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Student Opinions Regarding Twitter Usage with Mobile Applications for Educational Purposes

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to determine the opinions of regarding the use of the Twitter Micro blog site with mobile applications for educational purposes. The study ran for a period of 5 weeks, and involved the teaching of a Distance Education course. Course materials such as course concepts, slides and videos were shared, using Twitter as a platform, by using a variety of mobile applications such as ThingLink, Wevideo and Dropbox. As a result of the research findings, I suggest that Twitter usage in combination with mobile applications for educational purposes, created a positive effect on student opinions. It can be said that, when using Twitter for educational purposes, follow ability and share ability nature of Twitter micro blog site in combination with a variety of mobile applications, causes an increase in student-teacher and global student-student communication. Therefore the number of student websites that have this 'sharing' function will increase and a platform can be provided that promotes the growth of information as it is shared.

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Keywords: mobile application, educational purposes, twitter usage

Introduction

Many social websites and Web tools were improved following the development of Web 2.0 (Ruiz-Molina, Cuadrado-Garcia & Montoro-Pons, 2013; Oberer & Erkollar, 2013; Selcukcan, Akadal, Olgun, & Ayvaz Reis, 2012; Uzunboylu, Bicen & Cavus, 2011; Cabada, Estrada, Sanchez, Sandoval, Velazquez & Barrientos, 2009). Twitter is one of the most used Micro Blog sites nowadays and is an environment that helps to update a person's

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status, restricting the post to 140 characters, and one can increase the number of followers by these status updates (Grosseck & Holotescu, 2008). Twitter can be used both on the Web and on tablets and smart phones through the mobile application. According to Picard (2011), Twitter was launched in 2006. According to Alexa's (2014) data, Twitter is ranked 3rd after Facebook and Youtube on the 'social website' category of the most followed websites. Additionally, Junco, Elavsky & Heiberger (2013) stated that teaching design on Twitter provides an effective attendance of students. For this reason, it is thought that if a variety of applications can be used together on Twitter, this can provide an increase in student motivation. Therefore, Twitter and others social networks has started to be used for educational purposes and much research has been done on this subject (Bala & Arat, 2013; Veletsianos, 2012). According to Johnson (2011), when the effect of teacher's Twitter posts on student's perceptions were examined, it was seen that the students felt positively about the teachers' messages. In Bicen & Cavus' (2012) study, in which Twitter sharing habits of students were examined, it was deduced that majority of students mostly share beautiful words, pictures, videos and general news when using Twitter and sharing educational materials are less common. Gikas & Grant (2013) stated that mobile learning would increase lifelong learning abilities of students. This study investigated the effects on student opinions, were an educational environment created by using a variety of mobile applications on Twitter. The usage of Twitter is consistently increasing along with using smart phones and tablets intensively.

2 Aim of the Research

The aim of this research was to determine student opinions regarding the use of mobile applications along with Twitter Microblog site for educational purposes. This research is an experimental study that used a survey and quantified the opinions given by the use of a scale, which was developed by researchers. This survey was given to the participants before and after the course.

3 Research Method

This research study was conducted during a Distance Education course over a 5 week period. Course materials were shared on Twitter by using a variety of mobile applications. Course concepts, slides and videos were easily uploaded onto Twitter by using mobile applications as ThingLink, Wevideo and Dropbox. Students followed course materials on their Twitter accounts through their smart phones.

3.1 Attendants

24 students, all undergraduates at the Near East University, Cyprus, participated in this study. The average age of participants was 23. 62.5% of the students were male (15 people), and 37.5% of them were female (9 people).

3.2 Data Analysis

After collecting student opinions according to the developed scale, the data was analysed via the SPSS program. A paired Sample T-Test was applied in order to analyse whether there was a significance difference in the data before and after the course. The general average was looked at to interpret the opinions.

4 Application

4.1 Designing the Environment

In order to be a member of Twitter, it is enough to have an e-mail address. To create the educational environment, “Virtual Classroom”, each participant has to open a Twitter account. The students, who were taking a Distance Education course, were required to follow the specified Twitter account. Those students who opened Twitter accounts, who did not have one before. Materials, which were thought to be used in this course, were shared in this environment through the ThingLink, Wevideo and Dropbox mobile applications. If the students had questions about the course, they had a chance to ask by using “reply”. In addition to this, they could communicate with their teacher by a direct messaging system.

4.2 Implementation

A survey with 24 statements was given to the students to get their opinions before and after the course. Necessary announcements and notifications about course content were made through the “compose new tweet” tool of Twitter, and had a maximum of with 140 characters (a restriction of Twitter). In addition to this, course material was shared on Twitter via the Dropbox mobile application. Varieties of concepts about the course supported by pictures were explained easily with the ThingLing mobile application. The students were presented with course concepts through Wevideo by the creation of a variety of stories, supported by videos.

5 Results

In Table 1, general averages are given in order to determine students’ opinions regarding the use of Twitter together with mobile applications for educational purposes, before and after the course examined in this present study.

