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The most preferred social network sites by students

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Abstract

While social network sites share main aims of online communication and interaction, at the same time they vary according to sites in terms of main target and usage regulation. The aim of this study is to investigate the internet usage of students and also to learn which social network sites are preferred by the participants. The volunteer participant of this study consists of 52 undergraduate students. Literature survey was used to gather general information about background of the study and questionnaire was used to collect data and to find out the opinions of students about preferring social network sites. Also, frequency and percentage methods were used during the analysis process. The results of the study show that Live Spaces and Facebook social network sites are preferred by the participants.

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1. Introduction

Social network sites such as MySpace, Facebook, Windows Live Spaces, Orkut and Hi5 have attracted millions of users; many of them have integrated their daily practices with these sites. Therefore, by O'Reilly Media in 2004 for the first time put forward the concept of Web 2.0 has aim to provide that people interact with each other in a social environment. Thanks to Web 2.0 at the same time when people read the information within a network can communicate and exchange information with friends can make. Social networking, web-based services to individuals, depending on the system open to the public or semi-open to create profiles, communicate in the other list of users to express and communicate on the system where people with other people who see connections allow to have. This type of terminology and structure of communication networks may vary according to their website (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Individuals can use social communication networks for very different purposes. There are many social networking sites. Social networking sites, online interaction and communication at the same time sharing the main purpose and use of specific objectives in terms of layout may vary according to services. (Gross, Acquisti, 2005).

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Social Network Sites have applied a wide variety of technical features, their backbone includes of visible profiles that display an articulated list of Friends who are also users of the system. Profiles are unique pages where one can “type oneself into being” (Sunde'n, 2003). Joining a social network site, users are prompted to identify others in the system with whom they have a relationship. On the site-popular terms include Friends, Contacts and Fans. Most Social Network Sites require bi-directional confirmation for Friendship, but some do not. These one-directional ties are sometimes labeled as Fans or Followers, but many sites call these Friends as well. The term Friends can be misleading, because the connection does not exactly mean friendship in the everyday vernacular sense, and the reasons people connect are varied (Boyd, 2006).

The first social networking site in 1997, was founded with the same SixDegrees.com. This site were presented the opportunity to users create profiles and friends lists. In 1998, was allowed to surf on your friends list. Various ethnic groups in the years 1997- 2001 between personal, professional and they share their dating sites have emerged. In 1999 Live Journal, Asian Avenue, Black Planet, Lunar Storm; In 2000 Mi Gente; In 2001 Cyworld and Ryze; In 2002 Fotolog and Friendster, Skyblog; In 2003 Couchsurfing, LinkedIn, Tribe.net, Open BC/Xing, MySpace, Last.FM, Hi5, Orkut, Dogster; In 2004 Flickr, Piczo, Mixi, Facebook (only in Harvard University), Multiply, aSmallWorld, Dodgeball, Care2 (social network site was added), Catster, Hyves; In 2005 Yahoo!360, Youtube, Xanga, Cyworld, Bebo, Facebook (high school's network), AsianAvenue, BlackPlanet, in 2006 Facebook, Windows Live Spaces, Cyworld, Twitter, MyChurch were added. (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Actually MySpace has more mail messages than Google, Yahoo, or Hotmail, such as 50 million mail messages for each day, 14 billion comments on the site, and 10 billion friend relationships (Owyang, 2008). This is an important growth show that the Nielsen net ratings from 2006 nearly total of 68.6 million users of all Social Network Sites, with MySpace users comprising of 38.4 million of the Social Network Sites population. Facebook is the sixth most trafficked site in the United States and its active users becomes double every 6 months (Owyang, 2008). Because of social networks in terms of information sharing point, Sancez (2007) 18 – person user community with his study of social networks and learning in these environments were found to be more fun. According to the research of social networking tools just like traditional trainings methods to offer a virtual environment is proving to be. Except the study of cooperative learning activities, creative thinking and ensuring problem solving development skills was stressed (Crook, 2008).

2. Aim of the research

The aim of this study is to investigate the internet usage of students in the department of Computer Education Instructional Technology student, and also to learn which social network service the participants prefer. The study attempts to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the internet usage year's habits of students?
2. What are the internet usage hour's habits of students?
3. What are the internet usage type's habits of students?
4. What are the social networks usage habits of students?
5. Which social networks are mostly preferred?

