



## Social Media Usage Patterns Among University Students In Urban Lahore

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### Abstract

Social media have transformed the communication patterns on a wider scale at the dawn of this century at an increasing speed. There is a need to measure these patterns on regular basis to research the shift in cultural transformation. The current study aims to find the overall social media usage patterns, the selection of media for using Facebook, use of Facebook to communicate with social relations and the mass media as reasons for Facebook use among university students. By using purposive sampling method the students were selected from two educational institutes in Lahore (N=500). The study had used quantitative approach of cross-sectional survey. All the university students were found to be using Facebook but majority was also using WhatsApp and YouTube. Smart phone was found to be prominent medium for Facebook use. Majority of university students were using Facebook for the motive of communicating with friends rather than communicating with the family.

**Keyword:** *Social Media, Facebook, Smart Phone, Social Relations, Mass Media*

### Introduction

The social media have transformed the social relations. The offline ritual of friendship making and communicating with the family e.g. parents, grand-parents, brothers, sisters or spouse has changed. These changes in fact were unimaginable a few

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decades ago when there was only one state owned channel in context of Pakistani culture. The viewers used to wait for the selected television programs like *Alif Laila* and *Ainak Wala Jin*. But after 2000 in the 21st century there was a free flow of information with the agenda and slogan of enlightened moderation of the then military dictator of Pakistan which definitely has ensured the media pluralism for multiple voices but at the same time the social media started altering the social communication patterns. Latter, smart phone joined the social media for the cumulative effect.

It is observed that the face to face interpersonal communication patterns are now vanishing in the presence of 24/7 access to internet. Always on quality of the internet which “exacerbate the pressure to participate on an ongoing basis to avoid missing out” (James & Jenkins, 2014, p.84). This quality has also enabled the “web-based” digital technological applications e.g. social networking sites and the Facebook in particular to facilitate individuals to make and build networks (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p.211).

It is true that the public today is mediated sphere because media can bridge the temporal, spatial, and topical diversity (Schrape, 2016, p.4). Today the mass media or one-to-many is replaced by the internet which has contributed to meso-media or many-to-many. Hence, the web 2.0 is considered torch bearer for the evolution of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p.61). Social media is any site involving user-generated content and the few of its forms are blogs; micro blogs like twitter; messageboards and forums; social networks like Facebook; Wikis and

media sharing platforms like YouTube and Flickr (Miller, 2009, p.12). Among these social media, the social networking site of Facebook is growing with popularity. There were found to be monthly active users of 1.86 million, 1.15 billion daily mobile active users and the most common age demographic were explored between the ages of 25 and 34; 50% of 18-24 year olds had logged on when they had wake up and there were 16 million local business Facebook pages (“Top 20 Facebook Statistics” 2017). These few facts are the proof for the greater impact of Facebook social networking in the past five years.

Emerging adulthood group between the ages of 18 and 25 years is the early adulthood. In this particular stage of life the individuals try to find a sense of their self-worth and this is done by exploring possibilities of love along with work opportunities and world outlook (Arnett, 2000, p.469). People aged 18 to 24 were reported to disproportionately use online communication methods with the freedom of living on their own and these were those people who did not have the social pressures e.g. family of their own or a career (Bumgarner 2007).

Lahore is the center for educational institutes and students have 24/7 access to the Wi-Fi in majority of educational institutes. The cell phone packages are now available and increase the velocity of social media use among youth. The attraction through billboard, television and online pop-up advertisements for small message service packages and smart-phones is maintaining the momentum for Facebook use. This accessibility has the privileges of right to free flow of information and freedom of expression. The age group (18-25) is now socialized into virtual

