THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL-NETWORKING FACEBOOK TO USERS: BENEFIT OR HARM?

MOHD ALIFF MOHD NAWI & MOHD ISA HAMZAH

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of a rapidly growing social networking site, Facebook has started to give a massive impact on the users. The aim of this study is to examine the influence of Facebook for users, especially to the youngsters. This study will apply qualitative methods, through literature review and document analysis of past studies. The results showed that Facebook gives more negative impact, and if it is not properly controlled, it will be exploited for other dreadful purposes. At the end of this paper, some suggestions are included for a better use the social-networking site.

Keywords: *social-networking, Facebook, consumers, teenagers*

ABSTRAK

Fenomena laman sosial Facebook menyerap pantas ke dalam masyarakat memberi impak yang besar kepada pengguna. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti impak penggunaan laman sosial Facebook terhadap pengguna terutama terhadap golongan remaja. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kualitatif, menerusi kajian kepustakaan dan analisis dokumen kajian lepas. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa penggunaan laman sosial Facebook memberi impak yang negatif lebih tinggi berbanding positif jika tidak dikawal dengan sebaiknya dan dieksploitasi bagi tujuan yang buruk. Di akhir kajian, beberapa cadangan diberikan agar penggunaan laman sosial Facebook dapat digunakan ke arah yang lebih baik.

***Kata kunci:*** *Laman sosial, Facebook, pengguna, remaja*

INTRODUCTION

Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Friendster, Hi5 and LinkedIn are all examples of the virtual social-networking sites which is the current trend. It has a function as a communication tool that is equipped with various applications such as personal websites, discussion forums, email, chat rooms, space to upload pictures and video as well as game software (Boyd & Ellison 2008). Therefore, the virtual social-networking site can be defined as a social site with a range of interesting applications and thus helping the users to communicate or to interact with each other.

In Malaysia, the social-networking Facebook has become the most popular virtual community of choice compared to other social sites (Siti Azaleila & Azizah 2010). This page was rapidly built into the community with users ranging from all

ages, starting from childhood until the age of senior citizens. In fact, politicians and celebrities are not left from having a virtual social-networking site along with the progress of current technology (Rosmalina 2010).

Study by Norizan et al. (2010) shows that the use of social sites like Facebook and MySpace in Malaysia has become in trend and is increased from time to time, whether in urban or rural areas. Refer to statistics taken from Socialbakers.com website; the amount of visitors to social-networking Facebook in Malaysia is as high as over 12 million. In fact, this number increased from time to time. Among the highest number of users in Facebook are users within the age of 18 to 24 years old
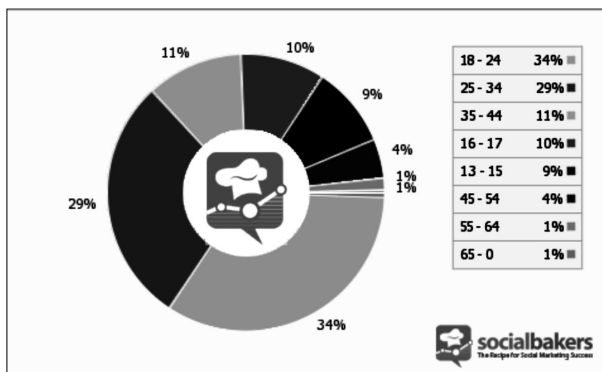
Figure 1. Statistical age of Facebook users in Malaysia
Source: Socialbakers.com

WORLD WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

 The advancement of technology in the 21st century has produced a world without boundaries. All information either in or outside the country can be accessed with only few clicks of a computer mouse. Even with just a few clicks, users are still able to explore the entire world and getting the updates of news in a faster way. This state will change the world towards an open policy thus creating a phenomenon of a broad discussion with no borders.

	Discussions can be done by using a variety of applications that have been fitted in the social-networking Facebook. Users are able to exchange ideas and comment on the status of contacts whos are in the same network. Furthermore, the presence of a third application such as online quizzes and games in the network allows users to create a variety of desired applications. These applications can then be shared with other users around the world and at the same time helping them to add new friends on Facebook.

	Before this, users can only access the social-networking site through computer or laptop, but nowadays the telecommunications network in Malaysia such

as Maxis and Celcom also have offers services to receive and to update Facebook's status. Users will have access to make updates directly only through SMS (Short Messaging System), which is not offered by other social-networking sites (www. amanz.my). This provides advantage and is appealing to many users to choose this social-networking site.

