

The role of Social Media in a Higher Education Environment

Wei Lizhe

Zhengzhou Business University, Zhengzhou 451200, Henan, China

Abstract: *Social media is a broad term for online media. Based on the technology and ideas of web 2.0, social media offers a social function for communication and understanding into people. Social media has been applied to abundant filed of life. Many scholars have studied the education function of social media. They think social media may be very helpful in assisting students in learning. This study mainly discusses the impact of students using social media in education and their attitudes towards the application of social media in education and entertainment.*

Keywords: *social media; higher education; online community*

1. Introduction

According to the drastic development of digital technology, new media is closer to people's life and study. With the deepening development of web 2.0 and science 2.0, internet sciences have provided a richer information platform and communication channel for academic research (Zhu, 2016). As an online platform and a virtual community, social media is used by people in creating, sharing, communicating opinions or different views. It is extensively described as varies of technical systems which are related to interchange and cooperation (Joosten, 2012). As users post content, share photos and interact with others, the effect of social media interaction has become as indispensable as a technology for student communication and collaboration (Tess, 2014). The technology of Social media is becoming an important section in people's life. The development of social network (SNSS) and social media is unprecedented. Digital technology is developing continuous nowadays. It is not only ubiquitous in people's lives, but also integrated into higher education school. In college, social media is very popular with some students and teachers. it can be used in communication and entertainment. furthermore, students and teachers may actively use social media in higher education classes. They may prefer using social media to help education. The types of social media are diverse, for example, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. these kinds of social media have widespread used in university learning and teaching in the world. The different social software has different functions. By using their respective characteristics, social software has a positive impact on students' education. It is also the good tools for entertainment between students and teachers' interaction. The concept that social media may become the main method on education has recently been gaining widespread attention among the researcher. At the same time, this growing field is also getting more and more discussion. As the facilitator and the learner, the potential function of social media is worthy to study (Paul a. Tess).

2. Social media and online community

Social media is often described in many technological systems related to community and collaboration (Joosten, 2012). The particular definition of social media seems abstract and elusive, so social media is often described and understood alongside examples. For example, blogs, social websites, wikis, multi-media platforms, etc. In the case of SNS, SNS is a web-based social media that permits participants to create content and share information by interacting with people (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). With the progress of network technology and the constant maturity of researchers' ideas, SNS has been developing and innovating constantly and increasingly. More targeted social networks emerged. For example, "match.com" is a website built for dating purposes. Social media is booming in different fields. A significant function of social media is to enhance the interaction of people. In addition, there are many different forms of application in social media. Most researches on social media application are based on three major industry parts: the first one is the public part, it includes the government and Egos, social media improve the development of society. The second one is the

education sector. Social media is more popular in education parts. The last one is a commercial part. Particularly in some situation, social media can be reflected in all three parts simultaneously. According to the survey, currently the most popular social media tool is Facebook, Twitter ranks second. The numbers of visitors using these webs estimated more than 300 million. At the same time, blogs are often regarded by well-known literature as an effective social media tool for scholars to conduct theoretical research. It was discovered that 41 percent of Internet participants in the UK already interact with online users in different countries by using social media. Social media obviously affect people. Comparing with traditional interaction ways, it allows users to join many casual communications and situations. Users can give more attention to reading and listening to details. It also allows users to complement missing content, sounds, photos by using the textual cues. Some studies suggest that the correct use of social media can reduce loneliness, interpersonal alienation, and psychological diseases such as melancholia. People are constantly expanding their social circle and becoming more self-deceptive. At the same time, some scholars give the opposite options. They think the essential principle of the internet is contrary to people's real life. The technology of social media is limited. It is impossible for social media to have a long-term and meaningful relationship with human beings. The issue of the academic influence on social media is still being debated. The rapid development of the network not only drives the popularity of new media but also promotes the formation and continuous improvement of the network community.

The online community was first used in 1979 for Use-net's news-sharing project. With the progress and development of network technology, more and more users share information, life, and pictures in virtual space. Online communities provide a favorable carrier and support means for social media. Online communities or virtual communities often do not have an exact definition. A community is a collective way to engage people interaction within a geographic area. Later, the definition of community gradually changed from keeping far away from the physical property and spatial approach to interaction and social exchange. This change is better reflected in online communities. The feature of online communities that constantly appear in numerous studies includes: commitment to a Shared place, shared information, resources, relationship and combination, social interaction and activity. Based on these characteristics, the most important thing is to pay attention to the people in the community. Users are crucial to the development of supporting the online communities and communication. The network community will give some basic attributes, such as common goals and interests, continuous generation of content, the interaction between participants, a clear interpretation of community definitions and practices, and special community culture. (Rotman and Preece, 2010). As a result, researcher found that online communities are virtual platforms that bring similar interests 'people together. In this platform, users communicating and learning, they can discuss different views of the same thing. Many studies have looked at incentives to actively participate in online communities.

