

A STUDY OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SYSTEMS AND ITS IMPACT

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Abstract:

Socio-economic environment is continuously changing due to technological advancement and new means of communication. The reflection of it is evident in the lifestyle of the people. The impact of it is more prominent in the young generation. The easy receptibility to technological advancement of this generation, who have grown up with personal computers, cell phones, and the internet, are now taking their place in a world where the only constant is, rapid change. Although, the outlook of the young generation varies from place to place due to social and economic conditions, an increased use and familiarity with communications, media, and digital technologies is the feature of Generation Y. The 2001 census indicated that nearly one-third of the Indian population is in the age group of young adolescents and young adults. This statistics makes this study more desirable.

The paper is based on empirical study, which in general focuses on probing the social networking system's influence on management students and future projections for it. The researcher derived its results from testing hypothesis using non-parametric tests like chi-square test for the interpretation of data.

Socialists, educationists and practitioners are always interested in understanding behavior of young generation, with respect to changes in the environment. The research shows the explicit impact of social networking websites on the management students of Kolkata region and their affiliation for social networking websites, for the role it will be playing in their professional growth.

Keywords: Generation Y, Social Networking Websites, Globalisation

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Introduction:

India has witnessed growth of telecom industry, which has spread in the nooks and corners of India like wildfire. The next technological growth India will be witnessing is the growth of virtual world. i.e. internet. A phenomenon increase in the number of internet users is observed over the past few years, which will increase in leaps and bounds in the coming years. The internet user base is rapidly growing at the rate of 40% per year. In 2009 a Juxt India survey indicated that 46.49 million internet users exist in India alone, out of which 32.38% use it daily, which is a substantial part. A study of CII-IMRB report on broadband roadmap for inclusive growth for the period 2009-2014 has projected that by the year 2014 there will be as many as 214 million broadband connections (a 30 fold increase from the current level of 7 million) and 393 million urban users of the internet in India. Migration of people for different reasons has made it difficult to be in contact with each other. The above facts of technological advancement has made it possible to contact and communicate with each other at a cheaper rate, which is also convenient and fast. The young generation or Generation Y, as they are known, are more “Internet crazy” and go online to fulfill a broader spectrum of purposes, with a higher inclination to use it for their entertainment and social networking needs. This has prompted a exponential growth of the social networking websites (SNW). This paper attempts to find out whether the young generation is aware of the SNWs and whether they think using these SNWs would benefit them in terms of knowledge upgradation and if they think it is an instrument in shaping their professional life.

Social Networking Websites:

“A couple of years ago, about half of our users logged onto Facebook everyday, and as we’ve grown to 250 million worldwide users, that number hasn’t changed”

—Mike Murphy, VP-Global Sales, Facebook.

One of the most important feature of SNWs is their ability to project social presence. Social presence can be defined as “the salience of the other person in interpersonal interaction” (Short, William and Christie, 1976)

Social networking is the grouping of individuals into specific groups, like group of people having a same mindset or interest, people having similar professional background like doctors and lawyers or people wanting to pursue a particular hobby and want to seek more information to further their passion. Although social networking is possible in person, as it was before the advent of the internet, especially in the workplace, but it is most popular online. This is because unlike most colleges or work places, the internet is filled with millions of individuals who are looking to meet other people, to gather and share first-hand information and experiences about a range of topics such as cooking, gardening, investing their hard earned money, developing friendships with like minded people or professional tie-ups, finding employment, business-to-business marketing and even groups sharing information about the topics as interesting and absurd as the end of the world or universe and most commonly, the “third world war”.

When it comes to online social networking, websites are commonly used. These websites are known as social sites. Social networking websites function like an online family of internet users. Depending on the website in question, many of these online group members share common interest in hobbies, religion, politics and so on. Once you gain access to a particular social networking website, as per your interests, you can begin to socialize. This socialization may include reading the information pages of other members and also contacting them for further information about the concerned topic. Each country or region has it's own culture and behavior. New friends can be made and long lasting friendships can be cultivated over the internet. By sitting in one corner of your room you can gain information relating to the culture of a place three thousand kilometers away from you.

Online Communities and World:

As per E Consultancy, the following statistics are prominent as far as SNWs are concerned:

- ❖ Facebook claims that 50% of it's active users use it daily. That means at least 175 million users every 24 hours.

