

Youth and social media: a study on the use of social media by the new entrants in the Faculty of Dental Sciences, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

W.G.A. Dharmarathne*

Main Library, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

**ajanthad@pdn.ac.lk*

Social media performs a pivotal role in every aspect of human life in the modern information world. The main purpose of this study is to examine the way in which social media is used by the new entrants in the faculty of Dental Sciences, University of Peradeniya, specifically the way it is used for educational purposes. All new entrants registered in the academic year 2015/2016 were selected for the study. Even though there were 85 students registered in the Dental Science library, only 75 new entrants participated in the survey. The study was carried out in February 2016, while a questionnaire that consisted of open and close ended questions was used as the main data gathering tool

The results revealed that 80% of the new entrants have been using Facebook accounts followed by Skype (37.3%), Twitter (18.7%) and Instagram (16%) as their favorite social media sites. In terms of privacy and security of their accounts, 77.3% of respondents maintained controlled accounts. Only authorized friends and relatives were permitted to view their accounts. However, 22.7% of respondents did not have an idea about the privacy and security of their accounts. Of the new entrants, 65.3% had not included their parents in the friends' list but 34.7% participants had included their parents. Nearly half of the respondents (48%) opened their accounts daily while 12% did so once a week. Fifty eight percent (58%) of new entrants rarely posted on their accounts while 24% of respondents posted once a week.

Majority of (88%) the respondents were in the view that social media helps to maintain better relationships with their friends, while 43% said that social media is one of the good platforms that helps to maintain better relationship with their family and close relatives. According to the results of the survey, 66% the respondents expressed that maintaining social media accounts is a time consuming matter while 28% expressed that social media behavior adversely affects their studies.

Entertainment was the top reason for using social media by the new entrants followed by accessing information on science, culture and sports. Many students (54.7%) had been extensively using social media for studying purposes during their Advanced Level examination period. Findings established that most of the dental Science new entrants had an adequate awareness on particular types of social media. The results confirmed that even though there are numerous types of social media available online, only few types are popular among new entrants of the Dental Science faculty of University of Peradeniya.