

The Use of Social Media in Teaching: Student and Lecturers Perceptions

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Abstract: The year 2020 has forced businesses and other institutions to start using technology extensively. Educational institutions were also forced to move to virtual classrooms and the use of social media in their delivery of their content. Students- both experienced and not experienced in the use of technology- were also forced to adapt to the new realities of teaching. The primary aim of the current study was to investigate the use of social media as a lecturing tool by examining the perceptions of lecturers and students regarding the effectiveness of social media networking systems as a lecturing tool. The study adopted a quantitative approach utilising a survey questionnaire to collect data from university lecturers and students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology in Bangkok. The overall sample for the study consisted of 326 respondents and of these, 30 were lecturers and 296 were students. From the data it is evident that both lecturers and students have a general positive attitude towards social network systems as a tool to be used in the academic environment. It was also found that students preferred social media as an additional method of instruction.

1. Introduction

It has taken decades for technology to become an integral part of the global market, resulting in the borders between countries becoming less defined and sometimes even non-existent. Internet technology is now part of everyone's lives. In the field of education, the use of social media is widespread among students and teachers around the world (Retta, 2012; Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2013). According to Dixon (2015: 9), about 2 billion people use social media network daily – while Facebook alone has more than 2 billion users. Many academics have been using social media and social networks for academic teaching purposes and to enhance the learning of students (Retta, 2012). According to Wannaphapha (2017), social media is used for teaching and learning as a medium for communicating between lecturers and students, especially when students want to communicate with lecturers immediately, they encounter problems or if something is unclear about both academic issues and student affairs.

By using technology in teaching, Young (2014) indicates e-learning as the tool to deliver content to all people, not only for maintaining relationships with people or loved ones, but also for educational purposes.

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The issue of education and information, as well as access to professors or lecturers, is important because they all act as barriers to increasing and improving the study experience. The issues that contribute to the barriers that face teaching and learning in Thailand range from communication issues to teaching matters. Further research is needed in this field as it addresses barriers that are prevalent in many countries. The use of social media-based systems overcomes the barriers of time, cost and geography, all of which are not unique to any one country and are transferable to a host of industries.

Social media and social networking have developed in many ways in teaching and learning. According to a study by Wannaphapha (2017), it was found that lecturers use social media online to motivate and create excitement for learning among their students using, for example, VDO in YouTube.com by showing certain interesting VDOs or even requiring their students to submit assignments via the YouTube channel. In addition, by using social media lecturers can communicate with students immediately and in real time when students are online and asking questions. Social media also provides an opportunity for both parties to build relationships and to establish trust, as well as reduce stress.

Furthermore, lecturers can reach out to students who neglect to submit their work as they will be able to communicate with them immediately as well as to answer any questions that students may have. Finally, lecturers can create teaching materials by using VDO clips and posting them online or on social networks, as well as creating Word files or PDF that can be posted on social media platforms. The focus of this study is on the use of these social media platforms and the perceptions of lecturers and students as to their usability.

2. Literature Review

Many studies research the increasing trend of using technology or the internet to communicate in professional sectors such as education, business, government and trade; one example of such a study is that of Wiid, Nell and Cant (2015) about the increasing use of social media in an educational setting around the world. Global Digital (2019) states that around the world there are 7,876 billion people, of which approximately 4,388 billion use the internet, while smart phones are used by 5,112 billion people, and social networks are used by approximately 3,484 billion people (marketingoops.com, 2019).

Thailand has a population of about 69.24 million people, approximately 51 million of whom are regular social media users and 49 million access social media via their smartphones (Marketingoops.com, February 23,2019). Since the turn of the century Thailand has seen a rapid growth of internet users and most noticeably a huge uptake of social media websites, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Line etc. From these figures there are many opportunities for a cross section of industries to tap into this huge market. According to McNaughton (2012), it is expected that social media usage will continue to rise in Thailand as internet penetration and mobile coverage increase. A study by Mangold and Faulds (2009) also indicates that the use of social media empowers the consumer through the “freedom of speech”, further enhancing the value and use of this medium.

2.1 Defining Social Media

According to Collins English Dictionary, Web 2.0 is the second phase of the internet that allows users to interact more dynamically through any social media, instead of just accessing information on the web.

Social networking sites (SNSs) are the most prevalent Web 2.0 applications among cyber users (Balakrishnan, 2013). In Thailand, SNSs have gained more attention from and are being accessed increasingly by internet users due to the lower cost of broadband internet services (National Electronics & Computer Technology Center, 2008). SNSs (e.g., YouTube, Facebook, and Line) were reported as being among the most visited websites. In Thailand, almost 70% of internet users have participated in SNSs, and accessing SNSs is the second most popular activity among mobile internet users (National Electronics & Computer Technology Center, 2010). However, there has been limited research conducted in Thailand to understand why SNSs are growing rapidly and what factors influence SNS usage. According to Mangold and Faulds (2009: 357), social media comprises a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated, and used by consumers with the intention to educate each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues.

