

# The Benefits of Using Social Media and the Impact of not Filtering the Information

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v7-i3/4368>

DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v7-i3/4368

*Published Online:* 27 July 2018

## Abstract

This preliminary study aims to examine the perceptions of students on the benefits of using social media and the impact of not filtering the information. A set of questionnaire has been distributed to 50 students from the Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Puncak Perdana, Shah Alam Malaysia. Thirty-six (36) or 72 per cent of the questionnaires were returned and were used for analysis. Results show that students have positive perceptions on the benefits of using social media (mean = 4.01). They agree that using social media will increase connectivity and encourage information-sharing among friends. The findings also show that students agree on the impact of not filtering information (mean = 4.00), which may cause confidential information to be used for blackmailing purposes. The outcome of this study is important as it reflects on students' awareness on the benefits of social media and the impact of unfiltered information.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Information, Information Filtering, Benefit, Impact, Information Management, Library Science

## Introduction

Generally, social media can be defined as movement of technologies and networking which enables a revolution of global community. The growth of social media moves the work force of the Internet which incorporates the features of users who publish their opinions, connect, build community, or produce and share content (Smith, 2009). Social media has reached its popularity in recent years as a result of which people are more dependent on online technology advancement which has become a compulsory practice in their daily lives. Social media is made up of two different words; media and social. Some examples of the most popular usage of social media nowadays are web sites like Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and YouTube. Viewing from the wave of the ever-growing number of media users, these web sites

have more users than ever before in fact, it has become a trend to have a user profile online. Social media is also a critical area of interest for scholars, academic practitioners and researchers. The advancement of social media practices confirmed that social media are much more valuable as traditional scholarly material (Tenopir, 2013).

Information filtering is one of the methods that is rapidly evolving to manage large information flows. Information filtering aims to expose users to information that is relevant to them. Various information filtering systems have been developed in recent years for various application domains, such as filters for search results on the Internet that are employed in the Internet software, personal e-mail filters based on personal profiles, list servers or newsgroups filters for groups or individuals, browser filters that block non-valuable information filters designed to give children access then only to suitable pages, filter for e-commerce applications that address products and promotions to potential customers only, and many more (Hanani, Shapira and Shoval, 2011).

There are many benefits of using social media. However in using social media, filtering information from the over-abundant of information as a result of the activities pose a challenge to users of social media. Do users know the impact of not filtering the information? Information filtering is the term of information age, where this is based on the relevancy of data and information (Tauritz and Ida, 1999). The process of filtering involved the delivery of information to people who need it. Thus, this study tries to find out the benefits of using social media and the impact of not filtering the information in using social media.

This study focuses on the benefits of using social media and the impact of not filtering the information among students of Faculty of information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Shah Alam, Malaysia. The objectives of the study are:

- 1) To determine what do students perceived on the benefits of using social media.
- 2) To examine what do students perceived on the impact of not filtering information.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Social Media and Benefits of Using Social Media***

Social media is an extremely active and fast-moving domain (Kaplan and Haenlin, 2010). It comprises both the conduits and the content disseminated through interactions between individuals and organizations (Kietzman, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre, 2011). Social media content comprises text, pictures, videos, and networks. Text was the first social media, which was initially primarily in the form of blogs (short for 'web logs'). Blogs are websites owned and written by individuals who maintain regular commentaries and diaries that may include text, graphics, videos, and links to other blogs and web pages and are usually presented in reverse chronological order. Micro-blogs (e.g., Twitter) are social networking services that enable users to send and read very short messages, which are usually restricted by the number of characters in the message. Picture-sharing websites (e.g., Flickr) allow users to store and share images, while video-sharing websites (e.g., YouTube) permit users to upload and share videos. Social media employs mobile web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, create, discuss and modify user-generated content.

On keeping up with the changes of technologies from social media, Kriek (2011) highlights that the use of social media is growing exponentially in her country. All kinds of networking includes academic and business purposes, are being offered for seeking competitive advantage from social media. Her study investigates on a private higher education institution in South Africa in using social media for educational and business purposes. The study

discovers the potential benefits that social media holds are recognized, and recommendations for using social media at the institutions are made. However the main challenge is the lack of fixed line Internet connectivity and this lead to the unlinked to the level of IT expertise. Interestingly most people access the social media through wireless connections, with mobile phones being the most popular access device and increasing of mobile phone penetration in South Africa.

Recent studies have shown that social media is commonly used by students (Ellison, Steinfield & Campe, 2007; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Junco & Cole-Avent, 2008). In addition, Facebook seems to be the most popular social networking site compared to other social media. Therefore, many studies are made to improve how to use Facebook in education (Gross & Acquisti, 2005; Ellison, Steinfield & Campe, 2007; Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007) . While a few of these studies focus directly on the effect of academic achievement, most of them discuss to enhance attention and motivation. Sidekli, Tangulu, Yangin and Dasdemir (2013) determines the effect of teaching on Facebook on fourth grade students who are learning Social Studies. At the end of the study it is noticed that there is a significant difference between experimental group with tuition assistance on Facebook and control group. The study demonstrates that teaching on Facebook is effective in developing students' academic achievement.

