



Visibility of Serbian State Universities on The Internet and Social Media

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to analyze if the universities in Serbia were using internet to communicate with their audience and in what extend. In this paper, we provide a theoretical background and a review of relevant research undertaken at 70 faculties divided into four Universities - University of Novi Sad, Belgrade, Nis and Kragujevac. The study was based on scanning the website of each Faculty as well as the pages/profiles/channels on certain social networks – Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube. Additionally, only the official pages/profiles/channels were taken into consideration. The main question this paper is dealing with is do universities at all use benefits of internet when communicating with their stakeholders and how much of modern internet potential is utilized. Based on the content analysis some additional details are noticed: What is the most often used online communication channel? Faculties from which University use internet communication the most? Does the field from which the Faculty is have any impact on the quality of online communication? Finally, we provide conclusions suggesting some major shortcomings as well as the possibilities for their improving.

Key words: *online communication, internet, social networks, Serbia, University.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Internet and social networks play an increasingly important role in contemporary communication. Exploring the importance of online communication and the use of social networks for promotional purposes, this paper primarily concerns the analysis of visibility of Serbian State Universities on the Internet.

The research was done separately for each Faculty in Serbia as well as for each communicational channel the Faculty had.

The paper analyzes weather faculties use internet and social media for communication and how does that influence on their public visibility. For writing the paper relevant theoretical background and analysis of four Universities are used.

2. VISIBILITY OF UNIVERSITIES ON THE INTERNET

2.1 Social Media Phenomenon

Social media is one of the main areas of interest for marketing scholars and practitioners. According to [1]

and [2] late research has demonstrated that 88 percent of advertisers are utilizing social networking websites and that they are spending over \$60 billion every year on social media advertising.

Social media is defined as "a gathering of web construct applications that work with respect to the ideological and specialized establishments of Web 2.0, and that permit the creation and trade of client produced content" [3].

Social media incorporates a large number of wellsprings of online data that are made, coursed and utilized by consumers to teach each other about items, administrations, and brands accessible in the marketplace [4]. Current cases of web-based social networking websites incorporate person to person communication sites like Facebook, photograph sharing destinations like Flickr and Instagram, video sharing sites like YouTube and Vimeo, business organizing locales like LinkedIn, small scale blogging destinations like Twitter, and various others. Online networking destinations are cheap and, as a rule, completely allowed to utilize [5].

The majority of research on social media use has exclusively centered around long range of social networking websites [6], [7], [8], [9] and [10]. These destinations are virtual accumulations of clients' profiles, which can be imparted to others to make arrangements of partners and keep up contact with them [11].

Social media can be portrayed as Web and versatile based instruments and gadgets that incorporate innovation, broadcast communications and social connection empowering the development, co-development and scattering of words, pictures (static and moving) and sound. The term Web 2.0, regularly connected with web-based social networking, depicts the scope of client focused, intelligent web applications that encourage these exercises. Web 2.0 spreads a more extensive assortment of electronic innovations that empower clients to add to, and devour, data [12]. [13] portray the accompanying as cases of essential and basic Web 2.0 advances:

- Blogs (cumulative books where authors publish entries and invite responses)
- Wikis (a tool that enables collaborative creation of a series of web pages)
- Social bookmarking (enables users to collate, tag, and share websites of interest)
- Media sharing spaces (enables users to post and share photos, podcasts and video)
- RSS feeds (enables users to view information from a wide variety of sources quickly)
- Collaborative editing tools (enables multiple users to share and edit documents)
- Micro-blogging sites such as twitter (enables user to publish very short messages)
- Social networking sites or SNS's (enables the creation of online communities).

2.2. Social Media in Higher Education

While organizations utilize social networking websites for expanding brand mindfulness and enhancing client bolster, different associations have concocted inventive utilizations to reinforce faithfulness and enhance donations.

According to the findings of the Students Online: Global Trends report, social media marketing still has a long way to go before it outruns the traditional channels of the higher education marketing world [14].

