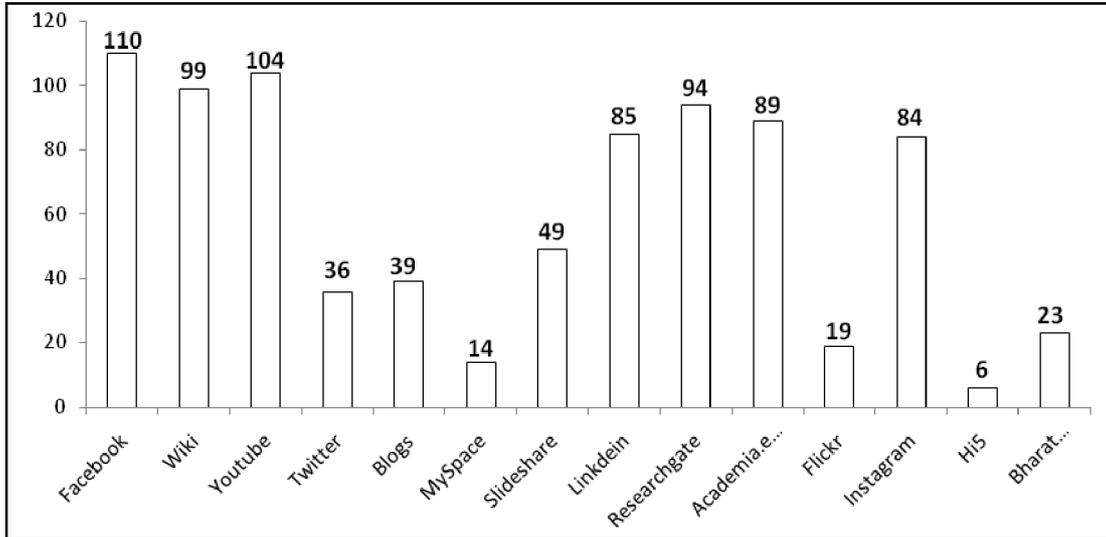


Figure 1: Most accessed SNS tools. Note: multiple options are permitted (n=114)

5.6 Purpose of using SNS

People access these SNS tools for many reasons. It is very important for us to know the purpose of the

visit to these SNSs by research scholars. In the questionnaire we provided nine options for purpose of use and all those responses received from them are presented in Figure 2.

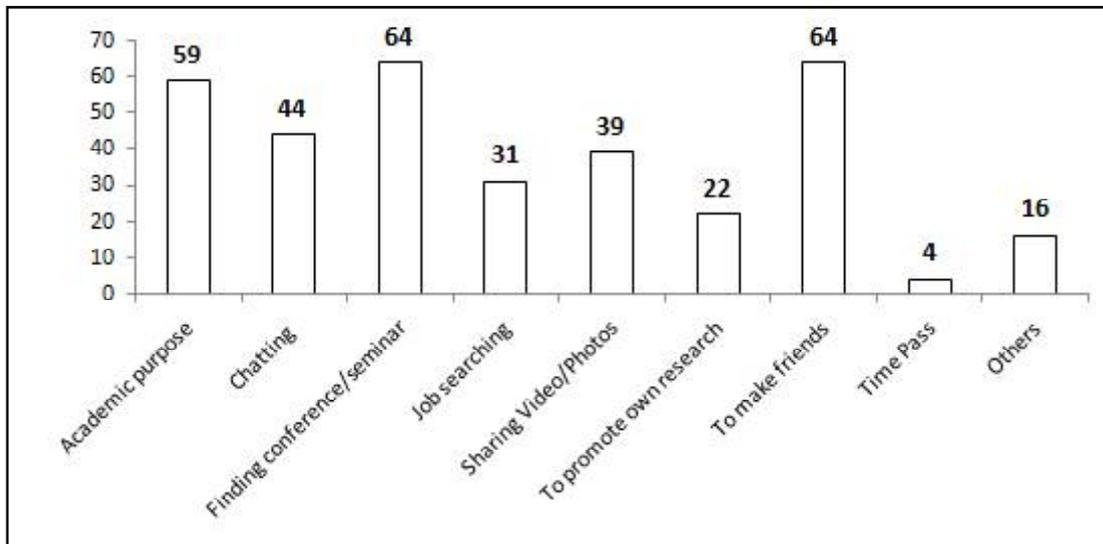


Figure 2: Purpose of using SNS Note: Multiple answers are permitted (n=114)

5.7 SNS used for Only Research Purpose

The data shows that 83.33% respondents use social networking sites for research purpose and remaining 16.67% of respondents do not use social networking sites for research purpose.