Because of the rapid developments in technology, social media allows two-way communication especially when it comes to sharing information. Social media platforms are predicted to increase the number of users annually (Collins, Shiffman & Rock, 2016). Social media will play an especially important role as intermediary in spreading their ideas and as a communication channel (Erlandsson, Bródka, Borg & Johnson, 2016).

Social media platforms are regularly used for academic teaching. They play a particular role in education such as enabling communication between instructors and students, the sharing of ideas and information among classmates, and collaboration among classmates, and even building relationships after class (Al-Khalifa & Garcia, 2013; Camilia, Ibraim & Dalhatu, 2013, Junco, Heiberer & Loken, 2011; Ketari & Khanum, 2013). There are many useful methods of social media such as forums, message boards, photo sharing sites, RSS (simple syndication), search engine marketing, social bookmarking, SNSs, and video-sharing sites (Gabriel & Koh, 2016).

Many researchers have studied the relationship between social network website usage linked to educational engagement and learning in the United States (Junco et al., 2011). The research has found that using social networks such as Twitter could facilitate learning as well as communication with students. There are three aspects that media literacy can address within the educational sector: firstly, it can open more sources, agendas and facts associated with the commercial benefits and their effect on corporate media; secondly, the right to publish to citizens to educate and generate projects through the use of communication; and lastly, as a source of alternative media for both the critical reception of media messages and the audio/visual products created by communities themselves (Lema-Blanco, Rodríguez-Gómez & Barranquero-Carretero, 2016). However, Camilia et al. (2013) indicate that Nigerian students used social media for studying, but it had no impact on their learning even though they spent more time with it. On the other hand, in their study, Al-Rahmi, Othman and Yusuf (2015) found that social media helped to improve students' learning.

YouTube as a social media platform also has pedagogic potential for engaging large classes of students by encouraging them to script YouTube videos and in some cases to make them, with the creative process helping to embed understanding of fundamental principles. There has been an increasing focus on getting students to create multimedia materials to enhance learning.

In terms of communication, social media is a way to help students form a better understanding when it comes to learning; social media is also important in the organisation to internally link departments and to form relationships with the public, as well as provide sustainable information.

The core educational benefits of the use of social media include creating a space for identity politics and resolving role conflicts. However, social media allows lecturers a way to symbolically stay connected to students. Lupton (2014) indicates significant advantages and disadvantages of social media usage. The results found more benefits in using social media in an academic environment, not only for students and professors, but also for stakeholders such as the community, parents and so forth. Many benefits of using social media networking were highlighted, including real-time connection with networks, especially with conversations; helping students to build relationships with teachers; creating a culture of sharing; increasing the ability to get information via mobile phone; as well as keeping track of international news. Students who use social media and technology have opportunities to freely discuss topics presented in class and can share these discussions with classmates and get their input. That can help to break down barriers for lecturers who find themselves isolated from their students.

Many researchers state that if instructors use social media for academic purposes, they should focus on the benefits of implementing it, especially if they integrate it to enhance academic performance and the learning environment.

3. Aim and Methodology

The primary aim of the current study was to investigate the use of social media as a lecturing tool. This was done by examining the perceptions of lecturers and students regarding the effectiveness of social media networking systems as a lecturing tool, the extent to which social media networking systems are utilised by lecturers and students and the extent to which lecturers and students are prepared to communicate via social media.

3.1 Procedure and Design

The study adopted a quantitative approach utilising a survey questionnaire to collect data from university lecturers and students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology regarding the use of social media as a lecturing tool.

To investigate the perceptions of lecturers and students regarding the use of social media as a lecturing tool, respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement with statements related to their perceptions on social network systems on a 7-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 – ‘strongly disagree’ to 7 – ‘strongly agree’.

The statements pertaining to social network systems included in the survey questionnaire examined the perceptions of respondents regarding the ease of use of social network systems, perceptions regarding social network systems to enhance teaching/learning, the attitude of respondents towards social network systems, the intention of respondents to use social network systems and the general importance of social network systems.

3.2 Sample

The overall sample for the study consisted of 326 respondents (N = 326). Of the 326 respondents, 30 were lecturers and 296 were students.

