ASSISTED LEARNING THROUGH FACEBOOK:
A Case Study of Universitas Terbuka's Students Group Communities in Jakarta, Taiwan And Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes and give insight about the use of Facebook to assist learning in Jakarta and several countries outside Indonesia.

There are so many problems that will arise based on the factual sight such users tend to find difficulties in searching, analyzing and accessing information that they need, particularly materials in their academic life. This paper explores how social network site (Facebook) has the potential to creating new resource in information and technology to assist learning in groups for finding information needs and also in distance learning system of Universitas Terbuka's students who live in Jakarta, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Generally, most of students are working from Monday to Friday and even on Saturday and Sunday, they really have problems in having face to face tutorial or even try to get information about their academic life. This paper was conducted with several communities of Facebook groups, the result showed that they specifically used Facebook group to assist them to finish their academic life such as tasks, examination, group discussion or even information.

As the most popular social network in Indonesia, Facebook which accessible, effective and efficient is one of many communities to assist students in making new friends and tutors as well as keeping in touch with information on upcoming events, competitions, seminars, library announcements, new books materials, registration, online tutorial, webinar, examination and other general information.

Keywords: Facebook, assisted learning, social media, Universitas Terbuka.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, Facebook as social networking site is one of the popular sites among Twitter, Google +, Plurk, MySpace, Flicker, YouTube, LinkedIn,Multiply and blog, where everyone can find their friends, discussing, sharing and communicating through social media in internet.

This interactive site allows everyone with no limit and space to get and stay in touch with many people. Especially many institution, schools, communities and information centers take the benefit from Facebook to communicate with their users and other people. In Indonesia, there are several groups of students that have Facebook group page and profile to communicate, maintain, share and give information about academic life.This group page on Facebook will keep students stay in touch with information on upcoming events, competitions, seminars, announcements, new books materials and other general information.

This significant resource can also access important links, search library access and some important databases from its formal and informal within the page. This paper tries to examine if social network site (Facebook) has the potential to creating new resource in information and social networking system especially for students who really have limited time to socialize in real world because of their busy activities of working and also far from their place to their daily life.

SOCIAL NETWORKING SYSTEM AS ASSISTED LEARNING

The development of web site is currently increasing significantly. Starting from the Web 1.0 era, which is a web site that only shows the information statically or often called a read-only websites. Next to the Web 2.0 era, which is a web site that can display information and also provides features that make visitors or users can contribute content to participate actively in it, it is often referred as read-write web. Web 2.0 and user generated content are really focused on user-oriented, which make easier for users to use the web site effectively without have to learn specifically about metadata. Based on the development of Web 2.0, one of the implementations is in the form of social networking sites. It changed the order and the way human work in daily life on internet. This can be seen with the use of Facebook, Twitter, Plurk, YouTube, Fupei, MySpace, Flicker, Meebo and many others. All members of social networking sites can be actively involved in the sending status, writing, editing, sharing, discussion, comment, rank, chatting, uploading photos, audios and videos.

So all information can spread very rapidly and expanded only in a second and visitors or users will easily get feedback for everything they do on these social networking sites.

The social networking site allows anyone to share data and information very simply, making it easier for everyone to give each other opinions and discuss the data and information that shared by others. This of course would be very simple if there is one common interest among members of social networking sites and then formed what is called community or group.

In the scientific and academic world, almost all the result of knowledge, learning resources and research created in the various forms of written publications, such as books, scientific writing, journals, articles, magazines, research reports, etc. The dissemination of information can be done through many ways in internet, especially with social networking system such as Facebook that really popular among students in Indonesia.

Ideally, by using social networking technologies, tutor or institution can be more innovative and alive with created the social networking site such Facebook as media for learning resource. With the characteristics of Web 2.0 technologies by the social networking site, it should be a model to change from centralized to decentralized. The active participation of its members which are not just talking about their daily life or education, it even more as a group of science-specific interest groups, discussion, communication, brainstorming that could provide knowledge and help students to understand each other.

