



THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING SITES ON ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Lakshmi Anand¹, Rangaswamy R²

¹Department of Silk Technology, Govt. SKSJ Technological Institute K R Circle

²Assistant Professor, Department of Physics, Govt. SKSJ Technological Institute K R Circle,

Corresponding Author- Lakshmi Anand

Email- lakshmismail99@gmail.com

Email- rangaswamy.gksj@gmail.com

Abstract

The expansion of growth in social media has been eclectic. There is a rapid increase in acceptance and approval of social networking platforms in an implausible manner. The engagement tool of social media has to be one of the main tools to achieve such broad popularity in a span of brief time. Every possible niche in the professional world could make use of this tool to achieve engagement with their desired audience. When we talk of academic research, from the process of perceiving reliable information sources to have the most effective publication of one's work becomes simpler and less tedious. Social media tools like engagement tool and analytics tool mentioned earlier make any researcher's life easy, from bringing access to reference sources to accurately curated search results and giving your published research a target specified audience engagement. In short, making the process and outcome of an academic research are a worthwhile experience. The main objective of this paper is to focus on the impact of social media networking sites on academic research. The paper brings limelight to both positive and negative impact of social networking sites on research. This paper further focuses on strategies to be used in improving the quality of research using social media.

Key Words: Social Media, Networking Sites, Academic Research.

Introduction

The expansion of growth in social media has been eclectic. There is a rapid increase in acceptance and approval of social networking platforms in an implausible manner. The engagement tool of social media has to be one of the main tools to achieve such broad popularity in a span of brief time. Every possible niche in the professional world could make use of this tool to achieve engagement with their desired audience. When we talk of academic research, from the process of perceiving reliable information sources to having the most effective publication of your work becomes simpler and less tedious. Social media tools like engagement tool and analytics tool mentioned earlier makes any researcher's life easy, from bringing access to reference sources to accurately curated search results and giving your published research a target specified audience engagement. In short, making the process and outcome of an academic research are a worthwhile experience.

Research

As the quoted definition from Wikipedia, "Research is creative and systematic work undertaken to increase the stock of knowledge". Research is usually characterized by a systematic

process to obtain accurate data; analysis made on logical reasoning and has inclusive and deductive observations made. The most salient characteristic of any research is accuracy because it cannot leave any room for ambiguity. Good research must always ensure an ethical practice and code of conduct during the process of research.

There are three main purposes of any research namely Exploratory, Descriptive and Explanatory.

Research is broadly classified into two types - Qualitative & Quantitative.

Qualitative Research

A conversational method and something commonly referred to as the 'the non-numerical method'. This research emphasizes solely on the responses to open ended questions which help the researcher to understand what or why the participant thinks as to a certain way. Some methods used in Qualitative research are One to one review, Focus groups, Ethnographic groups, Text analysis and Case study.

Quantitative Research

The numerical form deals with numbers and measureable forms of investigating data, systematic form of answering questions to justify

relationships with measureable variables to predict, explain or control a phenomenon. Methods in quantitative research are Survey research, Descriptive research and Co relational research.

Social Media

Millions of users on a daily basis publish articles, blogs, pictures, videos with various social media applications, some of the most popular ones called YouTube, Facebook, WordPress and etc.

Various definitions are associated with social media in current times and almost all of them seem to fit the description. “Social media allows people to exchange ideas and opinions, discuss together the content of pages and make contacts online”. It can also be defined as “social media is different from traditional mainstream media in that their content can create everybody as well contribute into it or comment on it.”

It is important to note that there are two terms in relation to this discussion, social media and social networking which are often confused to be similar. Social media is said to have a superior sense than social networking. Social media includes sharing and collaborating of content like photos, videos, blogs, wikis, articles etc. On the other hand, social networking is developing user profiles in order to establish interactions in a community or with individuals. Social networking, a hundred percent comes under social media because it creates a platform for networking and collaboration and hence go hand in hand.

