SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AND THEIR ROLE IN SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION: A STUDY OF FACULTY MEMBERS OF ASSAM UNIVERSITY, SILCHAR

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ABSTRACT

The present study is an attempt to determine the role and effectiveness of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) in scholarly communication among the faculty members of Assam University, Silchar, Assam, India. The study conducted through a well structured questionnaire administrated among the faculty members of the entire department (38) of the university. It indicates that most of the respondents were found to be aware and making affective use of such sites in their communication, teaching and research. It is observed that majority of the respondents believe that information available on SNSs is partially reliable. The majority of the faculty members who accesses SNSs for various purposes are in the age group of 31-40 years. It was revealed from the study that facebook is the most popular SNS followed by LinkedIn by all categories of faculty members.

KEYWORDS: Social Networking Sites (Sns), ICT, Facebook, Linkedin, Web 2.0 Application.

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the increased popularity of Social Networking Sites, professors and researchers are questioning whether research is being affected by how much time is being spent on these sites. Social Networking became popular between 2004 and 2006, after Facebook and MySpace were created. Facebook has over 500 million members and it is still growing. The recent trends and developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have changed the information seeking scenario in the digital era. A few years ago the Internet was providing very limited set of services such as searching, browsing, emailing, chatting and so on. But at present it has become more essential part of our day to day life. It is facilitating new services to the users of various areas. World Wide Web (www) is one of the most useful and important service of internet. The ever increasing contribution of internet and the revolution of information distribution over the last few decades have
significantly increased the relationship between the individuals, institutions, communities etc. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007) “Web based services allow individuals to build a Social and professional profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within a system”. Social networking sites, allow users to create a personalised account that includes the information like; name, date of birth, hobbies, preferences, education status, relationships status, Mobile no, email address, personal and professional interest etc. The applications of web 2.0 facilitate the users to provide very interactive and constructive information sharing, user based environment on the internet. It also provides a platform to all the users to interact with content creator, sharing their ideas with colleagues, friends, professionals, intuitions and so on.

1.1 Social Networking

Social Networking Sites comprise the competencies to recognise social and information needs of the individuals and to locate, evaluate, create and disseminate information within economical, cultural and social context. The term Social Networking is a composition of individuals, professionals or institutions, which are attached with one or more individuals like colleague, friend, neighbourhood, small society and so on. Social networking is possible in everywhere i.e. school, college, university, organisation, institution or in the work place among the individuals of the same group. This is because of the widely speared of internet in the work places like universities, research institution etc, where the individuals gather and share their first hand experiences, their ideas, their views, their emotions and information among them. In this way they are getting new experiences, they are updating themselves about their surroundings, about their profession and society as well.

1.2 Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

A social networking site is an online portal, or web service, which attracts to develop a social relationship among group of individuals like a small rural community or group of professionals. It is a relationship between individuals who belongs to different religion, different region as well as different profession but with the same purposes. Therefore it is an online community of users on the web. The services provided by social networking sites based on a representation of each individual, his/her social links, and a limitation of the additional services. A social networking site provides a huge number of web based services for their users to interact to the individuals through the internet i.e. e-mail, chatting, instant
massaging etc. It is estimated that there are more than 300 Social Networking sites which are available on internet and the membership of these websites are open to all. Anybody can become a member through a very small justification. The below images show the various types of Social Networking sites.
(https://www.google.co.in/#q=picture+of+social+networking+sites).

2. Review of Literature

The undertaken study is a quite new in the field of library and information science thus very limited studies have been conducted by the faculty members and research scholars across the world to investigate into issue related to the social networking sites in terms of their role and characteristics. The studies which were found appropriate were thoroughly reviewed along with their findings which are as follows:-

