

College Students' Uses of and Perceptions Towards YouTube as an Information Resource to Support University Courses



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ABSTRACT: *Using YouTube in the education domain offers a wealth of opportunities for learning, sharing, and collaborating over the developing number of education-based networks. To examine the use of YouTube as a platform of learning along with the other resource materials available to students, this study explores the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of undergraduate students related to the use of YouTube as an information resource to support their learning. The use of YouTube by professors for course activities is also examined.*

Keywords: YouTube, Technology-enhanced learning, Online video, open educational resources, User generated content, Social network

Received: 17 May 2015, Revised 19 June 2015, Accepted 25 June 2015

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1. Introduction

Social media has become a popular educational tool during the past few years. A growing number of college students use social media for their class assignments and projects, while social media tools can also be excellent resources for students to learn as well as to communicate and collaborate with the wider community.

Education provision through multimedia and other visual aids has always strengthened the curricula of many subjects (Sabhan, 2006). Therefore, one of the most important types of social media used in the education system is video-sharing websites. YouTube, for example, which contains videos uploaded by individuals and organizations, has influenced universities and higher education institutions to the extent that it has changed the ways in which students learn. The content of YouTube, which includes a variety of topics related to different fields, allows free access to thousands of high-quality educational videos, and it is thus used by university students around the world to improve their learning.

2. Problem Statement

The application of social media tools in Saudi Arabia is unclear because of the lack of studies that focus on the use of video sharing websites by university students. Therefore, this study explores the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of undergraduate students related to the use of YouTube as an information resource to support their courses.

3. Research questions

The study seeks to answer the following three questions:

1. What are the perceptions of students towards the use of YouTube for supporting course activities?
2. To what extent do faculties use YouTube in their teaching practice?
3. Which factors prevent students from using YouTube in course activities?

4. Methodology

This study applies a quantitative research design based on a survey method by using a questionnaire tool. The questionnaire contains twelve closed-ended questions and one open-ended question. The closed-ended questions aim to gather two types of information: (i) students' perceptions and attitudes towards using YouTube to support their learning and (ii) professors' use of YouTube in their teaching practice. The open-ended question provides students the opportunity to explain the obstacles and difficulties preventing them from utilizing YouTube in their course activities. The study sample comprises 87 undergraduate students from the College of Computer and Information Science at Imam University in Saudi Arabia.

5. Literature review

Studies show that the use of YouTube is spread across disciplines and *fields*. In the field of medical education, for example, Jaffar (2012) found that the use of YouTube can remodel and enhance anatomy teaching and learning. Based on his findings, YouTube can be considered to be an effective tool to enhance anatomy instruction if videos are scrutinized, diversified, and targeted towards course objectives. However, Tan and Pearce (2012) believe that the use of online materials in class can enhance students' learning if it is used to stimulate class discussion and not as a substitution.

The results of another study that assessed faculty utilization of YouTube in the health education domain showed that professors who use YouTube on their courses consider it to be an effective teaching resource for enhancing course material (Burke, Snyder, & Rager, 2009). In addition, non-user professors expressed an interest in learning more about the potential application of YouTube as an instructional tool for their classes.

Burnett (2008) found numerous opportunities for including YouTube in marketing classroom activities. For instance, students can be given the task of creating their own product and introducing the idea in a short online video. Students can also create their own product pitch to see how persuasive they can be.

Khalid and Muhammad (2012) explored the use of YouTube as a supplementary resource for teaching English literature and found it to be more effective than textbook-based courses for overcoming learners' difficulties. By contrast, Chin (2013) found that encouraging students to learn autonomously by using YouTube is difficult to apply to foreign language education in Taiwan because of the boundaries of culture and educational context.

6. Data analysis and results

Descriptive statistics on each variable of the study were used to investigate students' uses of and perceptions towards YouTube. The percentage for each survey item question is reported herein. The results are divided into categories that address three issues. The first category addresses the perceptions of students towards the use of YouTube in course activities. The second category examines the extent to which faculty use YouTube in their teaching practice. The final category addresses the factors preventing students from using YouTube in course activities.

7. General perceptions and use of YouTube

The analysis of students' responses indicates that all respondents have used YouTube to search for video clips. However, the rate of use varies between students. As shown in Table 1, the highest percentage of students (32.6%) tend to watch YouTube

videos more than 13 times a week, while the lowest proportion (5.6%) watch YouTube videos once a week. The proportions of participants who use YouTube weekly 2–5 times, 6–9 times, and 10–13 times are 23.6%, 22.5%, and 15.7%, respectively.

Times of use/week	Frequency	Percentage
1	5	5.6
2–5	21	23.6
6–9	20	22.5
10–13	14	15.7
14 or more	29	32.6

Table 1. YouTube use per week

The subject of the videoclips for which students mostly search was determined by providing five options: education, culture, entertainment, news, and others (see Table 2). Among all participants, the highest number (48.3%) reported that they more often search for videoclips related to education, followed by subjects related to entertainment (29.2%), and culture (16.9%). Videos related to news were the least searched for (2.3%).

Although all participants said that they have used YouTube, more than half (52%) just watch videos and do not contribute to enriching the content. The remainder (48%) have uploaded videoclips themselves.

Subject	Frequency	Percentage
Education	43	48.3
Culture	15	16.9
Entertainment	26	29.2
News	2	2.3
Other	3	3.3

Table 2. Subject of videoclips

8. Using YouTube for learning

The data analysis presented in this section aims to answer the first research question. Participants provided information on the following statements on the questionnaire: using YouTube is a good tool to enrich university courses, YouTube includes sufficient educational content to support courses, YouTube helps improve the student’s study, and I use or have used YouTube to obtain information related to courses.