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

The volunteer participants in this study consisted of 52 undergraduate students attending the Near East University in Northern Cyprus. 52 students from Department of Computer Education and Instructional Technologies (CEIT). The study was conducted during the 2008-2009 Summer term. Joined the study from students of CEIT are 10% female, 90% male. Akkoyunlu and Orhan (2003) stated that the majority of the students consist of males in Department of Computer Education and Instructional Technologies. Mostly males prefer to study in this department in Near East University. That's why most of the participants consist of males in this study. The mean age of participants was 21 years, ranging from 18-24. 17% of the participants (9 persons) are 18 years old. 37% of the students (19) are 19 years old. 12% of them (6) are 20 years old, 10% of them are (5) are 21 years old, 15% (8) of them are 22 years old. 7% of them (4) are 23 years old, and 2% of them (1) are 24 years old.

3.2. Instruments

The questionnaire was prepared to learn which social network sites are preferred by the participants. The questions about how many years students use internet and how many hours they use it in a day were asked to the students.

3.3. Data analysis

Data were collected using questionnaire. After that SPSS 16.0 was used to analyzed and interpret the collected data. Frequency, crosstabs and percentage methods were used during the analysis process.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Internet used years

According to the Figure 1, %2 of the students have been using the internet for a years, 2% of the usedents have been used it for two years. 2% of the students have been used it for 3 years, and 92% of them have been used for 4 years. Results show that 92% of the participants have been used the internet for more than 4 years.this results also show that internet play an important role in our life. When the internet use is examined in the world, it is seen that 1,733,993,741 people use the internet (WIUS, 2009).

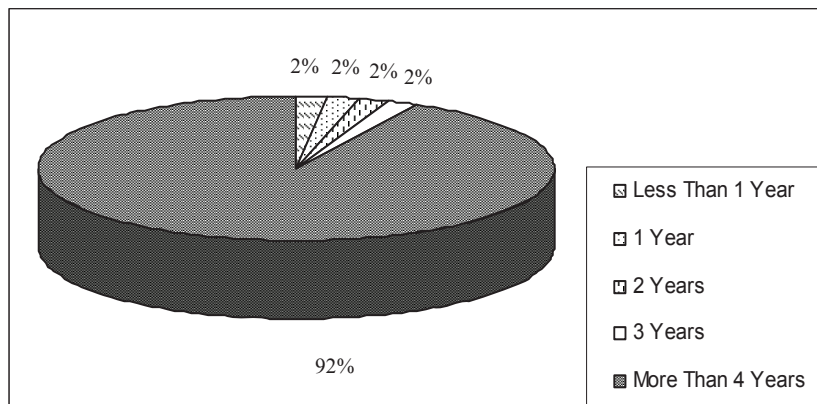


Figure 1. Distribution of internet used years

4.2. Internet used hours/day

According to the Figure 2, 4% of the participants use internet less than one hour in a day, 6% of them use internet one hour in a day, 10% of them use the internet two hours in a day, 15% of them use the internet three hours in a day, 65% of them use the internet more than four hours in a day.when the results are examined, it is seen that most of the participants 65% use the internet more than 4 hours in a day. Results also show that most of young people spend most of their times in the internet.

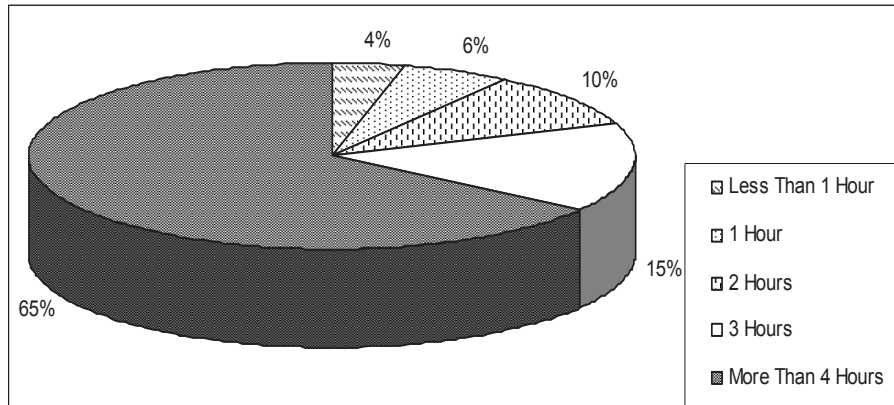


Figure 2. Distribution of internet used hours/day

4.3. Internet type

Figure 3 shows that 12% of the participants use Dial-up connection, 57% of them use ADSL, 19% of them use Wireless, and 12% of them use 3G to connect the internet. When the results are examined it is seen that most of the participants 57% use ADSL to connect the internet. The reason of this is that ADSL has higher speed than Dial-up. It is thought that The reason why 3G is not be preferred in TRNC is that 3G is not used in all the area and it has been started to use newly in TRNC.