- ❖ Twitter has 75 million user accounts, but only around 15 million are active users
- ❖ LinkedIn has 50 million users worldwide
- ❖ More than 35 million Facebook users update their status each day.
- ❖ Photo uploads to Facebook have increased having around 2.5 billion uploads to the site each day
- ❖ Mobile usage is bigger for Facebook, with more than 65 million users used it through mobile-based devices.
- ❖ There are more than 3.5 billion pieces of content such as web links, news stories, blog stories, blog posts shared each week on Facebook.
- ❖ About 70% of Facebook users are outside USA
- ❖ India is showing a growth in the user base of LinkedIn, with around 3 million total users.

According to a new Neilson report, “Global Faces and Networked Places”—has stated that two-third of the world’s internet population visit SNWs for time which will account for 10% of total internet time. The data of 2007 through 2008 if studied, shows that it is increasing three times the rate of overall Internet growth. The main feature of this growth are:

- More time for community
- Not just for the young
- Access of SNW connection and usage has shown popularity through mobile.

Some of the feature of SNWs used for community interactions are—short message updates pages (Twitter, etc), profile pages, ability to add third-party widgets to the active members, member scoring algorithms, etc. The SNWs are based on content, i.e. type of word you are using for search will help the internet browser to show type of advertisement or event alerts you will be receiving

Students and Social Networking Websites:

A study of S.L. Faisalv (2009) indicated that the emergence of online social networks and its expanding user base should not be ignored by academics. These are powerful tools, academics can use to cope up with the expectation of the students of new generation. As proposed by Mazman and Usluel (2009) an active participation of students is invited by the new education style, since technological development has given rise to new needs and expectations of students'. This need could be satisfied by the involvement of social networking websites.

An explanatory study of Indian university students' use of social networking websites carried out by Shailja and Monica (2009) implies that Indian students are using SNWs for not only leisure and entertainment but for some meaningful and serious deliberations. The study also suggests that females are more cautious as far as internet usage is concerned and future professionals will be active users of SNWs for their development. The study also indicates that in this global environment the virtual organization has to take note of the adaptability of students to this virtual social world and especially professional world. This also will help a smooth cross culture adoption process.

Objectives of the Study:

- To find out affiliation of the management students with social networking websites.
- To identify the time spent by students on SNWs
- To analyze factors for the SNWs selection by the management students
- To identify influence of SNWs on knowledge upgradation and information flow among management students
- To find out whether SNWs are helpful in shaping management students professional growth.

Scope of the Study:

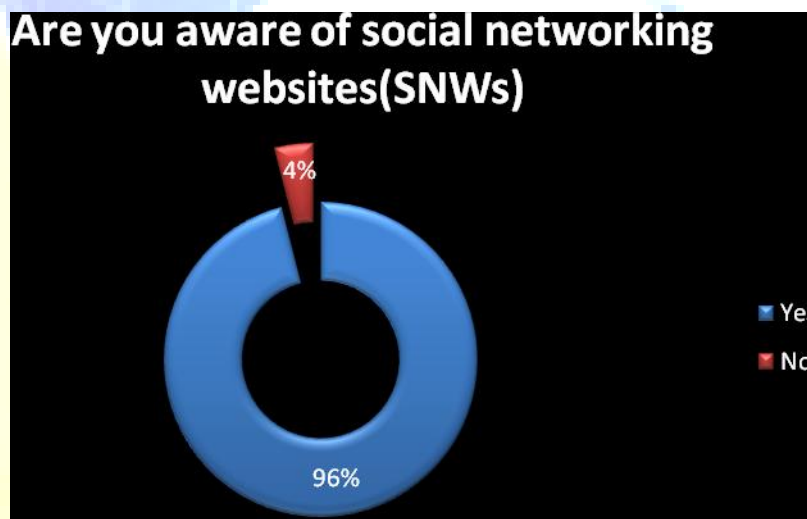
The study is limited to the management students of various MBA colleges in the Salt-lake region of Kolkata city.