THE IMPACT OF FACEBOOK ONTO IT'S USERS

There are many researches been carried out in overseas pertaining on the social-networking, especially on Facebook. Many issues that can be bring forward and are interesting to be discussed to see how far the social-networking can give an impact to the users. There are few issues discussed and among them are issue on the addictions of social network (Barbera et al., 2009), the issue on over exposure of self-details (Koroleva et al. 2010), Issue on privacy (Herig, 2006; Dwyeret al., 2007) and the users behaviour (Morgan, 2010).

This article will focus only on the Facebook and does not intend to involve other social-networking. There are also several issues that led to the ban on the use of the Facebook by the Indonesian Ulama Council. Surprisingly, some fatwa was issued by a scholar in Egypt to ban the use of Facebook among the users. These issues and problems will be reviewed in detail in order to answer the question of this part of the drastic action.

POSITIVE IMPACT TO USER

Spreading of Information
The use of Facebook has made the process of spreading the information quicker and faster within just a few seconds. Internet revolution has been ongoing since the early 90s to make the world smaller, and information dissemination can be done immediately. For example, thousands of Egyptians on the field to demonstrate the state of Israel after seeing some pictures of Gaza attack by Israel, which are included in Facebook (Che Mahzan 2009). Benefits of Facebook is recognized as a medium to connect people around the world to unite through virtual communication.

Enhance The Interaction of Students and Lecturers
As known, the social-networking Facebook is equipped with various applications such as personal websites, blogs, discussion forums, chat, email and others. These applications are combined with Web 2.0 technologies, which made them attractive and easy to handle. Therefore, these applications are exploited in education as it is seen to help student involvement in a subject. For example, many teachers outside the country have been using social sites like Facebook, Twitter and Ning in teaching and learning.

Among the subjects which use social-networking Facebook in teaching and learning is history (Anonymous 2009), Information Science (Moulaison 2009), Agriculture (Disberger 2009; McDonald 2009), and English (Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan et al. 2010). Apart from that, long-distance teaching methods are proven effective by using Facebook as a platform for lecturers and students to communicate with each other (Adhi Susilo 2008). In fact, Facebook was also used to help improve the skills of student teachers during teaching practice (English & Howell 2008).

People's Voice Heard

As a leader, the voice of the people is important to be taking into account to include knowing the issues and problems in the society. Previously, any views made will be heard only after the leaders have sat down and discuss or through the mass media. Now, Facebook has gone beyond the obstacles for people to have direct communication with their leaders. The U.S. President, Barrack Obama has its own Facebook account to communicate and to listen to the problem faced by the Americans (Westling 2007). In Malaysia, YAB Dato 'Seri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak, the Prime Minister of Malaysia has established a network of 1Malaysia for all Malaysians.

Through this established network, various views from the core can be expressed in the most relaxed and less formal atmosphere. In fact, the votes from the website and Youth Development Research Institute of Malaysia showed that 90.8% of Internet users agree that new media like social-networking site and blog has open the opportunities between the youth and the government to discuss issues such as youth development, social & educational (www.ippbm gov.my).

NEGATIVE IMPACT TO USER

Addiction

The nature of addiction can be identified when there is a conditioning process in which a person cannot be separated with a habit that exists due to the influence. This applies to the users of Facebook, who are willing to spend time in front of a computer screen for hours. The time wasted should be spent wisely for more useful activities. Research shows that the women are constantly exposed to this phenomenon, especially among adolescents (Barbera et al., 2009; Eszter Hargittai & Steven Shafer, 2006). According to Ass. Prof. Mohamed Fadzil Che Din (Online Kosmo, 5 April 2010), the individual who got addicted to Facebook is not aware of his or her plight. Therefore, it has become the responsibility of the parents, siblings or individuals to take immediate action to reprimand individuals who commit these bad habits. This is important to prevent the individuals from wasting more time.

Murder Cases

Social networking site Facebook has also contributed to variety of ills such as murder cases. According to the Cosmo magazine, a woman killed by her lover after changing the status of marriage to unmarried in the United States. While in

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE), one teacher who taught at international schools got stressed and died after she drank a poison because her former boyfriend had uploaded her naked photos on Facebook (Kosmo Online. April 5th, 2010). There is another case in Saudi Arabia, involving a father who shot his daughter for online chatting with a man who she had known through the Facebook (Farag 2010). Following of these incidents, a well-known Islamic speaker Sheikh Ali al-Maliki said that the West had brought the ideology to corrupt the youth, especially among Muslims through the use of the social-networking site.