The lecturer group within the sample was predominantly female (53.3%, n = 16) and fell within the 36–40-year age group (43.3%, n = 13). In terms of position, the group was also mainly comprised of ‘lecturers’ (66.7%, n = 10) and ‘junior lecturers’ (26.7%, n = 8).

In terms of the student group, most respondents were female (67.9%, n = 201) and between the ages of 18 and 24 (82.8%, n = 245). Most of the student group within the sample were in their second year of study or higher (96.3%, n = 285) with only nine (3%) first-year students included in the sample. The majority of both the lecturer group (90%, n = 27) and the student group (85.1%, n = 252) indicated that they did have a social media account.

Figure 1 below provides a breakdown of the predominant accounts used by lecturers and students:

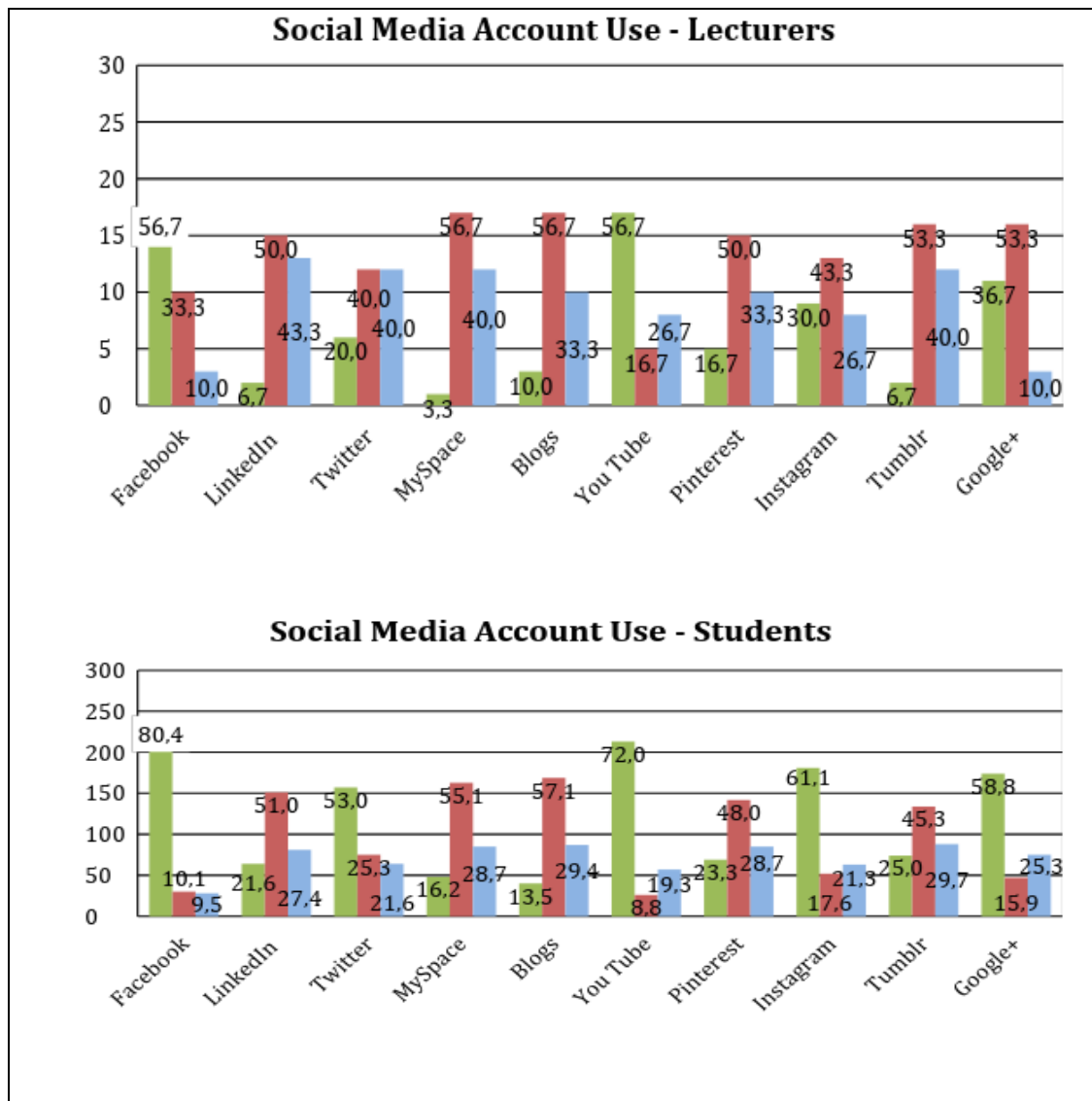


Figure 1: Social media account use – lecturers and students

In terms of the social media accounts utilised by lecturers, Facebook (56.7%, n = 17), YouTube (56.7, n = 17), Google+ (36.7%, n = 11) and Instagram (30%, n = 9) emerged as the primary account’s respondents reported using (see figure 1).