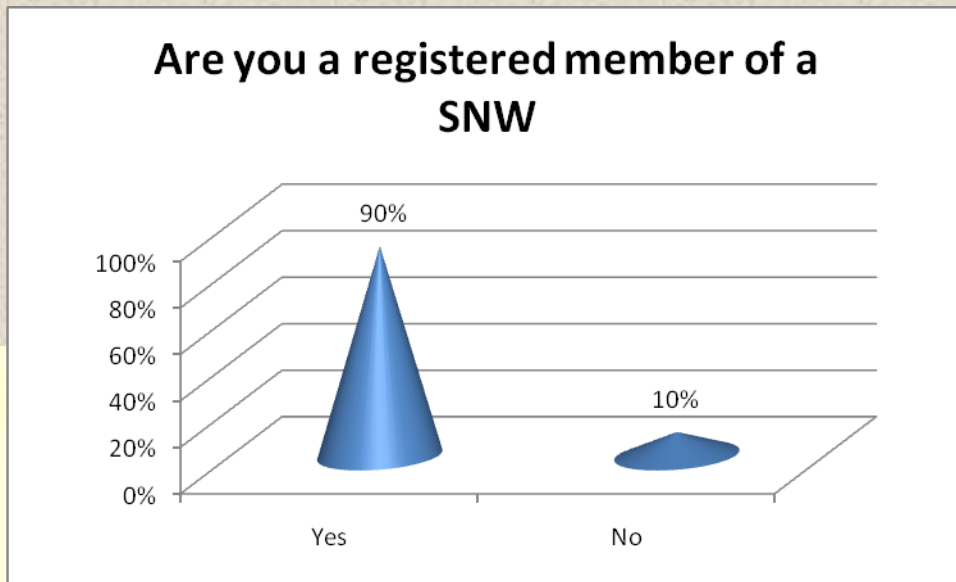
Methodology—

In this descriptive Research design, a structured questionnaire has been used as the data collection instrument from a convenience sample of management students of age ranging from 19 to 23. The sample size of 50 is taken for the purpose of research. Technique used for analyzing first three objectives is frequency distribution and analysis of close & open ended questions. While the last two objectives are tested through hypothesis testing with the use of Chi-square technique for interpretation of data.

Findings—

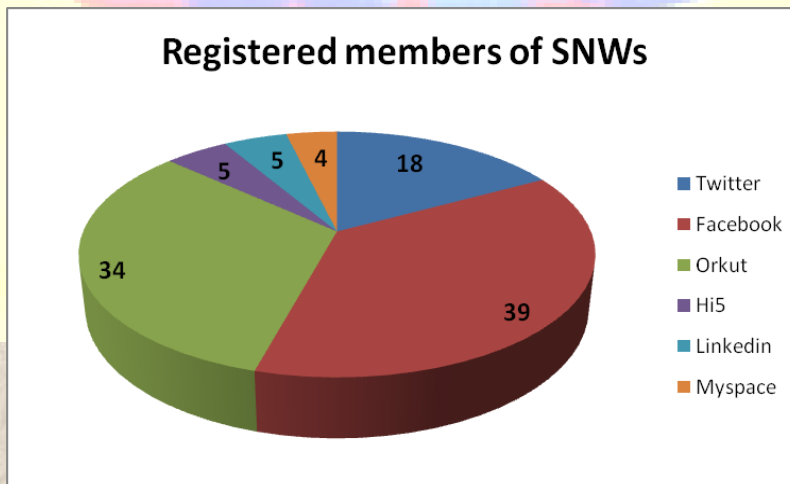
Affiliation and awareness of management students with SNWs:

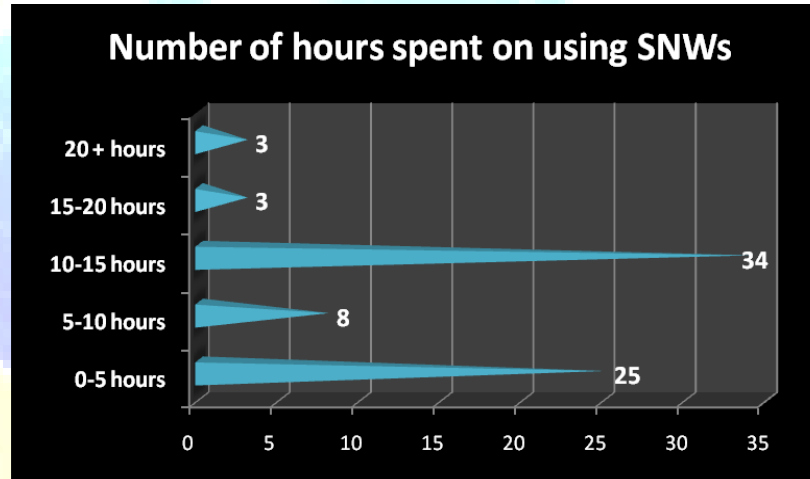
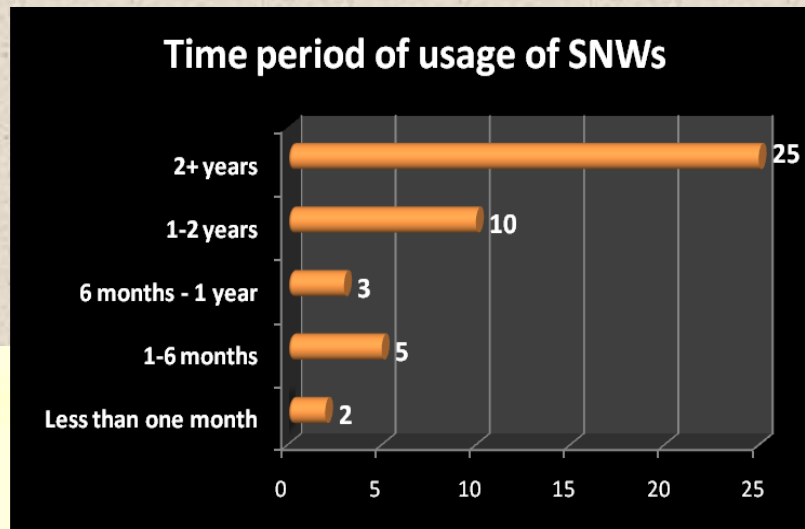