Types of social media are Social networking sites, Social review sites, Image sharing sites, Video hosting sites, Community blogs, Discussion sites and Sharing economy networks. Examples for social media are Facebook (2.74 billion users), YouTube (2.29 billion users), WhatsApp (2 billion users), Facebook Messenger (1.3 billion users), Instagram (1.22 billion users), WeChat (1.21 billion users), TikTok (689 million users), QQ (617 million users).

The Positive Impact of Social Media in Academic Research

The perks of using social media in academic research is endless. The prime part of research mainly focuses on obtaining information, gathering all the data related to the topic and questions which may arise and could be linked to the research to accommodate a new perspective in the research. Hence, it becomes important for any researcher to dive into the depths of gathering information and reliable references for his/her work. This is an essential

part of any research but, time consuming and tedious if an easy access is not established for reliable sources and materials for the researcher. Social media being a cluster of data hub in various forms, there isn't a missing piece when it comes to social media. All the sources are right out there for anyone to access for any purpose it serves to them. This can only mean as an advantage for a researcher. At only the search of a few keywords in relation to your research you can avail all the information required. This isn't the limit when it comes to social media, in addition to using already existing information one can create his own collection of data on social media, after all it has no loose ends to who creates content in there. For instance, a researcher wants to conduct qualitative research on “why STEM courses are more sought after in comparison to others?” now, he/she would like to get a collection of real time responses from at least five hundred college applicants or existing college going individuals. He/she decided to make a Google form which includes a set of questions that might help to bring in some responses to the research, the link to this Google form is shared on twitter in an open community page for college aspirants. The expected and existing followers and viewers of that page are primly college students or the ones aspiring to join college soon. After the link was shared the responses started flowing in and hence the researcher achieved his/her goal of surveying a desired group of individuals for the research.

The tools of social media have advanced in such heights that you can analyze collected data to bring in results and draw conclusions in just a few steps.

Another huge part of research includes the publication. Earlier times this would have majorly involved a lot of process and the right foundation or institutions for a researcher's work to be published out there. The wait period is long and the relevance would have been lost before the work had found light. All this can be avoided in the social media age. Publish your work in seconds and reach out to targeted audience in a few clicks and you do not have to worry about engagement with the audience since the connectivity social media holds is massive. The sort of recognition social media can give is incomparable to any conventional methods in the past. The hassle when it comes to research is huge and specifically academic research requires a tedious amount of work to establish good work in the end. It often becomes difficult to hold on to the same enthusiasm and dedication till the end of one's research. Social media, an existence

of virtual networking connects to relevant people and reliable sources, giving recognition the research demands in an expeditious manner. Social networking not only makes it easy to access just data but even the people of relevance. From the instance earlier we can draw a conclusion of how an open community page for college students on twitter could help a researcher whose conducting work on the same domain of individuals.

The Negative Impact of Social Media in Academic Research

As many perks being involved in using social media it definitely comes with some disadvantages as well. Most of the demerits is within the aspect of data collection. Some of those include,

1. Non representative samples
2. Low response rate
3. Financial motivation
4. Participant fraud
5. Limitations in types of data collected
6. Practical survey administration issues
7. Lack of follow up ability

Online users make it difficult to obtain behavioral studies and conduct studies that may require repetition in survey. Researches also cannot access truly random samples of survey because the participant would have not subscribed or probably not been active.

Apart from these data related disadvantages, in terms of publication of work in social media which gives high accessibility to users online that could pose as a threat in form of plagiarism, intellectual property theft and impersonation.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to bring into light the impact social media can create when it's used for academic research. A brief about social media and the social networking helps us to draw an inductive and deductive aspects of it being included as an essential tool for academic research. In today's world at least a negligible part of our work includes the involvement of social media hence we can say that social media is helping in ways we are aware of consciously or subconsciously which applies to the field of research as well. Although it is important to remember the demerits of the usage of social media as well and be prepared for any damage control we might have to do in later circumstances. The sole purpose of the paper is to make researchers aware in the field of academics that social media definitely creates a massive impact if used solicitously in their research work.

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