

Two Approaches to Collaborative Learning Through Social Media Microblogging

Team

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Goals

This project had two goals. First, to examine the use of Twitter as a tool for professionalization and community engagement within various types of classrooms. And secondly, to examine current use of social media by students.

Of particular interest is how perceived engagement and professionalization occurs across several variables: disparate student demographics, academic level of the program students are enrolled in, the classification of the institution, and the goals of the implementation of social media in the learning context.

Method

Chaseten Remillard at Royal Roads University and Tyler Nagel at SAIT in Calgary, each used Twitter as an engagement and professionalization tool in their classrooms during the Winter 2016 semester.

Each educator used a different technique. Chase's approach was to use microblogging as a classroom discussion tool, and Tyler's approach was to use microblogging to develop real-world skills and personal branding. Both educators strove to increase student engagement through the use of these tools. Students were surveyed at the end of the semester to gauge the success of the project in each approach. The surveys contained questions as to the students' previous use of social media, their use of social media during the course, and their perceptions about how social media use in the classroom affected their learning.

The data generated through the project can be examined through a number of variables:

- SAIT vs. RRU
- Two year diploma vs. four year degree vs. master's program
- Age of participants
- Goals of the educator

Conclusions

The data show that based on such diverse habits of social media usage among students, there will be no one-size-fits-all solution to implementing social media in a classroom. The approach to social media must include consideration of the current abilities and habits of students and must include scaffolding mechanisms to bridge from personal use of these tools to appropriate classroom, and eventual professional, use of social media.

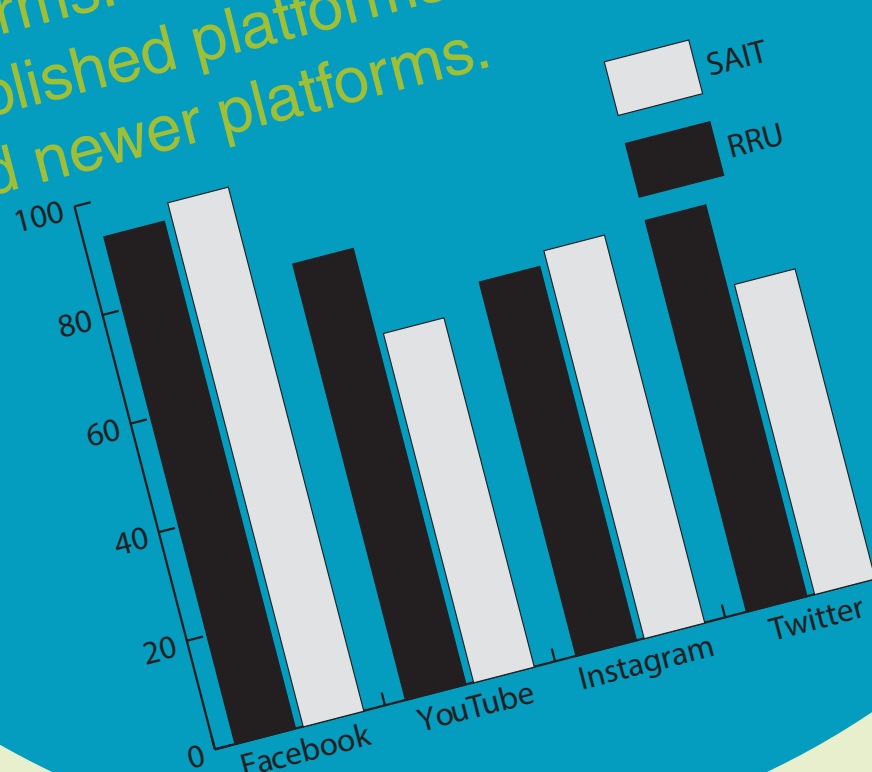
The analysis is still in its very early stages. So far, we have focused on identifying important differences in the social media habits of various student populations. The next steps will be to examine the data to better understand how social media can be used to facilitate communication, achieve course outcomes, and increase classroom engagement and rapport.

Preliminary Results

Sixty-two survey responses were completed across three programs delivered at two institutions. The surveys each had 45 questions, and are the basis of an important dataset on the social media habits, preferences, and reactions to social media use in classroom contexts. The researchers are still compiling and processing the data, but already some interesting findings have emerged. We present some of these findings below.

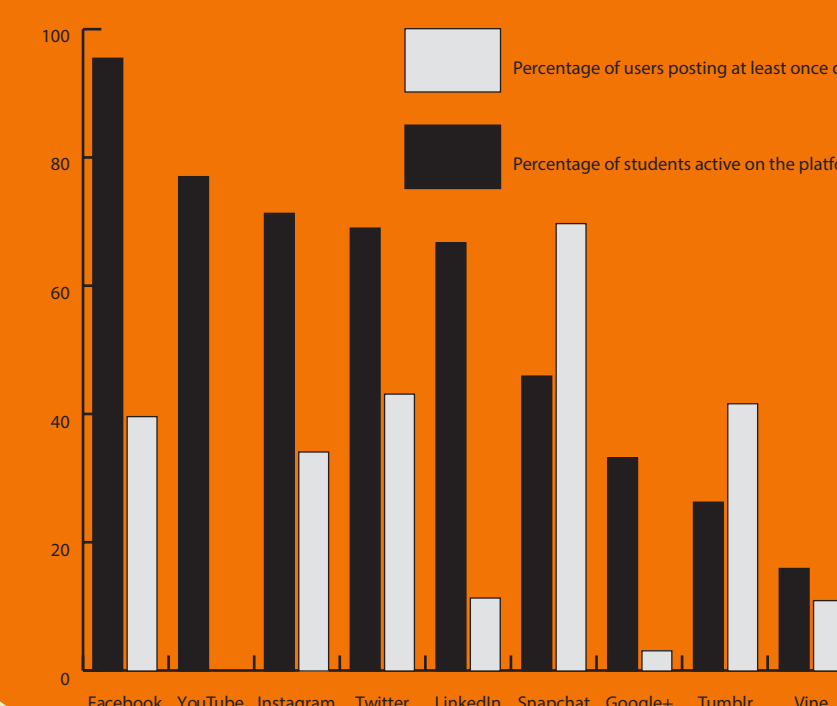
Institutional Differences

Distinct differences emerged between SAIT and RRU students' use of social media platforms. RRU students used older, more established platforms while SAIT students used newer platforms.



Creators vs. Consumers

The platforms used by students varied greatly in terms of how frequently students posted their own content as opposed to consuming content posted by other users.



Program Level

Usage varied significantly based on program level of the students. Masters students favored professional networks like LinkedIn, for example, while diploma students were uniquely active on Snapchat.