The primary social media accounts used by students similarly included Facebook (80.4%, n = 238), YouTube (72%, n = 213), Instagram (61.1%, n = 181) and Google+ (58.8%, n = 174) (see figure 1).

Figure 2 below provides a breakdown of the frequency of use of the various social media accounts for lecturers and students:

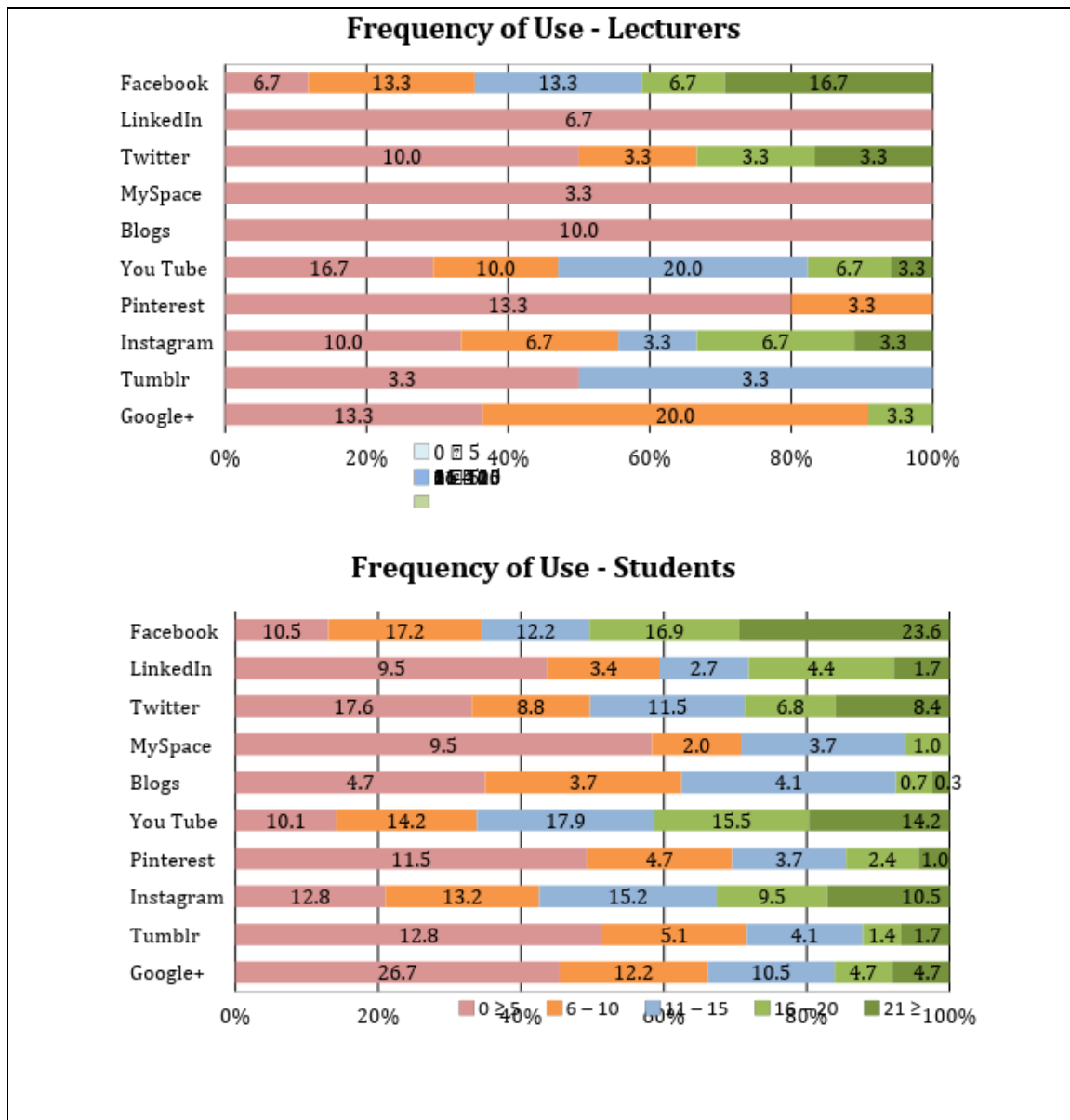


Figure 2: Frequency of social media account use – lecturers and students

About the frequency of use of the various social media accounts used by lecturers, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Google+ emerged as the accounts that were accessed by the highest percentage of users for the highest number of hours per week (see figure 2).