A five-point Likert-type scale for the first three statements and a three-point Likert-type scale for the last statement were applied to determine the perceptions of students towards the use of YouTube in learning.

Among all participants, the highest number (68%) agree or strongly agree that YouTube content enriches courses (see Table 3). A small number of students (3%) strongly disagree that YouTube enriches university courses. The remainder are either neutral (9%) or disagree (9%) with this opinion.

Data on the sufficiency of the educational content on YouTube for supporting university courses are shown in Table 4. Among all participants, more than half (59.5%) agree or strongly agree that YouTube has enough content to support courses. The fewest participants (2.3%) strongly disagree. The remainder are either neutral (24.7%) or disagree (13.5%).

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	37	42
Agree	31	35
Neutral	9	10
Disagree	9	10
Strongly disagree	3	3

Table 3. YouTube enriches university courses

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	13	14.6
Agree	40	44.9
Neutral	22	24.7
Disagree	12	13.5
Strongly disagree	2	2.3

Table 4. Sufficiency of educational content on YouTube

Regarding the relationship between YouTube and improvements in study, Table 5 indicates that the majority (73%) agreed or strongly agreed that there was a relationship between them. In the other hand, only (18%) of participants indicated the lack of relationship.

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	14	15.7
Agree	51	57.3
Neutral	8	9
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	16	18

Table 5. Relationship between YouTube and improvements in study

In regards to the use of YouTube to obtain information related to courses, as shown in Table 6, 35.9% of participants reported that they always use YouTube for that purpose, 47.2% indicated that they rarely use YouTube, and 16.9% never use it.

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Always	32	35.9
Rarely	42	47.2
Never	15	16.9

Table 6. YouTube use for courses

In regards to the use of YouTube to obtain information related to courses, as shown in Table 6, 35.9% of participants reported that they always use YouTube for that purpose, 47.2% indicated that they rarely use YouTube, and 16.9% never use it.

9. Professors' use of YouTube

The data analysis presented in this section aims to answer the second research question. A four-point Likert-type scale was

provided to participants to collect information about three statements: watching YouTube video related to courses is appreciated and encouraged by professors, professors direct and ask students to use YouTube in the study, and professors use YouTube for instruction purposes.

As shown in Table 7, the majority of participants (79.4%) reported that none or a few of the professors encourage students to watch YouTube, while 18% reported that some professors encourage students.

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
All of them	5	5.6
Some of them	16	18.0
A few of them	22	24.7
None of them	46	51.7

Table 7. Professors' encouragement of watching YouTube

Participants were asked if professors direct them to use YouTube to obtain extra information related to the subjects studied in class. Table 8 shows that the majority of participants (77.5%) reported that a few or none of the professors direct them to YouTube, while only 22.5% reported that either some or all of the professors do so.

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
All of them	3	3.4
Some of them	17	19.1
A few of them	36	40.4
None of them	33	37.1

Table 8. Professors direct students to use YouTube

Participants were asked if YouTube is a learning tool used in the classroom by professors. As shown in Table 9, about half (49.4%) indicated that none of their professors use YouTube in the classroom. By contrast, 38.2% of participants reported that a few professors do so, followed by 11.2% who reported that some do.

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
All of them	1	1.2
Some of them	10	11.2
A few of them	34	38.2
None of them	44	49.4

Table 9. Professors' use of YouTube

10. Barriers to using YouTube

To answer the third research question, participants were asked to list barriers that might prevent them from using YouTube or reduce their use of YouTube for course activities. The most frequently offered reason for not using YouTube for learning, as Table 10 indicates, is the low content of Arabic videos (56.1%). Other barriers mentioned included a lack of proficiency in English (16.9%), textbooks are enough to learn (7.9%), the low speed of the Internet (7.9%), and unawareness of searching YouTube (1.2%).

Barrier	Frequency	Percentage
Little Arabic content	50	56.1
Lack of proficiency in English	15	16.9
Textbooks are enough to learn	7	7.9
Unawareness of searching YouTube	1	1.2
Low speed of the Internet	7	7.9
Other reasons	9	10

Table 10. Barriers to using YouTube

11. Discussion

The results of the data analysis yielded some interesting findings. One of the major findings was that using YouTube is a common practice by all students, which concurred with the research by Martin (2009) that found that YouTube was the second most used learning platform by college students.

The perceptions of the students sampled in this study towards the use of YouTube in course activities were positive. Most students have a good awareness and a conviction of the importance of supporting course activities with YouTube. This finding is also supported by previous studies indicating that well-selected YouTube videos help students engage more deeply with subject matter and recall the information they have learned longer (Burke & Snyder, 2008; Hilner, 2012).

Although the incorporation of YouTube into learning enhances instruction and increases student interest (Buzzetto-More, 2014), the presented findings indicate that most professors do not use YouTube in their teaching practice or even encourage and direct students to use it.

Another interesting finding was the barriers preventing students from benefiting from the YouTube content. Participants reported that the lack of enough Arabic videos to support course activities was the greatest problem they faced. This result is not surprising because less than 1% of total global online content is in Arabic (Ramady, 2012).

Conclusion

The use of YouTube in the classroom influences student engagement. Students' understanding of the importance of YouTube was determined in this study. However, professors do not seem to have positive attitudes towards incorporating YouTube into course activities. More awareness is therefore needed in universities to encourage professors to support course subjects with YouTube video clips.

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