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Exploring students' purposes of usage and educational usage of Facebook



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ABSTRACT

In order to better understand why students use Facebook and how Facebook can be used for educational activities students' attitudes and perceptions towards purposes of Facebook usage and Facebook educational usage were investigated in this study. Also, theoretical models of the purposes of Facebook usage and Facebook educational usage proposed in literature were examined using the sample of 226 students from University of Belgrade, Technical faculty in Bor. Previous studies have pointed out that there are three underlying dimensions of purposes of Facebook usage that can be indicated as social relations, work related activities and daily activities. Facebook educational usage also includes three underlying dimensions defined as communication, collaboration and resource/material sharing. These hypothesized three-factor models of purposes of Facebook usage and Facebook educational usage were tested on the present sample data using confirmatory factor analysis. The results confirmed hypothesized latent structures and theoretical validity of both investigated factor models. Further analysis revealed that, according to students, collaboration through academic groups (communities) represents the most important value of Facebook implementation in academic activities.

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1. Introduction

Increased influence of social networks has brought significant changes in the distribution of information as well as in moving the frameworks of cultural norms. This has enabled presentation of individuals in a different way. Such an explosion of social media and capabilities and advantages of networking, have brought to young people, besides entertainment, the use of social networks for educational purposes in a different, modern way (Chen & Bryer, 2012; Junco, 2015; Thongmak, 2014).

Social networking has rapidly spread among a large number of people in recent years. According to data from 2015, the total number of Facebook users in the world is near 1.5 billion, which is 13% more users than in the same period in 2014 (<https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/>). The country with the largest number of users of the social networks is the United States with 151.8 million users, followed by India with 108.9 million. The next is Brazil with 70.3 million users, followed by Indonesia and

Mexico. In Europe, the country with the largest number of users is England with 30.3 million (<http://www.statista.com/statistics/268136/top-15-countries-based-on-number-of-facebook-users/>). Looking at the number of social networks with the regional aspect Canada and the United States together make 17.2% of the total number of users in the world; Europe 21.4%; Asia with Pacific with 28.8% and the rest of the world's population owns 29.9% of users (<http://www.internetworldstats.com/facebook.htm>).

In early 2013, the daily number of Facebook users totaled 665 million, and in the same period in 2015 this number was much higher – 936 million. 53% of users are women and 47% are men on Facebook. High density of Facebook usage is proved by 300 million image updates a day. 50% of the population, age 18–24, checks their profile as soon as they wake up. Every 60 s 510 comments, 203 000 statuses and 136 000 pictures are posted on Facebook (<https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/>).

Use of social networks provides an important background for the social, emotional and cognitive development of the young people who spend most of their time on the Internet (Hayes, van Stolk-Cooke, & Muench, 2015; Pempek, Yevdokiya, & Calvert, 2009). The most popular social networking site (SNS) today – Facebook – is a communication phenomenon. This social network slipped in society, won it, and as such, found great application with

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students who besides having fun, also use it for the exchange of relevant information regarding their studies (Chen & Bryer, 2012; Paul, Baker, & Cochran, 2012). Research conducted in 2011 in the United States shows that 90% of students use Facebook, and only 37% use Twitter (Dahlstrom, de Boor, Grunwald, & Vockley, 2011). When it comes to Serbia, according to data from 2015, the most popular SNS is Facebook, which comprises 96.7% of the population which uses social networks, followed by Twitter with 2.06% (<https://www.statsmonkey.com/table/21462-serbia-mobile-social-media-usage-statistics-2015.php>). This clearly indicates the dominance of Facebook among young people who are the target group of respondents in this study, i.e. the students. The results of recent study revealed that students in Serbia spend a daily average of 2.76 h on Facebook (Janković, Nikolić, Vukonjanski, & Terek, 2016). Hence, using Facebook for educational purposes can be considered as an important issue.

In order to better understand why students use Facebook and how they perceive the use of Facebook for educational purposes the focus of the current research is on students' purposes of Facebook usage and Facebook educational usage.

2. Literature review

Numerous studies are dealing with Facebook as the most popular social network from various aspects (Dickie & Meier, 2015; Hayes et al., 2015; Junco, 2013; Zaremohzzabieh et al., 2014). Many studies have examined psychological effects of social networks use (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Correa, Willard Hinsley, & Gil se Zuniga, 2010; Hayes et al., 2015; Ross et al., 2009; Ryan & Xenos, 2011; Wilson, Fornasier, & White, 2010).