In line with the above, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter were the accounts which were accessed by the highest percentage of users for the highest number of hours per week (see figure 2).

Overall, both the lecturer and student groups within the sample thus reported similar tendencies in terms of the types of social media accounts utilised as well as similar patterns regarding the frequency of use of these accounts.

4. Data Analysis Findings and Results

The data was analysed using basic descriptive statistics and frequencies, as well as independent samples t-tests to statistically compare the different groups. Frequencies and percentages were used to provide a graphic breakdown of the data.

The findings and results will be presented by firstly examining the perceptions of lecturers regarding the use of social media network systems as a lecturing tool, followed by an examination of the perceptions of students regarding the use of social media network systems as a lecturing tool. Finally, statistical comparisons between the groups will be examined.

4.1 Social Media as a Lecturing Tool: Perceptions of Lecturers

To examine the perceptions of lecturers regarding the use of social network systems as a lecturing tool, respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement with various statements relating to the ease of use of social network systems, social network systems to enhance teaching, their attitude towards social network systems, the intention of use of social network systems and the general importance of social network systems. Additionally, respondents were required to indicate whether they felt that it was important to communicate with students through social media.

4.1.1 Ease of Use – Lecturers

The overall mean about the ease of use of social network systems for lecturers was found to be 5.2. Overall, the lecturer group thus indicated an above average level of agreement (> 4) in terms of their perception regarding the ease of use of social network systems.

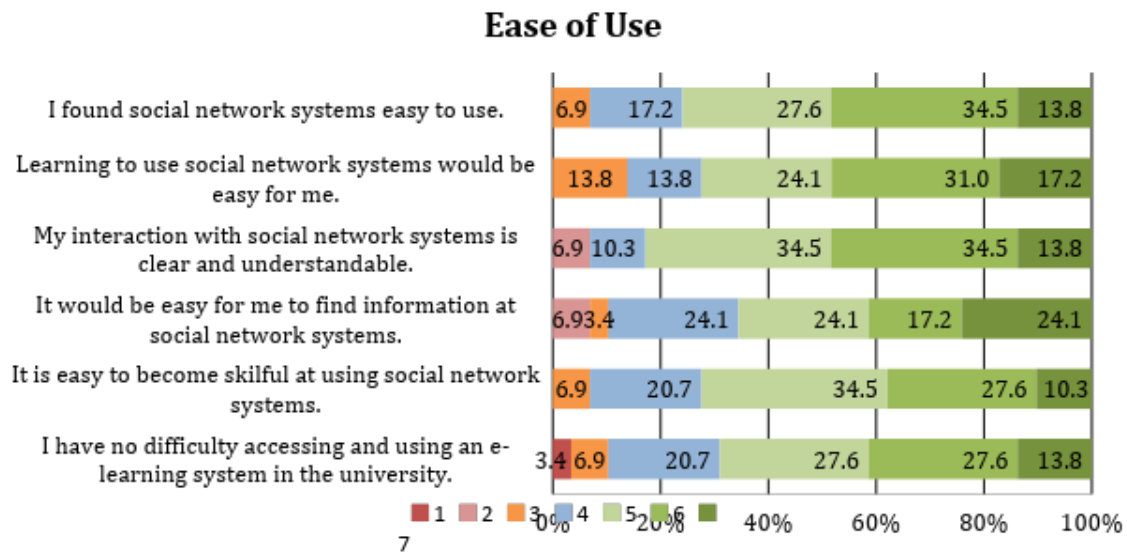


Figure 3: Perceptions regarding ease of use of social media network systems – lecturers

Overall, most respondents from the lecturer group indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the various statements related to the ease of use of social network systems, with respondents predominantly assigning ratings of ‘5’, ‘6’ and ‘7’ (see figure 3).

Table 3 provides a breakdown of the mean ratings in terms of agreement with the various statements related to the ease of use of social network systems for the lecturer group:

Table 1: Perceptions regarding ease of use mean scores – lecturers

	Mean
Ease of use	
I found social network systems easy to use.	5.31
Learning to use social network systems would be easy for me.	5.24
My interaction with social network systems is clear and understandable.	5.31
It would be easy for me to find information on social network systems.	5.14
It is easy to become skilful at using social network systems.	5.14
I have no difficulty accessing and using an e-learning system in the university.	5.07

‘I found social network systems easy to use’, ‘My interaction with social network systems is clear and understandable’ and ‘Learning to use social network systems would be easy for me’ were found to have the highest mean ratings in terms of agreement, with respective means of 5.31, 5.31 and 5.24 (see table 3). All the statements related to ease of use of social network systems were found to have above average ratings (> 4) in terms of agreement within the lecturer group (see table 1).