Van Wyk (2014) highlights few benefits of using social media to support educational endeavors that leverages the benefits of in-person learning communities with the benefits of using technology to support student engagement. Previous research has indicated that learning communities can have a positive impact on student learning and the level of university student interaction and cooperation. In other points, social media tools can also be used to differentiate the learning process and allows learners to select and share learning materials that best meet their learning style and interest (Ally, 2004).

In another study, Nugraha (2012) introduces the use of social media through the education field in cloud computing. The domain topic of Information Technology's development are social media and cloud computing. He mentions statistical data, where social media can have up to hundreds and millions of active users and this huge amount will precisely impact on investment in infrastructure to support IT services. Cloud computing technology delivered by social media is expecting to deliver IT investment cost reduction. This combination of technologies of social media and cloud computing technology are called social cloud. Social cloud will facilitate and enhance the third parties' contribution in order to add services into their Geosmart web.

Other researchers (such as Silius et al., 2010) focus on social media which enhances studying and learning in higher education. The Tempere University of Technology (TUT) supports collaboration and provides social networking tools for students especially at the beginning of their studies by developing its own social network sites. The study reveals numerous motivation aspects that should be somehow included in a study oriented to social networking site. This research describes the research results of intervention to motivate students to use a social networking site in the context of studies. The motivation should be further encouraged by the system itself when it relies on students' own voluntary activity. Other results show that a networking site is a suitable tool for promoting different events for students. From the results, they believe that social media are offering various means of

supporting community members especially for students to connect to each other and also to get in touch with their institution. Apparently, interventions of social media implementing as social networking are significant to motivate students in the context of studying.

### ***Filtering Information and Impact of NOT Filtering the Information***

Cheng-Jun and An (2012) conduct a study on the behavior patterns of online users which effect on information filtering. They come out with an empirical analysis that show social media brings over-abundant of information to users. To solve this problem, many recommendations such as collaborative filtering, content-based analysis, spectral analysis and interactive self-consistent refinement are developed to filter irrelevant information. The development of social media has greatly improved the function as well as understanding to many systems. The study recommends to solve the over-abundance of information and researchers have designed the network-based recommendation methods to filter irrelevant information. The investigation process on users' online behavior patterns and related to information filtering are revealed. In this sense, users may shed some light for developing a relevant and accurate information for higher accuracy and better reliability.

In her study, Golbeck (2013) notes that, besides allowing people to see profiles of friends, social media has become a primary source for discovering information online. Social media websites dominate the time people spend online. Other than that, it also dominates a deluge of personal status update, links to news articles and websites, photos, and videos. Many sites are created as a social sites which have the social elements such as product reviews and user-generated content which can be overwhelming. How does a user process all this information? Her study introduces several methods used to sort, filter and aggregate information from social media using social connections.

Thompson (2003) assesses students' usage of the Internet and the use of the web for research. Do the students have adequate information literacy skills to find the authoritative information and then to evaluate the information for use in their research?. The evidence shows the impact of not filtering the right information which is needed in their research. A study of Facebook users by Shrivastav, Collins, Hiltz, and Dwyer (2012) find that the average user sometimes feels overloaded by the "news feed" structure. One partial solution to the information overload problem in trying to use social media in crisis response is to use remote "digital volunteers" to help find, filter, and organize potentially relevant information.

### **Research Methodology**

This preliminary study used a survey method to collect data. Questionnaires were personally distributed to fifty ( $n= 50$ ) students from Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Shah Alam, Malaysia. The students were selected randomly from different courses which were Library & Information Management, Information System Management, Records Management and Resource Centre Management. The questionnaire items were designed on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) Likert scale on two dimensions which were: (1) benefits of using social media and (2) impact of not filtering the information. For the purpose of analysis, descriptive statistics which include frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were performed.

## Results

### Reliability Analysis

Table 1 shows the results of the reliability analysis. It can be summarized that Cronbach's alpha value of benefits of social media (0.890) and impact of not filtering the information (0.842) exceeded 0.7. According to Sekaran (2003), the value was considered high and acceptable thus further analysis can be proceeded.

Table 1

#### *Results of Reliability Test*

No.	Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
1	Benefits of Using Social Media	0.890	8
2	Impact Not Filtering Information	0.842	10

### Profile of Respondents

The summary statistics for the profile of the 36 respondents are presented in Table 2. From the total number of respondents, 72.2 % of the respondents were female and 27.8% were male. In term of course of respondents, 27.8% were both from Library & Information Management and Resource Centre Management respectively, followed by Information System Management (25%) and Records Management (19.4%). More than half (55.4%) of the respondents were 21 years old while less than half (44.6%) of them were 22 years old. Majority (61.1%) of respondents were in the third semester, followed by those in semester 1 and 5 (16.7% respectively), and only 5.6% in semester 2.