Earlier studies on social networks are mainly focused on issues such as user privacy, technology development, structure of social networks, the ways of usage and the main motives for using (Debatin, Lovejoy, Horn, & Hughes, 2009; Fogel & Nehmad, 2009; Pempek et al., 2009; Urista, Dong, & Day, 2009).

Facebook usage causes both positive and negative reactions, which is why the results of previously conducted studies on this topic are different as evidenced by numerous studies (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Paul et al., 2012; Sheldon, 2008).

Recently, many authors have conducted studies in order to analyze the use of social networks for educational and learning purposes (Dabner, 2012; Donlan, 2014; Forkosh-Baruch & Hershkovitz, 2012; Junco, 2015; Kuzma & Wright, 2013; Mazman & Usluel, 2010; Roblyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman, & Witty, 2010; Sanchez, Cortijo, & Javed, 2014; Sharma, Joshi, & Sharma, 2016). A number of previous studies show that students generally consider Facebook to be helpful in fast adapting to student life (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011; Greenhow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009; Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009; Selwyn, 2009). Dedication of students to learning process represents the fulfillment of their daily activities such as going to the lectures and performing tasks. It is a good incentive for universities from different areas to test the efficiency and sustainability of Facebook as a means of teaching tool and to test the benefits that allow a large number of young people to improve significantly the learning process, besides just having fun with it (Thongmak, 2014).

Mazer, Murphy, and Simonds (2007) have analyzed professors who use Facebook profiles to work with students. Also, Bowers-Campbell (2008) explains that teachers can use Facebook as a pedagogical tool to talk about the concerns and problems students are facing with. Students today spend most of their time on social networks and for this reason it is very important for teachers to take advantage of this possibility (Thompson, 2013) by putting on aforementioned network various contents, tests, surveys that students need to process as a task in the lectures (Kirschner &

Karpinski, 2010; Pasek & Hargittai, 2009). In this way, greater involvement of students through creative activity on the social network is being encouraged; content is thus rapidly expanding and it is easily accessible to all; good communication between students is being achieved and new acquaintances are being made based on the same interests (Munoz & Towner, 2009). Based on these findings a conclusion is being drawn that students who in this manner established cooperation with their professors have greater motivation to learn and spread a positive climate in the classroom, which leads to better results in learning. Although Facebook is the most widely used social network among students currently, often, teachers are not always willing to accept new teachings trends that appear (Lisette, 2014).

An example of successful practice of this method of collaboration between professors and students are courses in the field of new technology and innovation at the Technical Faculty in Bor, University of Belgrade in Serbia (Milošević, Živković, Arsić et al., 2015; Milošević, Živković, Manasijević et al., 2015). In these courses, professor posts required course materials, useful multimedia contents which follow lectures and shares all necessary information pertaining to the course in the group formed on Facebook. Also, this is the place where student leave their comments, opinions, and suggestions.

Kalin (2012) states that professors, even before they realize the benefits of modern technology, need to understand how students use new technologies, in order to keep abreast of modern trends. On the other hand, teachers need to be careful when posting content on the social network, as this may cause damage to their personal credibility (Mazer et al., 2007).

The research of full-time students and information technology conducted by ECAR together with other studies, show that despite the increasing use of information technology in everyday life, students feel comfortable while applying traditional ways of learning and love the moderate use of information technology. However, some authors recommend that this interpretation should be taken with a grain of salt because "moderate use of information technology" has already been implemented in society (Smith & Caruso, 2010).

There are also studies that point to the negative effects of social networks on the academic performance of young people due to excessive dependence that occurs (Frein, Jones, & Gerow, 2013; Junco, 2012; Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). Carr (2000) found that excessive use of the Internet among students can adversely affect academic performance, as it reduces their ability to concentrate on scientific research works, given the tendency to spend more time on things that entertain them and which are easier and faster to remember. The study conducted by Abusbiha and Mustaffa (2014) revealed that students who use Facebook every day have significantly lower grades than those who do not use it. Others fear privacy issues may negatively impact or even destroy the traditional roles of the teacher and learner (Sickler, 2007). Many authors believe that this social network has a much more negative impact on the success of the students in relation to the benefits that they offer. Therefore, it is assumed that the time students spend on Facebook while learning is negatively associated with academic performance. Bearing in mind that students must learn to balance their social and academic requirements through the entire period of their studies, this relation can be measured on the basis of the realized performance of students. Concretely, the students from the first year at the university are focused on making and maintaining friendships and they are not capable of regulating the use of Facebook in the best possible way so that leads to the detriment of their ultimate outcome of their academic work (Upcraft, Gardner, Barefoot, & Associates, 2005).

Recently, several empirical studies (Mazman & Usluel, 2010;

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