Hui-fang (2009) mentions that as an information resource at least it has 5 characteristics and features, they are:

- Media storage of digital documents that are physically getting smaller, but the quantity of stored data growing.
- Broad distribution
- No need to copy the documents or data, because any reader can read the same document simultaneously in real time
- Supported by the device and additional devices such as network communication lines, tower/antenna catcher network frequency,
- Facilitating information retrieval to facilitate the reader in search of any data or digital documents such as title, author, keyword search and others.
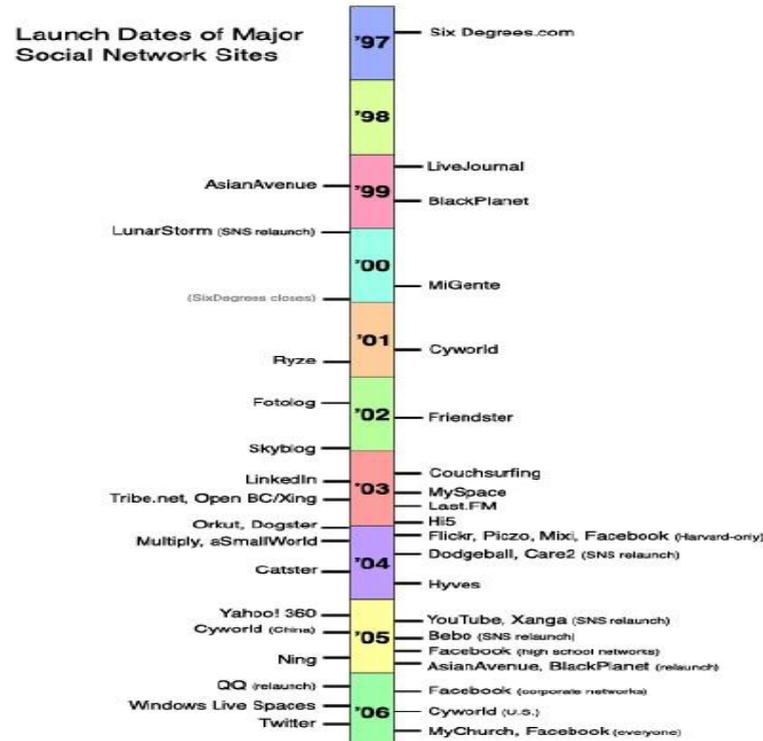

Figure: 1
History of social network sites (Boyd & Ellison, 2008)

Web 2.0 technologies currently allow for the distributed model in the development of learning resources, such as data entry of urgent and new information such as subjects, books, journals, papers, and it is not the main task of lecturer or administration staff, but users or members who have information can post or upload it. Anyone can contribute and participate in addition enrich the content of groups. This has become one of the architectural forms of participation instigated by Thomas (2006), except that the members can discuss, comment on each other, conduct reviews, rankings of the collection and quality of existing digital publications. An important component of social networking sites is a bookmarking and tagging, which can assist in its implementation to measure the growth rate of participation in social networking community to read bibliography (Farooq, et al, 2007).

Web 2.0 makes it easy for users to participate and gain the greatest benefit from the value of the community who have contributed in the form of content. Web 2.0 technology also emphasized the interaction, community, and openness between users.
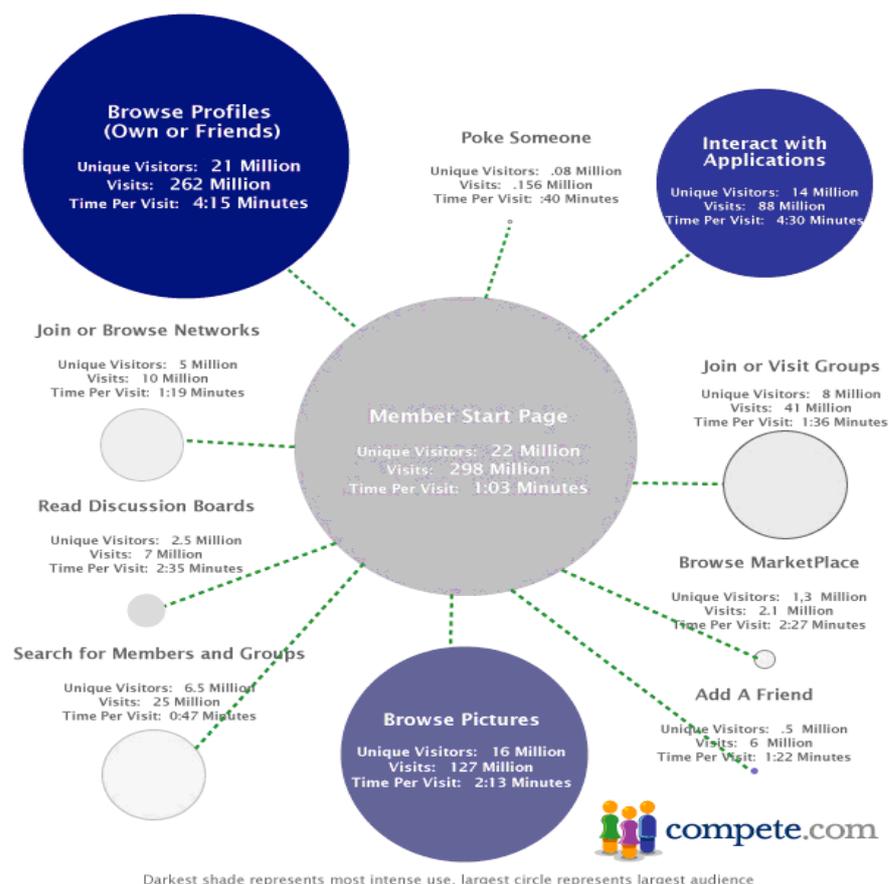

