

The Impact of Social Media on Higher Education: A Case Study of CeL

Ilinca Poliana

Abstract: *One of the defining phenomena of the present times is Social Media. Social media attracts online technologies and practices that people use to share content, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives, and media themselves. It is called Social Media because its users engage with and around it in a social context, which can include conversations, commentary and other user-generated annotations and engagement annotations; it is a way for people to communicate and interact online. The growth of social media and other Web 2.0 technologies is unprecedented (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). On the other hand, traditional printed media have seen their impact decreasing slowly with the introduction of online and social media, which have changed the world in many ways. There are a few important features regarding both traditional media and new media, such as: media experience is limited, one directional, and the sense receptors used are very specific. For example: print media - sense of sight, radio - sense of hearing and TV - sight and hearing. As for the New Media, media experience is more interactive, audiences are more involved and can send feedback simultaneously; it integrates all the aspects of old media. It is an integral part of everyone's life. Social Media gave people a voice, something to believe in, it empowered them to express their feelings and share their thoughts. Even if they had a slow start in adopting social media, universities worldwide use it for purposes varying from marketing and branding, to communication and recently, as an*

informal educational tool. Keeping in mind the main purposes of improving instant communication, reaching and engaging more people, is how universities use social media. In the eLearning Center case study, it is used for marketing, communication and improving the image of distance education.

Keywords: *social media, connection, audience, feedback, click.*

1. Introduction

Social Media has changed the world completely, we are all connected; it has brought such radical changes; it can connect and reconnect people just with the hit of a click.

Social media is a term that is broadly used to describe any number of technological systems related to collaboration and community (Joosten, 2012). While it appears that a specific definition may be elusive (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), social media is often described by example. Social networking sites, blogs, wikis, multi-media platforms, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds are among the applications typically included in recent illustrations (Barnes & Lescault, 2011; McEwan, 2012).

Communication is defined as an act or an instance of communicating; the imparting or exchange of information, ideas, or feelings. (Collins, 2009). Communication involves the transfer of meaning or information from one person or group to others. (Baack, 2012).

The visibility of Social Media is growing constantly in higher education, as social media is an essential and viable source in day-to-day communication, and my aim was to discover how students interact with it, with its channels and other means of communication during the university admission process.

“Social Media (web.2.0) should not be seen primarily as the platforms upon which people post, but rather as the contents that are posted on these platforms.” (Miller, 2016)

Nowadays, Web.2.0 or Social Media as an entity have become embedded in our everyday lives and according to (Miller, 2016) they are now seen as commonplace and pervasive, used by a wide range of individuals and institutions from all walks of life.

The past years have brought significant growth in technology and have created new possibilities for social media regarding education and other fields. Due to Social Media expansion, institutions are now transitioning from traditional learning and expanding their curricula towards the New Media.

Undoubtedly, the speed of change and immediacy of technology have remodelled media and communication, creating the false impression that social media has been with us since the beginning of time, while Facebook was launched only in 2004, Twitter in 2006, and Instagram in 2010.

When we think about social media, we think about a large variety of information or any type of content, so my research will contain mostly student testimonials regarding social media content and usage.

The use of social media can facilitate the communication between individuals because it is just a click away, and it can also help students working on something that requires the use of the New Media.

However, as I deepened into my research regarding social media, I identified pros and cons to it. While some believe that any type of technology can harm us and destroy traditions - in our case, demolish traditional learning, there are others who believe in building a bridge between technology and traditional concepts of learning.

“Think about what people are doing on Facebook today. They’re keeping up with their friends and family, but they’re also building an image and identity for themselves, which in a sense is their brand. They’re connecting with the audience that they want to connect to. It’s almost a disadvantage if you’re not on it now.” – Mark Zuckerberg, Founder, Facebook

Statistics show that there are over 2.8 billion social media users worldwide who use social media for education, communication or other purposes.



Here is what I found about the pioneers of social media: Facebook (2.01 billion monthly users) - by far the most used platform for both social and educational purposes, Twitter (328 million monthly users) and Instagram (this social media platform has quickly become a trend among social media users) (source: Digital Insights, 2016)

In conclusion, Social Media (or should we call it Revolution Media?) has changed the way we do business, interact or communicate every day. My goal was to identify as much valid data while following the status and impact of social media.

2. The Visibility of the eLearning Center regarding social media in education

In what follows, I will emphasize the visibility of the Center and the volume of interaction on social channels/platforms among students.