Statements	Pre-experience test		Post-experience test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Twitter Usage for Educational Purposes;				
1. Eases to follow course announcements	2.00	.58	4.75	.44
2. Causes to get different kinds of information	1.95	.55	4.83	.38
3. Increases communication between students	2.04	.62	4.70	.46
4. Provides chance of education everywhere	2.12	.53	4.83	.38
5. Eases communication between teacher and student	2.04	.62	4.75	.44
6. Gives chance to get instant notification	2.12	.61	4.79	.41
7. Makes courses more interesting	2.04	.62	4.70	.46
8. Increases learning willingness	2.12	.53	4.83	.38
9. Eases students to cooperate according to their interests	2.12	.53	4.83	.38
10. Gives opportunity to benefit from knowledge of other people by giving Hash tag about subjects that were not understood	2.00	.58	4.79	.41
11. Helps keeping information updated	2.12	.53	4.83	.38
12. Develops ability to make comment	2.00	.72	4.62	.49
Twitter Usage with Drop Box;				
13. Helps developing joint projects	1.95	.62	4.66	.48

14. Reaching course materials become easier	2.12	.61	4.75	.44
15. Makes sharing homework's/ projects easier	2.12	.61	4.75	.44
16. Provides enrichment of course materials	2.00	.65	4.62	.49
Twitter Usage with Wevideo;				
17. Sharing concepts through videos increases attention	2.04	.62	4.70	.46
18. Variety of video effects helps developing imagination	2.12	.61	4.70	.46
19. Helps learning editing while preparing homework's / projects	2.20	.50	4.79	.41
20. Provides learning concepts easier	2.12	.53	4.87	.33
Twitter Usage with ThingLing;				
21. Provides notions with images becoming more interesting	2.25	.44	4.83	.38
22. Provides learning while exploring	1.91	.65	4.70	.46
23. Provides reaching to general information from private information	2.08	.58	4.70	.46
24. Provides permanent learning	2.12	.53	4.75	.44

Table 1. Determining Students' Opinions Regarding the use of Twitter together with Mobile Applications for Educational Purposes

When Table 1 is examined, before the course, students expressed their opinion about using Twitter with mobile applications for educational purposes as "agree". Concurrent with our hypothesis, a significant difference occurred on students' opinions after this application and it reached the level of "strongly agree".

Table 2. Determining Significant Difference Regarding Mobile Application Usage with Twitter for Educational Purposes

	N	\bar{X}	SS	Df	T	p
Pre-test	24	2.07	.42	23	85.53	.000
Post-test	24	4.75	.27			

As it is seen in Table 2, there is a significant difference of the opinions of the students before and after the course ($t=85.53$, $p<0.05$). The students' opinions were at the level of "agree" before the course ($\bar{X}=2.07$, $SS=0.42$) and they reached the level of "strongly agree" ($\bar{X}=4.75$, $SS=0.27$) after the course. These findings indicate that, if Twitter is used with variety of mobile applications for educational purposes, this creates a positive effect on students.

6 Discussion

After 5 weeks of education, the students expressed that using Twitter for educational purposes makes following course notifications easier. In addition, to follow the course content, students stated that they could get a variety of information informally, and strengthen communication with the other students who took the same course. Students determined that they have the opportunity to receive their education whenever or wherever they want by using these mobile tools. This environment also strengthens communication between student and teacher. When they get instant notifications, students stated that their willingness to learn increased, and courses became more interesting. In

addition, they reported that it gave the opportunity to benefit from knowledge of other people by using the Hash tag (#) about subjects that were not understood. Therefore, Twitter is a platform that increases cooperation. Students also expressed that information can be kept up-to-date, and this is a platform that increases the ability to comment on current issues.

As a result of using Twitter with the Dropbox mobile application, students stated that it became easier to reach course materials and it provided the opportunity to develop joint projects. Students also determined that sharing course materials by using this application adds this environment richness and provides great convenience on sharing homework's and projects.

Regarding Twitter usage with Wevideo, students expressed that sharing concepts with this application helped increase the interest in the course, and it also helped develop their imagination by using variety of video effects - it made learning concepts easier. In addition, students determined that Wevideo gives an opportunity for editing while preparing homeworks or projects.

The opinions regarding the use of Twitter with ThingLing, an application that creates concepts with images, were that the concepts became more interesting and this allows for learning while exploring. Students also stated that information become permanent when they reached for general information from private information through this application. Borau, Ullrich, Feng & Shen (2009) suggest that Twitter usage for language learning purposes created positive effects on students. These findings are also supported by Lomicka & Lord's (2011) study. Junco et al. (2013) proposed that Twitter usage provides a positive increase in communication between students and in their course grades.

7 Conclusion and Future Studies

As a result of the findings in this present study, it can be suggested that Twitter usage along with mobile applications for the purpose of education can create a positive effect on students' opinions. The ability to 'follow' others on Twitter and the use of Twitter in synchrony with a variety of applications gives rise to a positive effect when designing educational mobile environments. According to student opinions, it can be said that if Twitter is used for educational purposes, communication between student and teacher increases, and communication with the other students around the world strengthens. Therefore, student sites will increase towards sharing information, and an environment will be provided as information will grow when it is shared. It can be said that, along with course tracking, the following of current information around the world can be attained. In addition, it can provide support for student's social and cultural development. As a result of Twitter having a structure that helps students reach their course content wherever they are, students can be informed about course announcements wherever they are. Twitter also has a structure that helps them communicate with the other students for cooperative studies, and both of these attributes are effective in the students' opinions. Using a variety of mobile applications can be effective in changing the structure of Twitter to a better teaching platform. The students in this study expressed that it helped improve their ability to make comments about course content and it helped reach educational materials through the Dropbox, Wevideo and ThingLink mobile applications. Furthermore, for those students who expressed that Twitter increases their interest and motivation towards the course, many course applications can be given through Twitter usage with different applications. As a result of using smart phones and tablets intensively, it is thought that not only Web tools, but also using mobile applications, can increase students' interest towards these environments. Therefore, further experimental studies should be made, using different social sites along with a variety of mobile applications and their effects on the students should be investigated.

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