Table 2

#### *Summary of Respondents' Profile*

Variable	Category	No. of Respondent	Percent of Sample (%)
Gender	Female	26	72.2
	Male	10	27.8
Courses	Library & Information Management	10	27.8
	Resource Centre Management	10	27.8
	Information System Management	9	25.0
	Records Management	7	19.4
Age	21 years old	20	55.4
	22 years old	16	44.6
Semester	Semester 1	6	16.7
	Semester 2	2	5.6
	Semester 3	22	61.1
	Semester 5	6	16.7

### Perceptions on Benefits of Using Social Media

This section analyzes the first objective of the study: what do students perceived on the benefits of using social media. The perceptions of respondents are measured on a Likert scale from 1 to 5: (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Quite agree, (4) Agree, and (5) Strongly agree. Table 3 shows the mean scores of perceptions on the benefits of using social media.

On the average, students agree on the benefits of using social media and this is shown by the overall mean score of 4.01. They agree that using social media increases the connectivity of friends and encourage information sharing among friends (both mean = 4.30 respectively). They also agree that social media increases the network among friends (mean=4.08) and improves the ICT skills among friends (mean=4.00). Conversely, they quite agree that using social media enhances the timeliness of communications among friends (mean=3.86), that using social media enhances the e-commerce business among friends and increases the awareness of social problems among friends” (both mean = 3.81 respectively). Overall, the results indicate a positive perception on the benefits of using social media.

Table 3

*Results of Mean Scores by Statements: Benefits of Using Social Media*

Variable	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Benefits of Social Media</b>	1. Increasing the connectivity of friends.	4.30	0.691
	2. Encouraging information sharing among friends.	4.30	0.691
	3. Enhancing the effectiveness of communication.	4.13	0.780
	4. Increasing the network among friends.	4.08	0.603
	5. Improving the ICT skills among friends.	4.00	0.870
	6. Enhancing the timeliness of communication among friends.	3.86	0.690
	7. Enhancing the e-commerce business among friends.	3.81	0.710
	8. Increasing the awareness of social problems among friends.	3.81	0.710
	<b>Overall Mean Score</b>	4.01	0.560

### **Perceptions on Impact of Not Filtering the Information**

This section analyzes the second objective of the study: what do students perceived on the impact of not filtering information. Table 4 indicates the mean scores of perceptions on the impact of not filtering information. The overall mean score of 4.00 in Table 4 indicates that, on the average, the respondents agree on the impact of not filtering the information. By individual statements, they agree that by not filtering information, irresponsible people can use confidential information to blackmail others (mean =4.41), that they will spread rumors (mean=4.31), that trusted information is difficult to find (mean=4.30), that information becomes overload (mean=4.22) and that inappropriate use of social media tools may put students at legal risk and collapse of moral values among students (mean=4.20 respectively). Nevertheless, they quite agree that the impact of not filtering the information may take searching of authentic information lots of times (mean=3.70), that the correct source of information is unable to use (mean=3.59), that information is unable to organize and manage (mean=3.52), and communications become ineffective, in that order. As an overall result, most students agree about the impact of not filtering the information from the social media, which brings a lot of inappropriate values and attitude.

Table 4

*Results of Mean Scores by Statements: Impact of Not Filtering the Information*

Variable	Statements	Mean	Std Deviation
<b>Impact of NOT Filtering the Information</b>	1. Irresponsible people can use confidential information to blackmail others.	4.41	0.770
	2. Spreading of rumours.	4.31	0.790
	3. Finding trusted information is difficult.	4.30	0.650
	4. Information become overload.	4.22	0.910
	5. The inappropriate use of social media tools may put student at legal risk.	4.20	1.010
	6. Collapse of moral values among users.	3.70	0.654
	7. Searching authentic information take lots of time.	3.59	1.010
	8. The correct sources of information is unable to use.	3.52	0.874
	9. Information is unable to organise and managed.	3.50	0.810
	10. Communications become ineffective.		
	<b>Overall Mean Score</b>	4.00	0.540

### Conclusion

This study is only based on small sample size in one faculty of the university. The generalizability of the results might be limited and might not be generalized to other faculty or university. The intent of this study was to provide some insight into the benefits of using social media among students by highlighted some of the points which also covers the impact of not filtering the information. The finding indicates that, there was a positive perception on the benefits of using social media. Besides that, the result indicates that most students agree about the impact of not filtering the information from the social media, which brings a lot of inappropriate values and attitude. In future, it is hoped that these results may be used to inform future researchers, lecturers and institutions that capitalize on the benefits of using social media to support student engagement. Once the higher education community has a better understanding of how and why students are using social media resources as part of their educational experience, this information can be used to contribute to the success of students.

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