Darkest shade represents most intense use, largest circle represents largest audience

Figure: 2
Facebook Activity. (competence.com)

Historical development of the social networking site started in 1997 is SixDegrees.com, then continued in the period up to 2001 began to appear AsianAavenue sites, BlackPlanet and MiGente, LiveJournal, Cyworld, LunarStorm. Until now, few social networking sites are popular today such as Facebook (www.facebook.com), Friendster (www.friendster.com), MySpace (www.myspace.com), Shelfari (ww.shelfari.com). The most popular social network site in history is Facebook, it reached record more than 1 billion people to use this social network site every day. (Facebook, 2013), in Indonesia it comes to fourth biggest in the world with most of users in age of 18-24 (student's age).The social network of Facebook is a simple application that can connect anyone; it allows everyone who has their own identity in Facebook for:

> Create their own profile
> Link to friends
> See everyone updates
> Create public or private groups
> Join groups

Hold group conversations, sharing and discussions
While there are a lot of other features, games and application in Facebook which about 90% of what people do. Based on competence.com, they described a picture of what users do in Facebook. (larger circles represent more activity):Based on picture, mostly some simple activities do by users, such browse their own profiles or their friends, see pictures or videos of what their friends do and give comments or using Facebook applications or games, some of them see their old friends in high schools or join and visit groups. Through these activities, Facebook becomes popular among students and commonly they are using this social network for leisure time and have fun. Combining Facebook as learning resource can be challenging for academician and it really helps to create a closer relationship among members of institution, users and also tutors.

FACEBOOK AS ASSISTED LEARNING

Nowadays, the use of Facebook by students is really popular, by creating a Facebook account, students just create a media where their friends can contact them anytime without coming to campus or anywhere, it is that simple. The use of Facebook as assisted learning can be:

> Personal accounts for students
> Useful applications for students
> Campus event publicity
> Joining and creating "groups" for discussions.
> Chatting and communication between tutors-students/students-students

There are so many Facebook applications that could facilitate and support students who can get access to group and disseminate information for others. Each of applications in Facebook provides the addition of links and suggestions of books, media, sources along with the ability to recommend and write reviews by students and the other students.

Facebook can also be active as a track of individual student who wants to get to know more about one subject or latest information about academic calendar. Real-time communication is also a possibility through Facebook with write message or chatting from personal accounts.

Academic or administration staff can also add students in their friends list, several real-time communications that users can use such in Yahoo Messenger, MSN or Google talk.

Marketing is another way of students that can use through Facebook. Events can be publicized and marketed to "wall", "home networks" or for the "global" Facebook community and tag everyone to inform about the event.

This application would be helpful to announce and invite friends, events, fundraisers, seminars, talk show and workshops, shared documents, videos or pictures can be done in simple way.