environment of Facebook in Pakistan. This social networking site assists them in self-exploration and the self-presentation with the peer, class fellows and friends. When it comes to Pakistan there were 31 million active social media users found and 28 million had accessed social media on their mobile-phones (“The Digital Landscape of Pakistan” 2017). Fastest growing pages on Facebook in Pakistan were found to be of Atif Aslam, Pakistan Television Network Sports; Abdur Razzaq Yaquoub News; *siasatnews.pk*, PkTube, Daily Ausaf, Pakistan Times, Dr. Najeeb, SooperChef, Bulbuly-ARY and BB ki Vines (“Most popular Facebook pages in Pakistan,” 2018). These pages reflect that people are using the Facebook pages for diverse gratifications of different genres of political and entertainment programming. A study in Pakistan was conducted for “preferred source of news in the social and traditional media among Pakistani university students”; 67% students were found to be spending more than four hours on social media and 25% on the traditional media (Zulqarnain, 2017, p.1).

It was observed that Facebook and WhatsApp were becoming more popular in Lahore especially at educational campuses. The students had used them even during lectures while in class rooms, libraries, in computer labs and study rooms. This network can range from social relations like friends, family and group communication among students. This social networking site has become a ritual of discussion about friends. The students are also observed to be spy on their classfellows or newly made friends.

The current study bridges the gap of social media research in Pakistan by focusing university students and describes the Facebook use, WhatsApp, You, Twitter and Instagram use. Secondly it sketches the factors (e.g. smart phone, lap top, friends, family, television, newspaper, radio and magazine) for Facebook use.

The students are not only using Facebook but also the other social media. They select different media for Facebook use. The Facebook users also use Facebook to keep in touch with close relations like friends and family. These students also use Facebook because of mass media because mass media in their programs often give their Facebook address to like their pages. It is aimed to research these phenomena with statistics.

RQ1. To what extent do university students use social media?

RQ2. Which media do university students prefer for Facebook use?

RQ3. For which social relations do university students use Facebook to communicate with?

RQ4. Do university students use Facebook because of mass media?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The uses and gratifications theory serves as the theoretical framework for the study. The comparison between activity and activeness leads towards relative concept of active audience in uses and gratifications theory (Baran & Davis, 2011) which has been applied to social media in recent history. Activity and activeness are related but the former refers more to what audience does (i.e. e.g. using different features of Facebook or preferring

one feature of Facebook over other) – and the latter is more what the uses-and-gratifications audiences had in minds (p.253) or the motives for friendship or communicating with family. The motive is the basic characteristic that affects people action in order to satisfy their needs (Shahnaz & Wok, 2011, p.4). US respondents had responded to have 200-350 friends (Sheldon, 2008) and Canadian students had a network of 297 friends (Christofides, et al., 2009).

## Results

**Table 1:** *Social Media Usage Patterns (N=460)*

	<b>Variables</b>	<i>f</i>	%
Social Media Use	Facebook	460	100
	WhatsApp	433	94
	YouTube	402	87
	Instagram	263	57
	Twitter	220	48
Media Selection for Facebook Use	Smartphone	283	62
	Lap top	177	38
Facebook use to communicate with social relations	Friends	383	83
	Family	77	17
Mass media as reasons for Facebook use	Television	189	41
	Newspaper	161	35
	Magazine	82	18
	Radio	28	6

RQ1. To what extent do university students use social media?

## **Journal of Media Studies 36(2)**

All the university students had used Facebook (100%). They were also using WhatsApp (94%) and YouTube (87%) dominantly. Comparatively, minimum number of students were using Instagram (57%) and Twitter (48%).

RQ2. Which media do university students prefer for Facebook use?

62% students had preferred the smart phone for Facebook use  
38% had also preferred lap top.

RQ3. For which social relations do university students use Facebook to communicate with?

Majority of university students with the percentage 83% had used Facebook to communicate with friends and only 17% had used it to communicate with family.

RQ4. Do university students use Facebook because of mass media?

The university students use Facebook for making friends but among mass media the television is the reason for using Facebook and 41% had said that the television was the reason for Facebook use. 35% were of the opinion that newspapers are the reason for Facebook use. Only 18% were of the opinion that magazines are the reason for Facebook use and the least percentage of 6% were of the opinion that radio was the reason for Facebook use.