5.8 Specific uses of SNS for Research Work

Research scholar can use social networking sites for their research purpose. They can create and join different groups of their own research interest and also communicate with fellow researchers. They can discuss their problems or prospects of any research with other researcher. Data explains that research scholars of Dibrugarh University use SNSs to find relevant materials (71.92%), to contact with fellow researchers (62.28%) and also use SNSs to keep themselves up to date with current research trends (38.59%). Only 19.29% respondents say that they use SNSs to publish their own research work.

5.9 Used of specialized Academic SNS

Social networking sites help people to create their own profile as well as to connect with the other people with their same research interest. There are many specialized academic social networking sites available. In the questionnaire we have provided six options to the research scholars where respondent can tick on multiple answers. Data helps us to know that majority of respondents (82.45%) use ResearchGate followed by Academia.edu (78.07%) and LinkedIn (74.56%), CiteULike (30.70%), Mendeley (25.43%) and other tools (17.54%).

5.10 Satisfied level of using SNS

96% of total respondents are satisfied with the use of social networking sites and only 4% are not satisfied with the use of social networking sites.

5.11 Problems with using SNS

Respondents were asked to indicate the problems they faced while accessing SNSs. Five options were provided in the questionnaire and among these five options majority of respondents (92.98%) indicate that privacy concern is the most common problem followed by data security (86.84%), poor internet connection (42.98%), site blocked by the university (38.59%) and lack of user-friendly interface (18.42%).

6. Findings and Suggestions

On the basis of the above study we can come in the conclusion that majority of research scholars of Dibrugarh University prefer to use social networking sites for their research purpose. Other findings and suggestion are listed below:

- ❖ All the respondents use social networking sites. Majority of respondents have been using SNSs for more than a year.
- ❖ More than 50% of respondents use SNSs for an hour or less than an hour on a daily basis. And Facebook is the most accessed social networking sites among the respondents.
- ❖ Majority of respondents use SNSs to make friendship and to find seminar/conference of their own interest.
- ❖ 83.33% respondents revealed that they use social networking sites for research purpose. Maximum respondents use SNSs to find relevant research materials and also to connect with fellow research scholars.
- ❖ ResearchGate, Academia.edu, LinkedIn are the most three used specialized academic SNSs.

- ❖ Majority of respondents feels that privacy concern is the most common problem followed by data security. It is noted that among all the female respondents were more concerned about privacy concern.

Some of the suggestions are been put forwarded on the basis of its findings: These are as follows:

- ❖ The rest 50% of respondents who did not visit SNSs on daily basis should visit their useful SNSs on daily basis for their academic purposes.
- ❖ Those research scholars who use only Facebook should use other social networking sites like ResearchGate, Academia.in, etc. depending upon their nature of requirement.
- ❖ Dibrugarh University should attempt to solve the problems faced by the research scholars such as site blocking, poor internet connection, privacy concern etc.

7. Conclusions

The increasing uses of social networking sites by 21st century people led to new social media revolution. These SNSs are offering an alternative means to communicate with new generation users. With the help of SNSs researcher can discuss their research problem/prospects with their fellow researcher. These SNSs are very easy tool for sharing, distributing information without any cost. So, with the help of SNSs researcher can also promote his/her own research. It has become the world largest platform to create and disseminate any information almost at no cost.

The result of this study shows that majority of respondents are using social networking sites more than a year. Majority of respondents reveals that

they use SNSs for research purposes. From the above study we can come to the conclusion that research scholars of Dibrugarh University are using these SNSs not only to make friendship but also to find seminar/conference of their own interest. SNSs can be treated as a useful instrument for improving academic research activities. Though it has some negative aspects but still some modern day research scholars are using different SNS sites for their research purpose. They have to use these SNSs very wisely and if they can able to do that then definitely these SNSs will be definite assets to complete their research work.

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Further Reading

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About Author

Mr. Trinayan Borgohain, Senior Library Information Assistant, L. B. Central Library, IIT Guwahati

Email: btrinayan@gmail.com

Note:

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