Moodle is one of the most used open-source e-learning platforms and because of that, it has been adapted in order to guarantee and ensure access of the enrolled students to online courses.

The Virtual Campus is a Moodle platform, whose features have been reshaped and enriched for use in UPT. It allows the exchange of information between students from different geographical points, via

Internet, through synchronous and asynchronous mechanisms of communication (chats, discussions forum, etc.).

To better understand it, its main features are presented below:

Activity	Module	Description
Creation	Database	allows to build, display and search a bank of record entries about any topic; allows to share a collection of data;
Organization	Lessons	lessons represent a set of ordered topics summarizing the instructional materials and allow access through the corresponding link;
Delivery	Assignments	allow teachers to collect work from students; allow teachers to evaluate the students' work and provide feedback including grades, in a private mode; allow students to upload assignment files
	Workshops	represent a peer assessment activity with many options; allow students to submit their work via an online text tool and attachments;
Communication	Chats	allow synchronous conversation;
	Forums	represent a communication tool where students and teachers can exchange ideas by posting comments
	News	represent a special forum for general announcements; allow teachers to add posts and to send emails;
Collaboration	Glossary	allows creating and maintaining a list of definitions; represents a mechanism for collaborative activities that can be restricted to entries made by the teacher;
	Wikis	allow users to edit collaborative Web pages; provide space for collaborative work;
Assessment	Choice	allows teachers to ask questions and specify multiple choice answers; represents a useful mechanism to stimulate thinking about a topic;

	Quiz	allows teachers to design and build quizzes with a variety of questions, with different types of answers, such as multiple choice, true/false, short answer;
	Feedback	allows teachers to create surveys to collect feedback;
Reusability*	SCORM	represent specifications that enable interoperability, accessibility and reusability of the learning content; represent tools that enable SCORM packages to be included in the course;
	External tools	enable interaction with compliant learning resources (e.g. Learning Tools Interoperability) and activities on other Web sites; provide access to new activity types or materials.

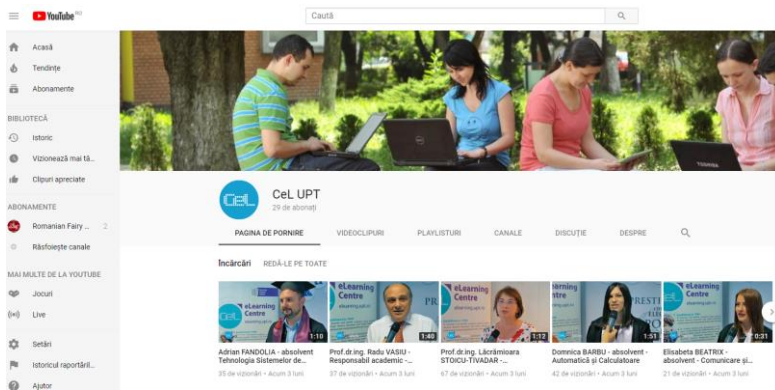
3. Case study: The e-Learning Center campaign for candidates for distance education

The history of higher education can be traced back to ancient Greece, where Plato founded his academy roughly 2,400 years ago. At that time, however, and for the next 1,400 years or so, higher education was limited to a precious few. Only in the Middle Ages did larger scale universities begin to appear in Bologna (1088) and in Paris, where the Sorbonne was founded in 1150 (Kaplan, 2016).

My study case consisted in recording data about how the eLearning Center ensured credibility and visibility during the campaign for attracting new students and during the admission period.

I conducted my research towards the online channels, social platforms and discovered that no less than 41,017 people reached on Facebook during the admission period and there were more than 10 newspapers and online publications that wrote about this subject in particular, not to mention other resources that provided information about this event.

Our team ensured and maintained communication permanently with potential students, successfully guiding them throughout the admission process.



These are just two of the multitude of examples regarding the Center's activity in social media.

In the end, I would like to add which solution I think is suitable for better visibility of the admission to UPT. The solution that I find the

most appealing is to create an Instagram account where we will provide students with updated content regarding student life, the admission and other interesting topics.

Another suggestion is to show our students how simple it is to operate in the Virtual Campus and how they can use the platform for better efficiency and communication.

I will provide further data of what I have encountered during my research in my dissertation paper.

4. Conclusions

Based on the theoretical aspects presented in the documentation sources I consulted, I conducted a research on how students react towards the admission.

I managed to do that by observing the content and the way it is made popular on Facebook, Twitter and other social platforms, networks and sources.

Further on in my research, I will also provide data about student testimonials and other significant findings.

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