It's clear that how understudies carry on when they are choosing a college is changing, just like their desires of the advanced experience they will get. Their choice is currently educated by get-together data from a continually developing rundown of channels, and online networking has an imperative influence in this procedure. Universities need to guarantee that they are deliberately considering the part that social plays inside their enlistment and understudy engagement technique,

understanding which channels they ought to be building a nearness on, precisely what destinations they are hoping to accomplish, and how this should be possible inventively and creatively [15].

3. RESEARCH METHOD

Since the aim of study is to analyze visibility of Serbian State Universities on the Internet, the research covers all 70 faculties from four Universities - University of Novi Sad, Belgrade, Nis and Kragujevac. To analyze online activities for each Faculty, their websites and pages/profiles/channels on social networks were examined; furthermore, only the official pages/profiles/channels did we take into consideration.

According to research made by Strategic Marketing and Institute for Sustainable Communities Facebook is the most often used social network in Serbia; while the next are Twitter and YouTube [16]. Based on that information and predicted digital trends, core of our research, beside websites, are social networks noted below: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn.

To analyze Faculty's activity on Facebook, each page is evaluated using the following parameters: when was the page started, what is the total number of likes, what is the average number of posts published per one day and what kind of posts are being published – what percentage of published posts are news, pictures and videos.

Twitter analytics is based on similar data – what is the starting year of profile, total number of twitts and number of twitts per day, as well as the most used hashtags, number of followers and people the page is following.

On YouTube as the criterions are taken the upcomings: Date when official channel is first started, total number of uploaded videos, subscribers and the date when the last video is published.

During Instagram research we were focusing on total number of posts, number of followers and number of other profiles the Faculty is following.

The idea for LinkedIn analytics was to base it on the number of followers, type of posts that are published, and generally how professional the page is.

When it comes to websites, the questions we were using as the criteriums are: Is the site clearly visible, how easily can you get the information you need, is the content updated, is it linked to social networks and is the site user-friendly.

Data used in this study are collected in past three months. Every official website, page, profile and channel of each Faculty from the State Universities in Serbia is visited and explored in detail, so to make the whole analysis as precise and accurate as possible.

Table 1 shows the results of research. Divided into four parts, in accordance with universities, this table compares total number of faculties from each University

and the number of faculties that have its own official and active website, page/profile/channel on observed social networks. Second picture (Chart 1.) presents the popularity of each social network by the percentage of usage it among Faculties in Serbia. The third picture (Chart 2.) compares activities of Universities on social networks inbetween.

Table 1. General Results

	University of Novi Sad	University of Belgrade	University of Nis	University of Kragujevac
Total number of faculties	14	32	13	11
Number of faculties with its official web site	14	32	13	11
Number of faculties existing on Facebook	9	14	7	4
Number of faculties existing on Twitter	6	14	5	3
Number of faculties existing on YouTube	10	13	5	4
Number of faculties existing on Instagram	3	6	0	0
Number of faculties existing on LinkedIn	0	0	0	0

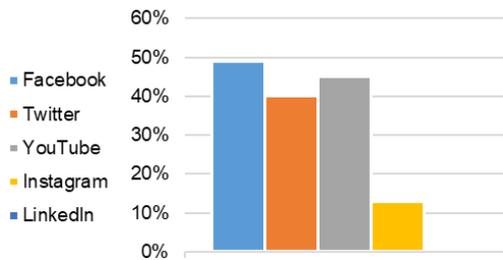


Figure 1. Usage of Social Networks by the Serbian State Universities [%]

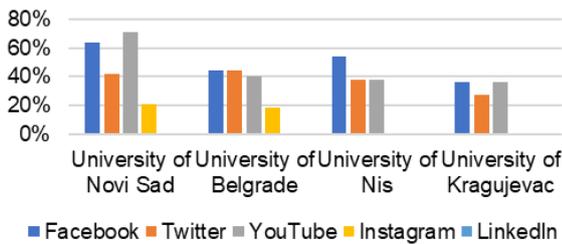


Figure 2. Percentage of Faculties per University Using Social Networks

4. DISCUSION

As it is shown in Table 1. each Faculty has its own official website. All the sites are useful and updated, clearly pointing out where to find important information. Additionally, sites are simple to use. Many sites have shortcuts to the most often searched links and furthermore some external links related to the Faculty. As a conclusion it can be said that every site that took part in this survey is functional and user-friendly, with fresh and helpful informational.