Mahajan et al. (2013) explored to study the activities and purposes for using SNSs by the scholars of Panjab University, Chandigarh. The findings of their study shows that majority of the respondents were found to be aware and making use of such applications in their research work. Their study also reveals that facebook is the most popular SNSs by all categories of researchers. Chakraborty (2012) pointed out the bustle and purpose of using SNSs by the research scholars of North-East Hill University, Shillong, and originate that the most of the respondents were from the social science stream and using it for group discussions in input matters, compilation exploring and inventing new concepts, etc. Parveen (2011) examine the
alertness and use of SNSs by LIS professionals in the university libraries of Uttar Pradesh and noticed that the most of the LIS professionals are well conscious about Facebook as it provide them a vital platform to share their views, ideas etc. Singh and Gill (2011) explored the awareness and use of social Networking Sites by the research scholars of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. In their study they found that social networking sites are useful for all the researchers and most of them are using SNSs. They observed that majority of scholars were using Facebook followed by Orkut. They also found that the use of SNSs is very easy and user friendly. Bicen and Cavus (2010) explored the uses of internet by the students in the department of computer education instructional technology and found that most of them are preferably accessing social networking sites. The study shows that Live space and facebook are most common sites used by the students. Kluemper and Rosen (2009) explored use of social networking website in employment election through accessing the personal profile of candidates on the sites. This study was conducted at a large public university in the southern USA. Boyd and Ellison (2007) In the study it is reported that the students used SNSs to keep in touch with old friends and to sustain or deepen relationships characterised by some, form offline link such as residence closeness or a shared class explain the widespread ideas, description and character of Social Networking Sites. They also offered the chronological growth of these sites and changes which had happened over the time. They discussed the recent scholarship on SNSs, pointed out key job and gave the suggestions for future research in related areas.

3. **Scope of the Study**

The present study is restricted to all the Faculty members of entire department (38) of Assam University, Silchar (Assam) who are performing their teaching work in different disciplines.

4. **Objectives of the study**

The present study has the following specific objectives:

- To find out the role of social networking sites in scholarly communication among the faculty members of the Assam university;
- To find out the most accessed SNSs by the faculty members.
- To explore the purpose of accessing the social networking sites;
- To find out the frequency and duration of accessing these sites;
- To know the reliability of information accessed by the faculty members;
- To find out the impact of SNSs on personal and professional life. and
• To know the problems being faced by the faculty members while accessing these sites.

5. Methodology Adopted

For collection of data a well structured questionnaire was prepared and was distributed during the month of October-2014 to January-2015 to all the faculty members of the Assam University from all the 38 departments covered under the study. Total 297 questionnaire were distributed and 208 (70.00%) duly filled questionnaire were received back from the respondents. Which have been analysed using statistical package for social Sciences (SPSS) and their interpretations have been undertaken in the light of framed objectives.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

6.1. Gender wise distribution of the respondents

Figure 1 presents the gender wise distribution of the respondents which shows that 72.12% respondents are male and 27.88% respondents are female who are actively accessing the social networking sites (Figure 1)

6.2 Age group wise distribution of the respondents

Figure 2 provides the data related to the age group of the respondents. It shows that 13.46% respondents falls between the age group of 21-30. Whereas 50.96% respondents are in the age group of 31-40, who are accessing most of these sites for scholarly communication followed by the 22.6% of respondents falls between the age group of 41-50. Further 12.98% respondents are more than 50 years old who are accessing SNSs (Figure 2).
6.3 Designation wise distribution of the respondents

Figure 3 shows the designation wise distribution of the faculty members. It shows that most of the respondents i.e. 74.52% are the Assistant Professor, followed by 13.94% of Professor and 11.54% are Associate Professor who are accessing these sites (Figure 3).

6.4 Commonly accessed SNSs by the respondents

Figure 4 shows the commonly accessing SNSs by the faculty members. It indicates that most of the respondents i.e. 20.90% are accessing Face book, followed by 19.10% of respondents who are accessing LinkedIn. Whereas 15.07% Academia. edu, 13.27% Whatsapp, 10.94% Research Gate, 8.97% Twitter, 7.26% Google+, 2.87% bloger.com and 0.81% is equally accessing by My Space & Others sites like Digg, Hike etc (Figure 4).
6.5 Tools for accessing SNSs by the respondents

Figure 5 indicates devices that are being used for accessing SNSs by the respondents. It shows that most of the respondents i.e. 33.67% are using Laptop for accessing such sites, followed by 32.66% respondents are using Personal Computer for the same, while 30.32% respondents are using mobile as tool and 3.34% using others like I-Pad, Palm top etc (Figure 5).

6.6 Distribution of respondents according to frequency of accessing SNSs

Figure 6 presents the distribution of respondents according to frequency of accessing SNSs. Which shows that most of the respondents i.e. 49.04% are accessing these sites several times in a day, whereas 28.86% accessing once in a day, 18.27% accessing it occasionally and 2.80% access it once a week where .96% access these sites twice a week (Figure 6).
6.7 **Accessing SNSs in a day (Hours) by respondents**

Figure 7 shows that most of the respondents i.e. 41.83% access SNSs less than 01 hour in a day followed by 30.29% who are accessing between 1 to 2 hours in a day. Whereas 11.06% respondents access between 2-3 hours. Whereas 8.17% respondents access 3-4 hours in a day and 8.65% respondents access these sites more than 4 hours in a day (Figure 7).