Another supportive application that users can use is "Facebook Mobile". It is also make this even more convenient since it seems that most of simple way in electronic communication device and can receive and respond messages, this technology becomes popular since mobile or tablet can connect to the internet and find what everyone wants to complete their information needs every time and everywhere. Social networking sites such as Facebook is a great way to promote student services, disseminate information and build a community quickly with no cost. Now, Facebook is not just for having fun anymore, but it can also be a valuable tool for assisted learning in maintaining their existence and supporting information for their users.

Finally there is an innovation to contribute the information of the student groups in Facebook activities, including: a new book information, questionnaire, information activities, events, seminars, user education, etc. The response to information will be quickly, responsive and even communications with members to be more easily, effective and efficient.

INTEGRATED SOCIAL NETWORKING SYSTEM AND INFORMATION RESOURCES IN FACEBOOK

The writer made the Site Observation Form and survey to collected data about student groups, it was determined if the Facebook pages were performing the expected uses and really influence the user to use this page as their reference to find their information needs. The data was gathered in table 1 and table 2 and then used to see the comments from user in Table: 3.

The analysis uses data collection to obtain the use of Facebook as social networking system and resource in information. The survey began with a selection process, determining which student groups Facebook would be used in the evaluation. Since many groups do not update their pages regularly and some groups only update their page several times a week or even in a month.

Table: 1
Facebook Maintenance and Application as Resource

Groups	Members	Wall Messages	Photos	Links	Events	Shared Docs	Total Updates	Days in Existence
1	742	493	20	8	37	27	213	289
2	215	259	39	5	29	18	235	187
3	93	136	8	7	22	6	64	337
4	54	103	12	4	15	5	58	186
5	58	98	4	2	14	2	117	162
6	32	62	2	4	7	4	10	81
Total	1194	1024	85	30	124	62	697	1242

The student groups of Facebook pages were also searched for frequently updated group pages to include it in this paper. This updates frequency is really important, if the pages are not active there would have been nothing to observe. The selection process resulted in 6 student group pages for analysis consists of 2 student groups from students in Jakarta, 2 student groups from students in Taiwan and another 2 student groups from students in Hong Kong

Table: 2
Number of Add-on Application on Facebook Groups

Groups	Total Updates	Days in Existence
1	213	289
2	235	187
3	64	337
4	58	186
5	117	162
6	10	81
Total	697	1242

Note. 1 = yes, 0 = no for this data.

Data collection for this study was performed on the same day for all student groups Facebook pages (Feb 24th, 2013). A form was created to collect data from the pages as objectively as possible (see table 1 and 2).

There are 20 Information collected in the Site Observation Form (Table: 1 and 2) included the date of Facebook group creation for each page, the number of members, the number of tracked page changes and the number of days the page was in existence.

The form also collected information about the use of specific applications such as photos, videos, events, note and reference help. It also collected information on the total number of wall posts and the number of posts from students as well as other optional applications that were added to the Facebook student groups. The data collected from this form was entered into two tables for data analysis.

The first table (see table 1) contains data relating to the maintenance and use of the Facebook page. This includes information about how many members, wall messages, photos, links, events and boxes applications on the page. It also contains information about how many days each student group Facebook page has existed and updated their information regularly.

Based on the data in table 1, student group no. 1 has 742 members with 213 total updates and 493 messages in its wall. In student group's no.2, no.3 and no.6, most of their members are communities of certain subject in their academic major; these communities posted their activities which supported by the tutors it.

Student group no.6 has members around 32 people, even their Facebook's page has been activated for more than 81 days and they still maintain their page and also give valuable information for their members regularly.

It can be seen that the media use Facebook as a tool for learning resource is quite successful, this supports the distribution of information and updates of information, effective and efficiently.

The second data (see Table: 2) is a collection of number of add-on application on libraries' Facebook page with *yes* or *no* data where *1= yes* and *0= no*.

This data calculates how many add-on applications are used on each of the Facebook pages. Based on data in table 2, student group no.1 and student group no.3 has many applications in their student groups Facebook's page, so students can choose applications that they want to complete their information needs.

Data collected from the Site Observation Form was input into their corresponding Excel spreadsheets totaling the amount of members, wall messages, photos, links, events, "boxes" applications, updates, and days in existence (quantity of use).

Additional data was also gathered as to how many student group pages used particular applications such as reference, video, discussion boards, etc. (yes/no responses).