Zhu (2016) summarized that social, technical and personal factors are the main factors influencing people's active use of online communities. First, people who with the sense of social identity and responsibility are more actively participate in online communities. They will think about their social identity and abilities, then helping other members of their communities. Secondly, technological factors include the application of emerging electronic technology, stable online community environment and so on, easy using is an important part of social media. Finally, the researchers found that people with high performance, high self-esteem, and high morality were more willing to communicate in online communities (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2003). In virtual communities, individuals have a sense of belonging. Users can easily find friends with similar interests. participants can express their ideas in a positive atmosphere and sustaining environment. The positive atmosphere is suitable for people using in schools. In college, students who have similar interests can make friends through social media.

3. Social media for education and leisure in university

The main function of social media is communication and promotion. It also applies to the teaching life for the purpose of learning, especially in strengthening the interaction between scholars and students. Because of the popularity of social media and the prevalence of SNS, more and more higher education teachers use social media to help their guidance teaching. Thus it promotes students' learning enthusiasm and effects . Young people are leading the way in using social media. Madden studied that 83 percent of online users use social media in the age group of 18-29. Researchers have many observations about using social media in university instruction. Communication is the essence of learning. It includes interpersonal dialogue and sharing activities. Researchers believe that the widespread use of social software promotes active participation, self-guidance and self-reflection among students, and the construction of personal meaning. In recent years, more colleges in the UK

have offered social-media practice classes to PhD. students and academics. According to the survey, in the year of 2012, more than 85% of higher education organizations in the UK had their own official social media interfaces, like Twitter account, Facebook pages. The relationship between students and teachers is constantly strengthened due to using social media such as Facebook. The learning environment is more perfect, and students can better participate in the classroom. The popularity of SNS provides a richer communication mode and purpose for communicating between students and teachers. Social media give support impact in learning and teaching. In Roblyer and Wiencke's (2003) evaluation study of online course interaction, they divided online interaction into five aspects: socialized interaction, instructional interaction, technology interaction, student appointment, and teacher appointment. All type of interaction contributes to enhancing the studying quality and potential influence of the classroom. The positive impact of SNS on teaching is obvious. It provides a new possibility for interactivity in teaching. More convenient and fast communication can make students learning more efficiently. The relationship between students and teachers is closer. Social media could promote the learning enthusiasm of students and increase the educator-e-student and student-e-student interactions. It also can develop users' network skills and assistant for emerging mobile learning methods. Liu (2010) stated that the three most popular social tools for helping to learn in higher education are Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, because they are good at communication, social engagement, connection building and feedback speed.

Social media has become a popular trend. More than 35 percent of schools and students use blogs at official or teaching requirements. In the process of using blogs to assist teaching, teachers act as the gatekeeper of the website, controlling the content of students. Giving advice on students' essays before publication. High-quality blog content helps students to learn and communicate with each other. Nearly two-thirds of teachers said that they had used social media in class or posted homework and assignments on social media. Facebook is widely used by students, furthermore, it also used by more and more university professors. According to Facebook data, nearly 297,000 Facebook users are university education workers. Comparing with the traditional teaching system, students have a positive attitude in the capacity of social media, especially Facebook. Sobaih and Moustafa (2016) mentioned that building academic interaction with others on Facebook or other social media can increase the communication between teachers and students. It supports and encourages students to learn actively. At the same time, it enhances users' confidence and contributes to building strong community relations among team members.

In addition to teaching, social media is also popular in students' daily life and entertainment activities. The business college at Southern Illinois University started to use Facebook to promote school activities.it enhanced the communication between students or alumni. By joining the same Facebook group, members receive school news regularly. Communicating become more easily with members of the online community. School staffs are sympathetic to this idea. They argued that social media offers schools a simpler, less expensive way to promote the varies activities of students. furthermore, social media is the most useful way for entertainment generalizing. The most essential function of social media is to facilitate social contact. With the popularity of the network, students no longer need to communicate face to face. If they are interested in some things or activities, students only need to join a common network community to find like-minded friends. In the community, users share information, discussing opinions and organizing offline activities. It is actually a kind of community activity, but it is no longer limited by the time and place.