4.1.2 Enhancement of Teaching – Lecturers

The overall mean about the perception of lecturers of social media network systems as a tool to enhance teaching amounted to 4.87. Overall, the lecturer group thus indicated an above average (> 4) level of agreement with the perception that social network systems can be utilised as a tool to enhance their teaching methods.

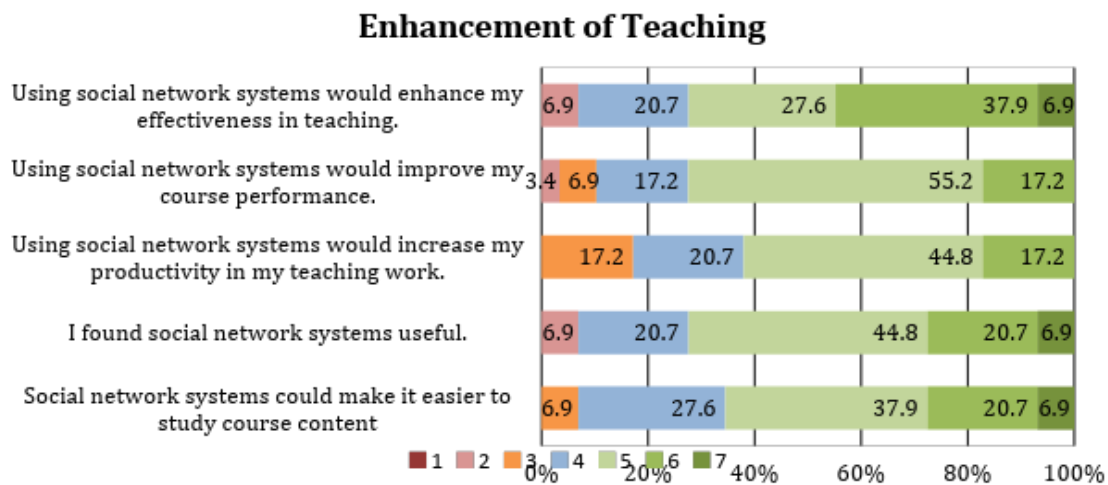


Figure 4: Perceptions regarding social media network systems for enhancement of teaching – lecturers

Most respondents from the lecturer group within the sample assigned ratings of ‘5’, ‘6’ and ‘7’ to indicate they agreed strongly with the various statements related to social network systems as a means to enhance teaching (see figure 6). No respondents within the lecturer group indicated that they ‘1 – strongly disagree’ with any of the statements (see figure 4).

Table 4 below provides a breakdown of the mean rating in terms of agreement for the lecturer group with the various statements concerning the social network systems as tools to enhance teaching:

Table 2: Perceptions regarding enhancement of teaching mean scores – lecturers

	Mean
Enhancement of teaching	
Using social network systems would enhance my effectiveness in teaching.	5.10
Using social network systems would improve my course performance.	4.76
Using social network systems would increase my productivity in my teaching work.	4.62
I found social network systems useful.	4.93
Social network systems could make it easier to study course content.	4.93

‘Using social network systems would enhance my effectiveness in teaching’, ‘I found social network systems useful’ and ‘Social network systems could make it easier to study course content’ were found to have the highest mean ratings in terms of the agreement means of 5.10, 4.93 and 4.93 respectively (see table 4). Overall, the above average ratings (> 4) of agreement were found within the lecturer group for all the statements related to social network systems to enhance teaching (see table 2).

4.1.3 Attitude towards Use – Lecturers

In terms of the attitude lecturers hold towards the use of social network systems, the overall mean was found to be 4.91. The lecturer group thus indicated an above average positive attitude (> 4) towards the use of social network systems.