Therefore two different types of data were collected and analyzed: data on how many student groups used a particular application and the quantity of use.

This data is useful in understanding student groups Facebook usage as a whole, where as the *yes* or *no* data for how many student groups use particular applications were very useful in having their specific applications.

Table: 3
Facebook's responded of users in groups

Responses	Number of Responses
Campus announcements to students	32
Provide chat reference	48
Provide a forum for students users to communicate	37
RSVP for students events	47
Provide database search	50
Provide user education	43
Provide educational tutorials	41
Post Shared Documents	52
Post photos	38
Post audio	32
Post video	31

All of respondents stated that they are really familiar with Facebook, around 80% of respondents clearly said that they want to have chat reference, documents, photo, audio and video in Student Groups of Facebook, most of them want to have database search in that page, educational tutorials and events from group's page. Based on this survey, respondents believed that they can use this application and it really helps them to find information and everything that they need. This application also made them to find their friends in same interest easily, most of them posted some events that they created to invite anyone to come and they really enjoying this media to communicate between tutors and students, and the most important thing that they can share and posted urgent and significant information about the regulation in that country and condition of their working regarding their status as worker and students in Universitas Terbuka.

CLASS CONTACT

In Taiwan and Hongkong's students, they have some schedule for each week, it connected through several four of five sessions, live and online, most of students use WiZiQ for online teaching and learning, they also use G+ or Skype to connect and communicate for their learning environment if the first could not be use, in the learning process, some of classes recorded their learning time and posts it in YouTube, some cases groups of students in English and Communication classes give and share the link in Facebook group.

The online classes run very good, all students feel free to discuss, after class they post and share in Facebook, lecturers and the other students will have some questions and answers regarding the material that they have already take. During the weeks, students will share their ideas; post some other materials related to the subject and respond each other comments in Facebook groups.

In the other group, some students have presentation about a topic, while the other students will give comments and suggestions about their friends' presentation.

Some tutors give project to have group assignments and project, in each group students will present their work in video, this group stimulate all students to active and participate in every topic. Around 1200 students in Jakarta, Taiwan and Hong Kong enrolled in groups of Facebook, the forums activates reports that students are participate in many activities, around 38% students use it everyday, around 65% students are in same major, some of students (around 85%) viewed Facebook posts in news feed, comments, likes or visiting discussion or interacting in documents, around 15% interacted in groups but did not do anything with discussion.

Most of students likely to post on Facebook and ask their tutor about anything regarding the materials that they really do not understand, some of them asking tips or suggestion to understanding difficult materials.

STUDENT TO STUDENT COMMUNICATION

The tutor gives different topics for tasks in third, fifth and seventh meeting, some topics addressed in individual or groups, in one or two group discussion, usually consist of 3 or 5 students, each topic depends on the materials in guide book, tutor use video conference or web based for group members to use in communicate with others, the conference run for each groups in 10 until 15 minutes, after that they will have a group discussion.

Another thing that students do in groups, they also share their email, telephone number in the wall, some of students come from same company or region, most of Taiwan students divide in two regional groups, north and south groups, while in Hong Kong students come from several areas, whereas in Jakarta most of students are really inclusive, some of them come from Jakarta and the others come from several places outside Jakarta such as Bekasi, Depok, Tanggerang, Bogor or even Karawang (2 hours from Jakarta). After several session in face to face tutorials, students can access another online tutorials, through online tutorials, they can discuss their difficulties with other students from all over Indonesia, they also can share documents, tasks or even their Facebook ID, however some groups of Facebook discuss their final project and exam in that group.

CONCLUSION

Institutions should be aware that using Facebook as a assisted learning is a good way to keeping in touch with students/users and tutors on information, events, competitions, seminars, announcements, new books materials and other important things. If an institution and students could use it effectively, efficient and simple way, it could be a great tool to help users in finding their information needs and from several group students in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Jakarta are convenient to access and more familiar with Facebook, it really useful for distance education such as in Universitas Terbuka.

It was found that Facebook would be a good assisted learning tool for "academic life" in improving and maintaining their existence. It facilitates students to hold a lot of information and other activities along with using it for announcements and marketing to another student. However, I do believe that Facebook is a useful and effective resource for students in assisting their users in searching, analyzing and accessing information that they need and it really has potential to create new resource in information and technology.

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