Social network on which most of the faculties have its own page is Facebook (Chart 1.). According to results, almost half of all faculties have their own official and active Facebook page (Table 1.). Best faculties' pages to point out are the page of Faculty of Technical Sciences from Novi Sad and the page of Faculty of Economics from Belgrade. These two are mentioned as the best due to the largerst number of likes and updated profile. Additionally, Faculty of Technical Sciences publishes posts very often and varied kinds of it – news, pictures and videos are all present. On the page of Faculty of Economics publishing video is missing, while almost 80% of all posts are news; the rest are pictures.

Next observed social media is Twitter. Looking through the perspective of percentages, 45% of faculties have their own official and active twitter page. In accordance with the results, profile of Faculty of Technical Sciences from Novi Sad and Faculty of Political Sciences from Belgrade seems to be the most active ones and the most often followed by other interested parts. Faculty of Political Sciences twitts more then once per day, while the Faculty of Technical Sciences publishes new twitt averagly two times in three days. However, neither of them significantly uses hashtags.

Another social media, also very popular in Serbia, is YouTube. Analysing the results we discovered that remarkably more faculties from Universites Novi Sad and Belgrade use this social channel than the faculties from the rest two Universities in Serbia. The criteria we took as basic to rank the faculties is number of subscribers and number of uploaded videos. Accordingly, the following faculties are selected as the best: Faculty of Technical Sciences and Faculty of Philosophy (Novi Sad), Faculty of Architecture, Faculty of Economics and Faculty of Orthodox Theology (Belgrade). All of the five listed above have roughly equal number of subscribers and videos, which is at the same time notably more than any other YouTube channel that took part in this survey.

When it comes to Instagram, analysing it did not provide much of the results. Only 9 out of 70 faculties use this communicational channel. Additionally, those faculties are from universities Novi Sad and Belgrade. Ranked by the number of followers and number of published photos, official profile of Faculty of Technical Sciences, Novi Sad is the most active one. Right after it are Academy of Arts (Novi Sad), Faculty of Economics (Belgrade), Faculty of Organisational Sciences (Belgrade) and Academy of Arts (Belgrade). The rest of faculties existing on Instagram are not worth of

mentioning due to its insignificantly small number of followers and published photos.

LinkedIn, as special business network, turned out to be completely unpopular in this case. According to the results of the research, none of the University consider this media as important nor relevant for communication with its audience. So, there is no Faculty with its official page on LinkedIn.

5. CONCLUSION

Generally speaking, Faculties in Serbia do partly use benefits of the modern online communication when contacting their audience. As the research has shown the most often used channel among faculties is website and Facebook, as the representative of social networks. Universities Novi Sad and Belgrade are more active online than Universities Nis and Kragujevac; additionally, the field from which the Faculty is has no impact on the quality of online communication.

The results from research have also revealed that there is only one Faculty with well-made and serviced website that is active on all social networks (except LinkedIn), Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad. All the other pointed out as active on some networks, are non-active on the others. The shortcomings noticed in online communication during the research are mostly the same for all the faculties, no matter how active they currently are: posts on pages are not published often enough, there is weak engagement with the audience, no discussions, comments or any other activity by the fans and no interaction with other similar pages. This inactivity results in following: potential students are not informed about the Faculty, companies from the region are not familiar with kind of knowledge faculties provide and local community does not appreciate the involvement and humanitarian events the faculties are organizing in order to help citizens.

To improve faculties' visibility by online communication, here are some basic suggestions.

Starting with the social networks currently in use, before creating any content, target audience has to be clearly defined. Posts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter should be made primarily for (potential) students. Posting is recommended to be averagly 1.2 times per day, with the roughly equal percentage of news, videos from University events and pictures presenting interesting facts or any other information the (potential) students could be interested in. For other stakeholders like local community, companies and similar websites should contain more relevant information. All this would provide higher visibility of the Faculty among students and also would provide better support of companies and local government.

To conclude, modern internet potential is not much used, but there are indications that in future the situation will be different; since the result have shown that even now some faculties take care of their online visibility by communicating via channels they consider important.

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