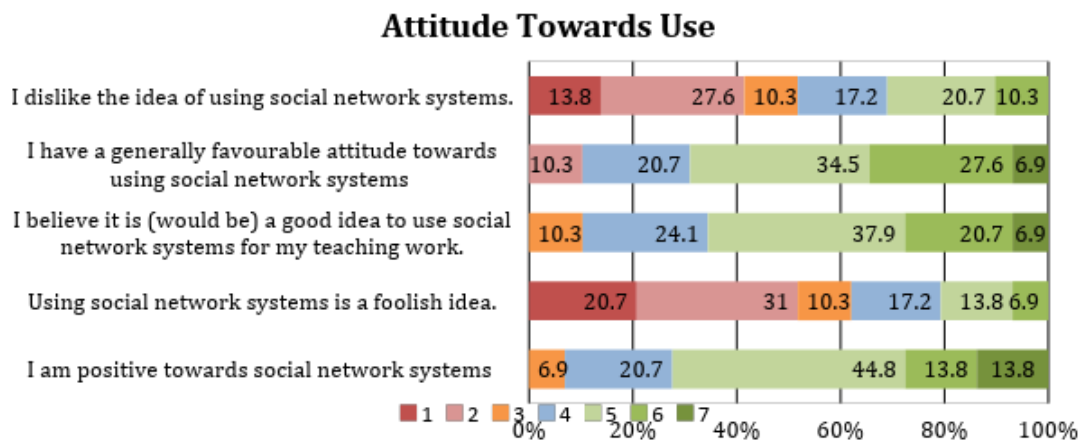


Figure 5: Attitude towards use of social media network systems for teaching – lecturers

Most respondents from the lecturer group indicated that they agreed to strongly agreed with the statements related to a positive attitude towards social network systems, predominantly assigning ratings of ‘5’, ‘6’ and ‘7’ to the statements phrased in a positive manner. In terms of the two statements phrased in a negative manner: ‘I dislike the idea of using social network systems’ and ‘Using social network systems is a foolish idea’, most respondents within the lecturer group indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with these statements, assigning predominantly ratings of ‘1’ and ‘2’ (see figure 5).

Table 3 provides a breakdown of the mean rating in terms of agreement with the various statements related to the attitude of lecturers towards social media network systems:

Table 3: Attitude towards use of social media network systems for teaching mean scores – lecturers

		Mean
Attitude towards use		
	I dislike the idea of using social network systems.	3.34
	I have a generally favourable attitude towards using social network systems.	4.90
	I believe it is (would be) a good idea to use social network systems for my teaching work.	4.90
	Using social network systems is a foolish idea.	2.93
	I am positive towards social network systems.	5.07

‘I am positive towards social network systems’, ‘I have a generally favourable attitude towards using social network systems’ and ‘I believe it is (would be) a good idea to use social network systems for my teaching work’ were all found to have above average mean ratings of 5.07, 4.90 and 4.90 respectively. In terms of the statements expressing a negative attitude towards social network systems ‘Using social network systems is a foolish idea’ and ‘I dislike the idea of using social network systems’, the mean ratings were found to be 2.93 and 3.34 respectively, indicating disagreement from the respondents in the lecturer group with these statements and reflecting a positive attitude towards the use of social network systems (see table 3).

4.1.4 Intention of Use – Lecturers

About the intention of lecturers to use social network systems as a tool during teaching, an overall mean of 4.42 was found. The lecturer group within the sample thus indicated an above average level of agreement (> 4) about their intention to use social network systems.

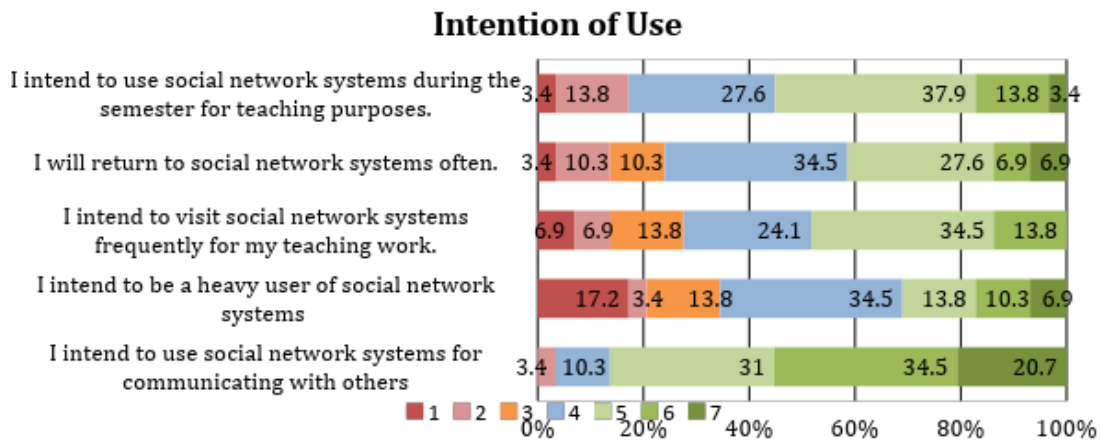


Figure 6: Intention to use social media network systems for teaching – lecturers

Most respondents from the lecturer group within the sample indicated that they agreed to strongly agreed with the various statement regarding their intention to use social network systems, assigning mostly ratings of ‘5’, ‘6’ and ‘7’. About the intention to be a heavy user of social network systems, 17.2% of respondents indicated that they disagreed with the statement assigning a rating of ‘1’. In contrast, however, respondents rated their agreement with the statement regarding their intention to use social network systems to communicate with others predominantly as ‘5’, ‘6’ and ‘7’, indicating higher agreement. This may allude to the fact that while lecturers may not necessarily intend to use social network systems heavily in general, they may have a greater intention to use them specifically in relation to communication within the teaching environment.