![Figure 7: Accessing SNSs in a Day (Hours)](image)

6.8 **Purpose of Accessing SNSs by the respondents**

Figure 8 indicate the data related to purpose of accessing SNSs by the Faculty members. Which shows that most of the respondents i.e. 14.53% accessing SNSs to shaering information about seminars and confrences followed by 13.30% of respondents use for uploading Veidio/photos of confrences. Wheras 12.56% for participating in discussions, 12.01% of respondent acces it for keep update, 10.68% for shaering experiences, 10.13% for find information, 10.00% for massage/chat, 8.53% for shaering veidio/picture and 8.25% of respondents accesse it for find new friends (Figure 8).
6.9 **Friends/contacts on SNSs of the respondents**

Figure 9 presents the numbers of friends/contacts on SNSs of the faculty members, which shows that 34.13% of respondents having more than 200 friends/contacts on SNSs, whereas 16.83% of respondents have contacts in between 100-200 and 20.19% respondents have friends in between 50-99, whereas 10.10% have contact in between 26-49 and 18.75% respondents have less than 25 friends/contacts on SNSs (Figure 9).

![Figure 9: Number of Friends on SNSs](image)

6.10 **Flexibility with SNSs while accessing**

Figure 10 presents the flexibility with SNSs which shows that for 40.87% respondents it is very easy to access, whereas 20.67% find it moderately easy and 27.62% respondents feels average, whereas 9.62% respondents find moderately difficult and .96% of respondent find it very difficult while accessing these sites (Figure 10).

![Figure 10: Flexibility with SNSs](image)
6.11 **Satisfaction from SNSs of the respondents**

Figure 11 indicates that most of the respondents i.e. 71.15% are satisfied in accessing SNSs. Whereas 14.42% respondents are partially satisfied and 12.50% are highly satisfied while accessing it. Whereas 1.92% of the respondents are not satisfied from these sites (Figure 11).

6.12 **Reliability of Information available on SNSs**

Figure 12 presents the data related to the reliability of information accessed by the respondents on SNSs. It shows that 39.42% respondents believe that information which is available on SNSs is reliable. Whereas majority of the respondents i.e. 58.17% believe that it is partially reliable and 2.40% respondents feel that information is available on SNSs is not reliable (Figure 12).
6.13 Problems in accessing SNSs by the respondents

Figure 13 shows various hurdles facing by faculty members while accessing these sites. It indicates that 16.30% respondents find it time consuming, whereas 13.12% facing poor internet facility, 10.98% respondents feels that it is not useful for academic, 10.37% feels that it leaks the personal information, 10.28% find it unsecure while accessing, 10.09% agree that due to lack of technical knowledge they could not access it, 9.72% respondents believe that it is not user friendly, 9.62% of respondent don’t have any problems while accessing it and 9.53% respondent joined but left out these sites due to some personal reason (Figure 13).

7. Major Findings

The followings are the major findings of the research study:

- The study finds that most of the faculty members accessed the SNSs for their scholarly communication, teaching and research,
- The majority of Faculty Members i.e. 50.96% are between the age group of 31-40 years,
 Majority of the faculty members i.e. 74.52% who are accessing these sites are the Assistant Professor.

 Most of the faculty members i.e. 33.67% used Laptop as accessing tools followed by Personal Computer,

 Majority of respondents i.e. 14.03% access these sites for sharing information about seminars, conferences etc.

 Facebook is the most popular social networking site being access by the faculty members i.e. 20.90% followed by LinkedIn,

 Majority of the faculty members i.e. 49.04% logged SNSs several times in a day,

 Most of the faculty members i.e. 34.13% have more than 200 friends/contacts on Social Networking Sites,

 Most of the faculty members i.e. 58.17% are of the opinion that information available on SNSs is partially reliable,

 Most of the faculty members i.e. 40.87% are of opinion that it is very easy to access and

 Most of the faculty members i.e. 16.30% faced problems regarding shortage of time followed by Poor internet facility for accessing these sites.

 8. Conclusion

 At presents the Social Networking Sites provide a very vital platform to share and access the relevant information for academic as well as personal purposes to connect and enlarge their personal and professional network. The above findings show that Social Networking Sites are being accessed very actively by the faculty members. The SNSs provide very largest role to interact and communicate with each others. Several features of these sites such as profile surfing, posting of new information, sharing photo & videos making friends, meeting new people, participating in discussion and so on are the medium by which the faculty members keep update and share their experiences to each others. The Colleges and Universities library should create an environment to support library activities and access SNSs as a promotion apparatus for the services available to the faculty members.

 References