## **Discussion**

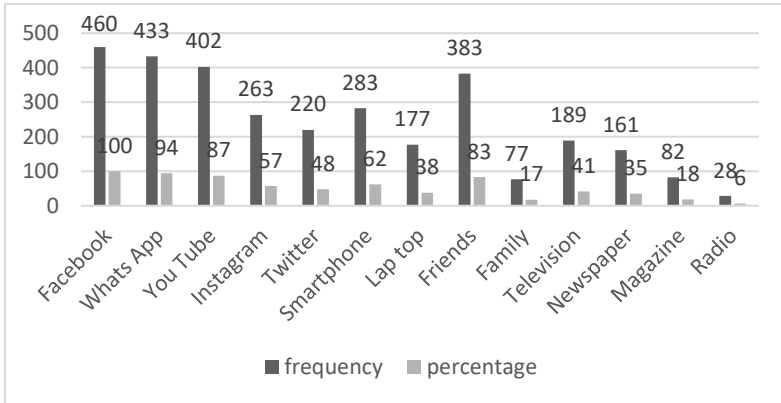


Figure. Social Media Usage Patterns

All the University students in Pakistan who were studying in the Lahore city were using Facebook. This social networking site is still the mostly used social media platform. Majority of them were also using WhatsApp and YouTube. The Facebook was not the only social media platform as university students in Pakistan had access to other social media sites so the future research in Pakistan should not focus only on Facebook but on the social media by including the sites of WhatsApp and YouTube to better explain the picture for correlation studies.

The smart phone was found to be the most prominent factor for Facebook use. The smart phone is mobile, because of this mobility it can be taken anywhere. It is easy to carry in terms of its weight and connectivity made even more possible and accessible with the help of internet. With the smart phone in hand, Facebook, What App and YouTube are at mobility because of 24/7 connectivity of internet.

Communicating with friends was found to be the most prominent factors when compared to communicating with family for Facebook use. The results clearly indicate the presence of web



and its adoption among youth today. In the case of the researched sample of university students it is observed a shift from traditional communication of communicating with family on Facebook to new modes of communication of social media with the increasing use of Facebook over smart phone for friendship. The clusters around smart phone and the mobility associated with it may cause problems. These problems may include the immobility of students with consequences of less offline social interaction with the family and using less traditional mass media of television and radio.

Television viewing two decades ago was a strong family ritual but today youth are observed with their bent necks over the screens of smart phones even when they are watching television with family. They are commenting, liking, sharing and waiting for the notifications on Facebook and WhatsApp. In fact there are limitless activities on this palm top called smart phone. Students today can use this smart phone for social networking on Facebook, Instagram, video watching on YouTube and messaging e.g smart phone messaging with cell phone packages, WhatsApp messaging, Facebook messenger. There are maximum chances that the time spent with the smart phone and social media and Facebook in particular is increasing. This has an impact which needs future consideration about students' health and academic performance.

Majority of university students for the study were in their emerging adulthood stage and were between the ages of 18 and 24 years (87%). In this age they often seek love, work opportunities and want to see the world from their own self-

styled perspective (Arnett, 2000) and the motive of communicating with friends for Facebook use is an indicator of seeking love, discussion for work opportunities and finding friends to share their self-related inner and outer worlds.

The study had used descriptive statistics and was exploratory in nature but has potential for the future studies to explain with the help of inferential statistics the transforming nature of media and evolving patterns of communication in contexts of time spent with the social mobile media e.g. use of smart phone with the applications of Facebook, Whata App.

#### Conclusion

Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube were found to be the mostly used online social media platforms among university students. The smart phone was found to be the dominant factor for Facebook use. The motive of communicating with friends was found to be the prominent factor for Facebook use and there was less communication with family on Facebook. The use of Facebook with the help of smart phone use to communicate with friends means that university students are likely to consume more time on Facebook and less time for family which the students have to check.

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## Journal of Media Studies 36(2)

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**Journal of Media Studies 36(2)**

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