The data analysis shows that awareness for the social networking websites is utmost i.e. 96% and out of which 90% are the members of the SNW. This confirms the fact that SNWs is a wide application in today's generation.

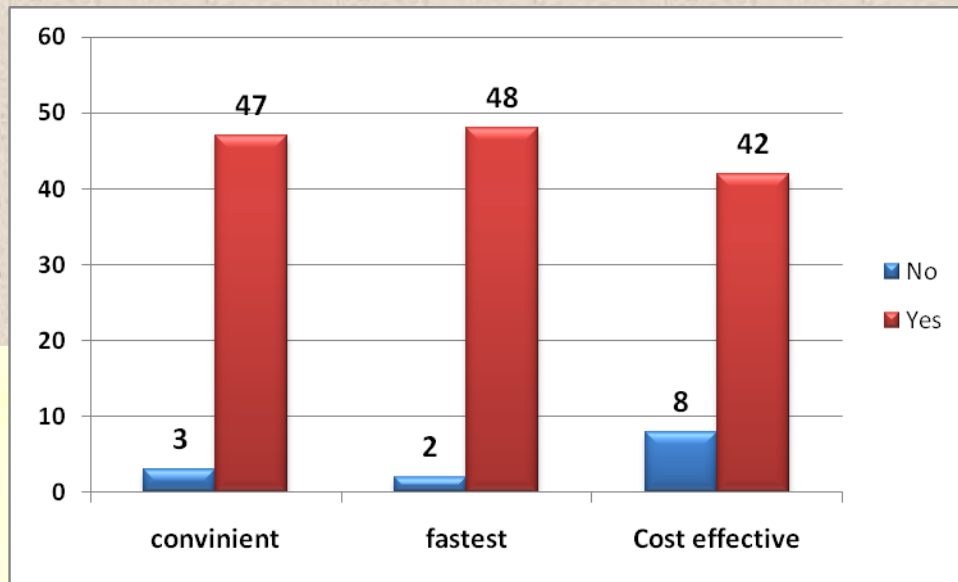
Registration type and time spent of SNWs:





Facebook and orkut are the SNWs most used by the management students followed by twitter, which confirms the worldwide usage pattern of SNWs. As is evident, maximum number are using SNWs for more than last two years. On an average, weekly usage of 10-15 hours is there of SNWs. These facts confirm the various findings by researchers across the globe.

Factors that influence the SNWs usage by Management Students—



To explore why management students prefer using social networking media for information, a question with the options which emerged from the studies of various researchers. There are three prominent reasons—cost effectiveness, fast availability, and convenience, though these factors are motivation for the usage of all internet users, a fact confirmed by the management students as well.

The other factors that prompt the students to use SNWs were explored by an open ended question. It was found that most of them were outstation students who found it easy to keep in touch with their family which reduced their homesickness. Also new social and professional contacts could be made through the SNWs. Being online helped them to get updated information of the current events and different marketing offerings.

