



Purpose and Preference of Using Social Networking Sites by Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to know the preference and purpose of using Social Network Sites (SNS) by adolescents. Social networking has become part of the daily life experiences for an increasing number of people. The study was conducted in Hyderabad and Secunderabad twin cities using ex-post facto research design. The sample consisted of 200 adolescents of aged between 18-20 years who were studying professional and non-professional degree courses. The results showed that Facebook was ranked I and it is the most popular and widely used social network site followed by YouTube and Twitter. Another finding of the study showed the difference between the Professional and Non-Professional students in their purpose of usage *i.e.* professional students used the social network sites for chatting, fun, to get information and for flirting others whereas Non-Professionals used for making friends, playing games and reading blogs. This study was helpful to understand why and how Social networking sites are being used by the adolescents. Social Network sites can be used to create awareness on social evils and to generate the knowledge.

Key Words: Social Network Sites, Adolescents, Purpose, Preference.

INTRODUCTION

The social networking is a web-based service that allows individuals to create a public profile and to make a list of users with whom they want to share their connections and also to view others profile within the system (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Social networking sites (SNS) allow users to share ideas, pictures, posts, activities, events and interests with people in their network. Some of the social network sites commonly used are [Facebook](#), [Google+](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) etc. Social media adoption among internet users in India is around 84 per cent today. This translates to around 110 million social network users in India. Adolescents are the major group who use SNS.

Social networking sites offer a wide variety of resources and services such as messaging, blogging, sharing photos, audios and videos, group discussion, and distribution of applications. Youngsters, especially students, are the avid users

of these sites. Adolescents use these sites to create and share their identities and profiles that may include personal information, pictures, blog entries, videos and music clips. These sites provide an online platform for students of diverse backgrounds and nationalities. This study was conducted to find out the purpose and preference of social network sites by adolescents.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was carried out to study the purpose of usage and rank order preference of SNS sites among adolescents. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the present study. Hyderabad and Secunderabad were purposively selected for conducting the study. The sample of the study was 200 adolescents between 18-20 years of age group (100 professional and 100 non-professional degree students). The questionnaire was developed specifically for the present study. The data were

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collected using the questionnaire. The collected data were scored, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted with appropriate statistical procedures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Rank order preference of respondents for usage of SNS N=200

Sr. No	Social networking site	Weighted score	Rank order
1	Facebook	1859	I
2	YouTube	1796	II
3	Twitter	1356	III
4	Google plus	1330	IV
5	Skype	1009	V
6	Linked- inn	976	VI
7	Yahoo	934	VII
8	Instagram	819	VIII
9	Google talk	727	IX
10	Orkut	574	X

The results indicated that among all available social networking sites, Facebook was the most popular and widely used social media and ranked I by the selected late adolescents. YouTube and Twitter were ranked second and third respectively. Google plus, Skype and Linked-Inn were ranked as IV, V and VI respectively. The other sites like Yahoo, Instagram, Google talk and Orkut were less popular among late adolescents, hence they were ranked low. Varghese and Nivedhitha (2013) also found that Facebook was the most popular social networking site among the Indian teenagers. The study by Stephen and Thanuskodi (2014) found top five commonly used SNS by the college students were Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Orkut and LinkedIn Social networking sites. It has recently been reported that nearly three out of four teens and adult internet users between the ages of 18 and 29 use an SNS (Lenhart *et al*, 2008), and Facebook alone boasts over 800 million active users (Facebook, 2011). The SNS have the potential to improve learning experiences in a variety of ways, including

improving communicative efficiency, providing positive social transformations, facilitating openness, and fostering learner participation, community building, and social presence.

The internet, especially sites like Facebook and Myspace offer prominent places for youth to put themselves out there in a text/multimedia forum for others to see. Subsequently, adolescents were able to garner an audience of as many or as few as they feel comfortable number with and also gain access to other teens with whom they would never regularly have any interaction. They can also experience self-disclosure effects via divulging personal information about themselves to others which can lead to development of interpersonal relationships varying degrees of intimacy, which may not be possible in face to face situation. (Schmitt *et al*, 2008).

It was interesting to note that 98 per cent of professional degree students and 97 per cent of non-professional students used SNS for chatting. Another interesting finding of the study was that 81 per cent of professional and 73 percent non-professional course students used SNS for gaining knowledge and information. In contrast Non-professional course students used SNS for making friends which was a major activity after chatting. The study revealed that majority of late adolescents (77%) of both professional and non-professional courses use SNS for entertainment. Among non-professional students, 74 percent use SNS for playing games whereas, it was only 59 percent in case of professional students. It was surprising to note that majority of (73 %) professional and (67 %) non-professional use SNS to update their profile. Researchers Ellison *et al* (2007) also affirmed that most of the adolescents use social networking as a medium to build and maintain friendships. The least important functions that SNS sites served were updating profile, flirting, reading blogs and work. Top three purposes for which SNS were used were chatting, making friends and news with and user preference respectively (Reema and Gopal, 2014).

Use of Social Networking Sites

Table 2. Purpose of usage of SNS by Adolescents.

N=200

Sr.No	Purpose	Professional (N=100)	Non –professional (N=100)
1	Chatting	98	97
2	Making friends	79	91
3	Commenting on others update	39	50
4	Fun of others	40	31
5	Entertainment	77	77
6	Games	59	74
7	Simply browsing(time pass)	59	57
8	Shares	67	69
9	Work related requests	59	68
10	Work related browsing	66	75
11	To gain knowledge / information	81	73
12	Reading blogs	39	56
13	Updating profile	73	67
14	News update	67	66
15	Flirting	41	15
16	Any other	19	12

CONCLUSION

The study conducted that the most popular and most used site for late adolescents was the Facebook. All the selected samples have accounts in Facebook because of its user friendly interface, opportunity for relaxation and for maintaining relationships and features it has like uploading photos /status, comments, postings, sharing's, chatting, video calling, news updates, forming groups, etc. The next popular sites were YouTube, Google plus and Twitter. The most important activity of late adolescents irrespective of their course and gender was chatting in SNS. Another important finding was that majority of adolescents pursuing professional courses used SNS to gain knowledge whereas majority of non-professional course adolescents used SNS to make friends. These findings clearly suggest that adolescents used SNS for making new friends and spending most of their time in strengthening their sense of belongingness

among the peer group. Other activities of adolescents in SNS were playing games, and entertainment. As more than 70 per cent of students were found to be using SNS for gaining knowledge, government officials who were at the helm of affairs, popular movie actors, cricket stars, famous politicians etc. can post messages in bullet form on burning issues in the country such as anti-corruption, anti-ragging, gender sensitivity, values and ethics, traffic rules, employment or educational opportunities etc. This helps to reform youth for a healthy nation.

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Malatesh and Dhanasree

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Received on 19/09/17

Accepted on 10/12/17