4. The impact of social media on education

The pew Internet is a study by the pew research center that collects huge data on the influence of the social media (www.pewinternet.org). Since 2007, pew research center unceasing research on the impact of social media and the popularity of social websites. In the year of 2010, the proportion of young people using social networking sites was significantly higher than the others ages, with 72% of 18-29-year-olds using SNS. Only 39% of users over age 29 use SNS. It can be found that teenagers are the main users of social media. As a result, the potential for applying social media to university is huge. Social media has lots of promoting effects on education. Firstly, social media has changed the traditional teaching mode. For nearly a hundred years, the education way always is the face-to-face transmission of knowledge. Interactions between teachers and students tend to occur in schools. The particular interrelationship between teachers and students has broken down since social media became ubiquitous in higher education colleges. After classes, teachers still can use Facebook or Twitter to communicate with students, asking some thoughtful questions or answering students' questions. The interactions happen outside of the classroom now. Due to the emergence of new media, the education

field appears in many new teaching modes, such as long-distance teaching, live-streaming teaching and so on. All of them are innovating in the area of education. The emergence of various teaching and communication forms means that social media is increasingly developing in education under the influence of web 2.0. Subsequently, more and more scholars began to think about the influence and importance of new media and traditional media.

Some researchers also propose that the application of social media in university is imperfect, which has many hidden dangers and shortcomings. Firstly, social media may exist the problem of personal privacy. Due to the rapid development of network technology, people's activities on social media are easy to be tracked. To some extent, it increases users' privacy and security risks. In addition, some teachers do not want students to participate too much in their personal life and social area (Sobaih and Moustafa, 2016). Some researchers believe that social media can waste students' time and learning effect. Social media is often deemed to an entertainment method in many education organizations. They think social media will distract students' attention and affect their focus on learning. Social media have many different forms and contents, so students tend to be attracted to new and interesting things (Phillips, 2011). Finally, some researchers believe that social media is difficult to be supervised. With so many different forms of software, social media have rich content and large Numbers of users. So it is difficult for schools to effectively monitor each tool. While school encourages interaction between students and teachers, inadequate regulation may lead to a chaotic atmosphere in online communities.

5. Conclusion

The emergence of web 2.0 is appeared to describe the transformation of the world wide web from broadcasting to participating in social media. This development has generated the new functions and new situations of the network. Social media allows users to actively join in creation and development of contents. As a basic guarantee for social media operation, the web encourages users to interact and share with each other. The evolution of web 2.0 in the education space is huge. It changes the opinion people used to have, changing people's values. It encourages users to participate in social interactions and actively create contents. The application of social media in universities has become a popular phenomenon. Social media has an impact on students' study and leisure life. The impact is two-sided, reasonable using social media is helpful for school teaching.

References

- [1] Boyd, d. m., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). *Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship*. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 210–230. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.
- [2] Joosten, T. (2012). *Social media for educators: Strategies and best practices*. Hoboken, NJ, USA: Jossey-Bass.
- [3] Liu, Y. (2010). *Social media tools as a learning resource*. *Journal of Educational Technology Development and Exchange*, 3(1), 101-114.
- [4] Phillips, C. (2011). *Social media use: How much is too much?*. Retrieved, October 25, 2011, from *Millennial Marketing*: <http://millennialmarketing.com/2011/01/social-mediause-how-much-is-too-much/>.
- [5] Rotman, D., & Preece, J. (2010). *The 'WeTube' in YouTube-creating an online community through video sharing*. *International Journal of Web Based Communities*, 6(3), 317-333.
- [6] Sobaih, A. E., and Moustafa, M. (2016). *Speaking the same language: the value of social networking sites for hospitality and tourism higher education in Egypt*. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Education*, 28(1), 46-56.
- [7] Wang, Y., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2003). *Assessing motivation of contribution in online communities: An empirical investigation of an online travel community*. *Electronic Markets*, 13(1), 33-45.
- [8] Zhu, Y., & Procter, R. (2015). *Use of blogs, twitter and Facebook by UK PhD students for scholarly communication*. *Observatorio (OBS*)*, 9(2), 29-46.