❖ Hypothesis (I)—

To check the Objective:

(I) To identify influence of SNWs on knowledge upgradation and information flow among management students, I have used the method of hypothesis testing which is chi-square hypothesis testing. A null hypothesis is proposed

Ho-There is no relationship between use of SNWs and upgradation of knowledge

Description	Increase in the knowledge (Observed) (B)	No Increase in the knowledge (Observed) (b)	Total
Using SNW (A)	(AB)44	(Aa)01	45
Not Using SNW (a)	(aB)03	(ab)02	05
Total	47	03	50

Expected frequency AB=47*45/50=42.3

Description	Increase in the knowledge (Expected) (B)	No Increase in the knowledge (Expected) (b)	Total
Using SNW (A)	(AB)42.3	(Aa)2.7	45
Not Using SNW (a)	(aB)4.7	(ab)0.3	05
Total	47	03	50

Group	Observed Frequency (O _{ij})	Expected Frequency (E _{ij})	(O _{ij} -E _{ij})	(O _{ij} -E _{ij}) ²	(O _{ij} -E _{ij}) ² /E _{ij}
AB	44	42.3	+1.7	2.89	0.0683
Ab	01	2.7	-1.7	2.89	1.0703
aB	03	4.7	-1.7	2.89	0.6149
Ab	02	0.3	+1.7	2.89	9.6333

Chi square value= $\sum (O_{ij}-E_{ij})^2/E_{ij} = 11.387$

The calculated value for above data is 11.387 Degrees of freedom (d.f.) for above data is 1. The table value for d.f. 1 and significance level of 5% is 3.841 The Calculated value is higher than table value so we do not accept the null hypothesis that there is no relationship.

There exists a relationship between knowledge upgradation and use of SNWs.

❖ Hypothesis (II)—

(II) To find whether SNWs are helpful in shaping management students professional growth

Ho—there is no relationship between use of SNWs and Professional Growth

Description	Increase in professional growth (Observed) (B)	No Increase in professional growth (Observed) (b)	Total
Using SNW (A)	(AB)38	(Aa)06	44
Not Using SNW (a)	(aB)02	(ab)04	06
Total	40	10	50

Expected frequency AB= $44 \times 40 / 50 = 35.2$

Description	Increase in professional growth (Expected) (B)	No Increase in professional growth (Expected) (b)	Total
Using SNW (A)	(AB)35.2	(Aa)8.8	44
Not Using SNW (a)	(aB)4.8	(ab)1.2	06
Total	40	10	50

Group	Observed Frequency (O_{ij})	Expected Frequency (E_{ij})	$(O_{ij}-E_{ij})$	$(O_{ij}-E_{ij})^2$	$(O_{ij}-E_{ij})^2/E_{ij}$
AB	38	35.2	2.8	7.84	0.2227
Ab	06	8.8	-2.8	7.84	0.8909

aB	02	4.8	-2.8	7.84	1.6333
Ab	04	1.2	2.8	7.84	6.5333

$$\text{Chi square value} = \sum (O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2 / E_{ij} = 9.2802$$

The calculated value for the above data is 9.2802 Degrees of freedom (d.f) for above data is 1. The table value for d.f. 1 and significance level of 5% is 3.841 The calculated value is higher than table value so we do not accept the null hypothesis that there is no relationship.

There exists relationship between professional growth and use of SNW. It implies that students anticipate SNWs as a tool for professional growth.

Conclusion:

Almost every management student is aware of the SNWs. These SNWs have been widely accepted by the management students as a media which is most cost effective, convenient and prompt way of getting information of any kind be it offers, current affairs, education, events of all kinds or social issues. Facebook and Orkut are undisputed favorite of the management students followed by Twitter. Students believe SNWs keep them updated on the current issues and also discussion of the current issues help them in sharing the views and thoughts of each other. This helps them in understanding a particular topic from all the angles. SNWs are definitely looked upon as a media for upgradation of professional growth. The survey shows that the awareness about the use of SNWs for professional growth is less in junior class students. The higher class students do a better use of SNWs for professional growth. As far as the professional upgradation is concerned the survey indicates that it will be in the form of quick information of employment opportunities, reach of varied types of opportunities and insights from the current employees.

Implications and Future Scope:

This survey is carried out for only a few management colleges in Kolkata. The findings can be further tested for larger scope. A more concrete and productive use of SNWs should be done by education system where such a wide reach of students is possible. The students view this medium as knowledge base provider which opens up new opportunities for academics. This will go a long way in helping them in developing effective tool for knowledge impartment. The other side of the coin is that because of such a wide reach, a chance of misconceptions is possible in the young developing mind. A control mechanism should be established which will motivate constructive thought process in the young mind to consciously use the internet in a positive way. There is a clear indication from the study that the students will use the SNWs for professional growth in a positive way and for the betterment of themselves and that of the society as a whole, whether they stay in India or abroad. The potential employer has the opportunity to search and headhunt the eligible candidates as the percentage of students using SNWs is very high.

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