Career
Research shows that there are employers of a company who use Facebook as a medium to find candidates with detailed background before choosing to work with them (Smith & Kidder 2010). This was done to obtain all relevant details of the candidates before selecting them to be one of the employees who can perform or not. Apart from that, there is a company in London that has fired a female employee after the women complaint on Facebook about atmosphere in the workplace, and revealed that she hated her job (Kosmo Online. April 5th, 2010). This has given a bad reputation to the company, and thus they took action to remove the woman from continue working with them.

Divorce cases
A study was conducted by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML) shows that 81% of the 1600 members of the Association has acknowledged in the past five years, the divorce cases had increased drastically due to the social-networking site such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter (http://www.aaml.org). They often take over divorce cases due to the existence of third party in their relationship. This came out when the husband or wife has looked to their partner's messages who's discussed about sensitive matters, domestic issues and even sex. It makes the husband or wife feeling jealous and thus choosing the divorce as a way out.

The implications of this issue have caused a religious scholar, Sheikh Egypt Abdel Hamid al-atrás to issue a fatwa prohibiting the use of Facebook. He said that a Muslim cannot use the social-networking site and can be considered "guilty" or "sinful" if they continue to use it.

> "This is one of the factors that destroyed the family institution as it provokes the married couple to have a relationship with another person that contravenes the Islamic Sharia law..."

Egypt Abdel Hamid al-atrás was also a former head of the fatwa council member in Al-Azhar University, Cairo, said that Facebook is like a TV satellite or the "double-edged sword" which means the social-networking Facebook will allow the users to use for either good or bad purposes. This has made the social-networking Facebook to spread missionary activities but at the same time the users also did not prevent the occurrences that are forbidden in Islam. For that reason, he

considers that any Muslim who uses the social-networking Facebook as "guilty."

Decline in Student Performance

Study by Chowdhry (2009); Hamilton (2009); Kirschner & Karpinski (2010) and Leake & Warren (2009) have proven that there has been a decrease in achievement of students who use Facebook in their learning performance. According to Chowdhry (2009), of the total 214 students who sat for the examinations, 148 students obtained lower grades, and they have Facebook's account compared with the remaining students who do not have a Facebook account. Students who do not have a Facebook account told that they can review the lesson up until 11-15 hours a week compared to students who have Facebook's account and studied for only 1-5 hours per week. Similarly, a study conducted by Kirschner & Karpinski (2010), showed that the Facebook has given a negative impact on the students and causes them to get a low CGPA. Findings indicate that students spend only few hours to study compared to students who do not have a Facebook account.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, based on a number of issues that have been explored above, Facebook has more negative impact on consumers rather than the positive impact. This indicated that the use of the social-networking site can be potentially harmful if the user misused it and is not wise in spending the time on Facebook. At the same time, we cannot deny the existence of positive effects resulting from technological advances in the cyber field. People need to be aware that the information contained in the social-networking site is not fully accurate and should be investigated first. Parents and teachers as mentors for the students must control the behavior of students when they use the social sites so that they do not go astray from the teachings of Islam.

        Apart from that, researchers also suggested the authorities to create a software that can control and monitor students' activities while they use computers and the internet. The proposal to establish guidelines for teenagers to use the social site can also be made. In addition, parents can also restrict the use of the social-networking site to avoid their children from wasting time with useless activities. The usage of the internet can also be beneficial if it is used properly. This issue is also important in order to educate students not to misuse the ICT and avoiding them to use it is unethical.

REFERENCES

Anonymous. "Collaboration Tools 2.0 Style," *Library Technology Reports*, no 45(2009): 4, 19-28.

Barbera, D. L., Paglia, F. L. and Valsavoia. "Social Network and Addiction," *Advance Technologies in behavioral social and neurosciences*, no 7(2009): 9, 628-629.

Boyd, D. M. and Ellison, N.B. "Social Network Sites: Definition, History and Scholarship," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(2008): 210-230.

Che Mahzan Ahmad. "Facebook dan Twitter: Jaringan Sosial Berwajah Janus". Dewan Siswa.(2009) pp. 34-35.

Chowdhry, A. "Ohio State Researcher Aryn Karpinski Conducts Study Concluding Facebook Causes Lower Grades" (2009) <http://pulse2.com/2009/04/14/ ohio-state-researcher-aryn-karpinski-conducts-study-concluding- facebook-causes-lower-grades/> (9 Oktober 2010)

Disberger, B. "The Face (book)s of the Next Generation of Agricultural Educators," *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, 82(2009): 1, 5-6.