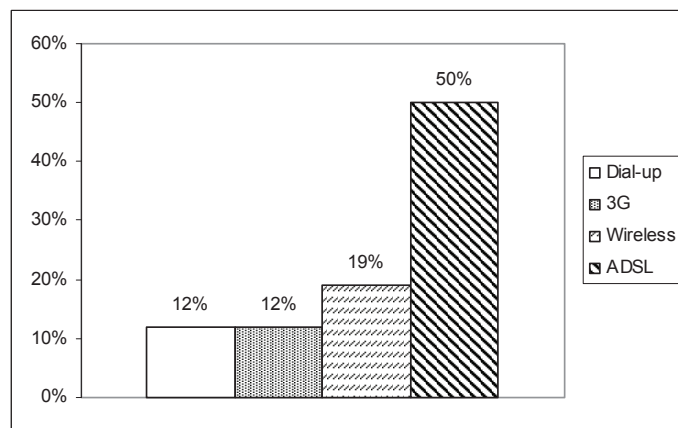


Figure 3. Distribution of internet type

4.4. Social networks used

As indicated in Figure 4, 38% of the participants use Live Spaces, 11% of them use My Space , 12% of them use Hi5, 38% use Facebook and 1% of them use Orkut from social services Sites. When the results are examined, it is seen that Live Spaces and Facebook are used in equal rates. The results shows that participants mostly prefer to use Live Spaces and Facebook when they want to share something. Results of the study indicate that it can be seen that a large majority of the students use the social networks the majority of them chose to use the facebook and Live Spaces. Cetin (2009) stated that students use Facebook since it has fun. According to the information given from Facebook, at the end of 2009 year, there will be an estimated 350 million active users of Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>). The usage reason of Live Spaces as much as facebook is Hotmail Service. Because Cavus and Bicen (2009) found out in their study that students of Near East University mostly use hotmail e-mail service.

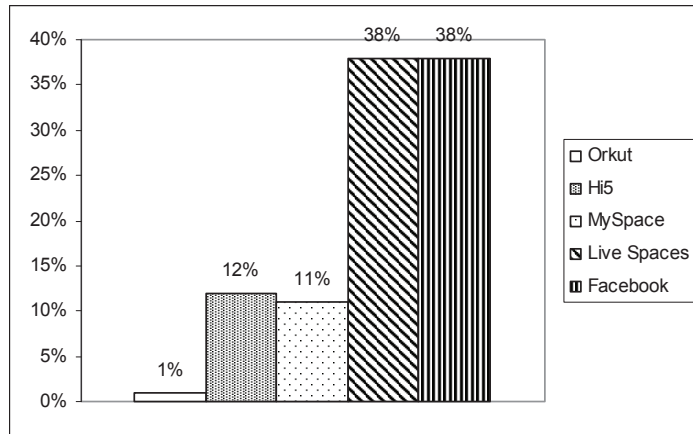


Figure 4. Distribution of social networks

4.5. The most preferred social network service

According to the Table 1, participant using Dial-up connection prefer Live Spaces social network service (5 persons). Secondly Facebook and Hi5 social network service is preferred in equal rates (3 persons). The less preferred social network service is MySpace (1 person). Participant using ADSL connection mostly use Facebook (26 persons) than Live Spaces (23 persons) social network services. While Hi5 and MySpace social network services are preferred by ADSL users, Orkut social network service is the least preferred service by the participant (1 person). Participant using Wireless connection prefer Live Spaces and Facebook social network services in equal rates (9 persons). Secondly MySpace (4 persons) and Hi5 (2 persons) social network services are preferred. Participants using 3G prefer Live Spaces (6 persons), Facebook (5 persons), MySpace (3 persons) and at least Hi5 (1 person) social network services.

Table 1. The most preferred social network service

	Live Spaces (f)	MySpace (f)	Hi5 (f)	Facebook (f)	Orkut (f)
Dial-up	5	1	3	3	0
ADSL	23	5	8	26	1
Wireless	9	4	2	9	0
3G	6	3	1	5	0

5. Conclusion and future studies

The effects of development are mostly seen in informatics and technology fields. Most of the people use social network sites in their daily lives for years. Especially internet use and sharing knowledge on the internet play an important role in our lives. However the speed and type of the internet is very important. It is ratherly clear that Facebook and Livespaces are commonly used. The popularity of Facebook and Hotmail and Messenger tools of Livespace make them mostly used Social Network Services. Studies should be made on how these social networks take place and are used in education. Contributions of social networks to education should be supported with theoretical studies and more academic studies should be made about how they are used to guide the teacher. Researchers plan to make studies on these issues.

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