A survey on internet use among university undergraduates

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The internet is considered the most vital technological development in the 20th century due to its impact on teaching, learning and research. In tandem with this technological boost, the government of Sri Lanka has invested significantly to increase the usage of ICT through many programmes. University authorities in Sri Lanka are also making tremendous efforts to improve ICT infrastructure in their institutions. Under this setting, the study aims to identify the level of penetration of internet usage among undergraduate students, in the case of South Eastern University of Sri Lanka. A questionnaire survey among randomly selected 15% (n= 289) students of the Faculty of Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (FIA) and the Faculty of Arts and Culture (FAC) was employed in this case study. The results demonstrated that most of the students (92%) use the internet consistently and the great majority of them (FAC-75% and FIA-79%) have a history of using the internet for more than 4 years. Respondents of FIA (69%) and FAC (61%) have learned to use internet tools by themselves. Similarly 65% of the students of FAC and 72% of FIA search the internet from their own tablet computers or smart phones. However, in both Faculties accessing the internet for academic purposes remained low. Google is the most popular search engine for 79% of the students followed by Yahoo (43%). Moreover, 82% use Yahoo email service and 71% mentioned Wikipedia as the major source of academic information. In both faculties 76% use the internet on a daily basis. These numbers indicate that policies and infrastructure should be immediately introduced, implemented and established University wide by providing more access points and promoting services among the undergraduates. In summary, the research indicates that this Net-savvy young group under study appears to be immersed in new technology that traditional education is not endowed with. Thus, it is recommended to introduce an information literacy component in each degree programme to train students to effectively use the internet and related ERs. However, a widespread survey is of a dire necessity to understand the level of internet penetration in the lives of undergraduates in tertiary education.