Divorce Filings Have Dropped in the Recession Reveals Survey of Top Matrimonial Lawyers <http://www.aaml.org/go/about-the-academy/press/press- releases/divorce-filings-have-dropped-in-the-recession-reveals-survey-of- top-matrimonial-lawyers/> (9 Oktober 2010)

Dwyer, C., Hiltz, S. and Passerini, K. "Trust and Privacy Concern Within Social Networking Sites : A Comparison of Facebook and MySpace," Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS) Proceedings.Association for Information Systems, (2007) pp. 1-12.

English, R. and Howell, J. D. "Facebook© Goes to College: Using Social Networking Tools," *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 4(2008): 4, 596-601.

Farag, Doaa Alaa El Din. "New Forms of Electronic Media and their Impact on Public Policy Making. Three Cases from Egypt". Thesis Master of Arts. (2010). School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. The American University in Cairo.

Greenhow, C., Robelia, B., and Hughes, J. "Learning, Teaching, and Scholarship in a Digital Age," *Educational Researcher*, 38(2009): 4,246-159.

Hamilton, A. "What Facebook Users Share: Lower Grades". (2009). <http://www.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,1891111,00.html>   (9   Oktober 2010)

Herig, S. "Youth, Privacy and social networking,". *Educause Review*. (2006): 16-28 <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ERM0660.pdf> (10 Oktober 2010)

http://amanz.my/2009/11/kini-facebook-merupakan-laman-paling-popular-di-malaysia/ (16 Ogos 2010).

http://www.ippbm.gov.my/v2/index.php?option=com_poll&id=15%3A11111-media-baru-seperti-laman-sosial-dan-blog-membuka-peluang-antara-golongan-belia-da-kerajaan-membincangkan-isu-isu-seperti-pemba-ngunan-beliagejala-sosial-dan-pendidikan&lang=en (11 Jun 2012)

http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/malaysia (11 Jun 2012)

http://www.kosmo.com.my. Ketagihan Laman Sosial Maya. (11 Jun 2012)

Kirschner, P. A and Karpinski, A. C. "Facebook® and academic performance," *Computers in Human Behavior*, 26(2010): 6, 1237-1245.

Koroleva, K., Krasnova, H., and Guenther, O. "Stop Spamming Me!' – Exploring Information Overload on Facebook,". Proceedings of the 16th Americas Conference on Information Systems, Lima, Peru, August 12, (2010) pp.447-458.

Leake, J and Warren, G. "Facebook fans do worse in exams" (2009). <http://www.timesplus.co.uk/> (10 Oktober 2010).

Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan, Norlida Ahmad and Mohamad Jafre Zainul Abidin. "Facebook: An online environment for learning of English in institutions of higher education?" *The Internet and Higher Education*, 13(2010): 4, 179-187.

McDonald, A. K. "Branding for Agricultural Education," *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, 82(2009): 2, 6-8.

Morgan, J. J. "Social networking web sites: teaching appropriate social competence to students with emotional and behavioral disorders,". *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 45(2010): 3,147-157

Moulaison, H. L. "Facebook à la Fulbright," *American Libraries*. 40(2009): 10, 60-63.

Norizan Abdul Razak, Zaini Amir, Mahamod Ismail, and Norhayati Shuja. "The Impact of Wireless Technology Among Malaysian Society," Conference on Recent Advances In Electronics, Hardware, Wireless And Optical Communications, (2010) pp. 54-59 <http://www.wseas.us/e-library/ conferences/2010/Cambridge/EHAC/EHAC-08.pdf>   (12 Oktober 2010)

Rosmalina Abd. Kadir. Rencana Utama. "Ketagihan laman sosial maya," (2010) <http://www.kosmo.com.my/kosmo/content.asp?y=2010&dt=0405&pub =Kosmo&sec=Rencana_Utama&pg=ru_01.htm> (10 oktober 2010).

Siti Azaleila and Azizah Hamzah. "Media Sosial: Tinjauan Terhadap Laman Jaringan Sosial dalam talian tempatan," *Jurnal Pengajian Media Malaysia*, 12(2010): 12, 37-52.

Smith, W. P. and Kidder, D. L. "You've been tagged! (Then again, maybe not): Employers and Facebook," *Business Horizons*, 53(2010): 5, 491-499.

Westling, M. " Expanding the public sphere: The Impack of Facebook on political communication," (2007) <http://www.thenewvernacular.com/projects/ facebook_and_political_communication.pdf > (12 Oktober 2010)

Profil Penulis

Mohd Aliff Mohd Nawi, M.Ed
Research Assistant
Faculty of Education,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
aliffmohamed@yahoo.com

Mohd Isa Hamzah, PhD
Senior Lecturer,
Faculty of Education,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
cher69@gmail.com