Table 4 below provides a breakdown of the mean ratings for the various statements regarding the intention of use of social network systems by lecturers:

Table 4: Intention to use social media network systems for teaching mean scores – lecturers

	Mean
Intention of use	
I intend to use social network systems during the semester for teaching purposes.	4.38
I will return to social network systems often.	4.21
I intend to visit social network systems frequently for my teaching work.	4.14
I intend to be a heavy user of social network systems	3.83
I intend to use social network systems for communicating with others	5.55

‘I intend to use social network systems for communicating with others’ and ‘I intend to use social network systems during the semester for teaching purposes’ were found to have the highest overall mean ratings, with ratings of 5.55 and 4.38 respectively (see table 4).

In contrast, ‘I intend to be a heavy user of social network systems’ was found to have a below average mean rating of 3.83 (see table 6). As stated previously, this may suggest that while lecturers may intend to use social network systems for teaching purposes and as part of their teaching work, they may not intend to be heavy users of social network systems in general beyond the teaching environment.

4.1.5 Importance of Social Media – Lecturers

In terms of the value and importance lecturers place on social network systems, the overall mean amounted to 4.29. Overall, the lecturer group thus indicated an above average (> 4) level of agreement with the perception that social media network systems are important within the teaching environment.

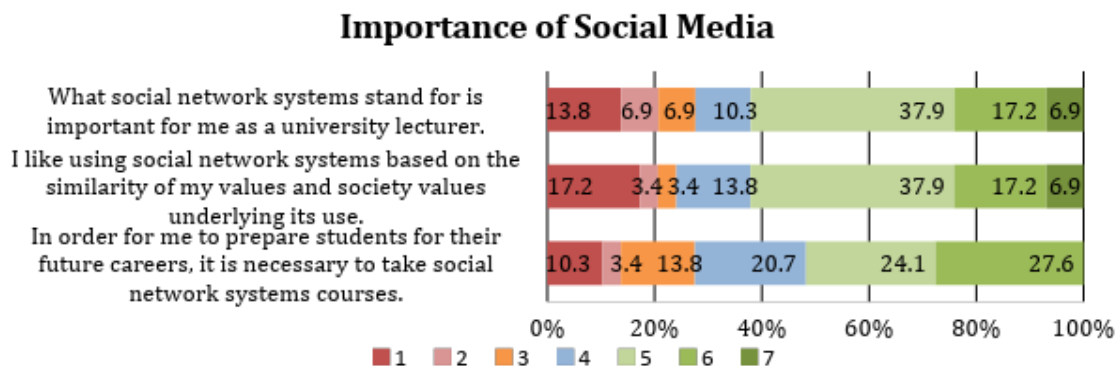


Figure 7: Perceptions regarding importance of use of social media network systems for teaching – lecturers

Most respondents within the lecturer group indicated that they agree with the statements related to the value and importance of social network systems, predominantly assigning ratings of ‘5’, ‘6’ and ‘7’ (see figure 7).

Table 5 below provides a breakdown of the mean ratings for the various statements in relation to the importance and value lecturers place on social network systems:

Table 5: Perceptions regarding the importance of use of social media network systems for teaching mean scores – lecturers

	Mean
Importance	
What social network systems stand for is important for me as university lecturer	4.31
I like using social network systems based on the similarity of my values and society values underlying its use.	4.31
In order for me to prepare students for their future careers, it is necessary to take social network systems courses.	4.28

Overall, the mean ratings in terms of agreement for the lecturer group were above average for all the statements regarding the value and importance of social network systems (see table 7).

4.1.6 Communication through Social Media – Lecturers

To further investigate the importance the lecturer group place on social media as a means of communication with students, respondents were asked to indicate whether they think it is important to communicate with their students on social media:

Table 6: Importance of social media communication – lecturers

	n	Percentage
Lecturers		
Yes	13	43.3
No	6	20.0
Missing	11	36.7

Most respondents (43.3%, n = 13) indicated that they thought that communication with students through social media was important, with 20% (n = 6) indicating that they did not think it was important, while 36.7% (n = 11) of respondents did not provide an indication of their opinion. If this is considered in line with the findings regarding the intention of lecturers to use social network systems to communicate with others, most lecturers do perceive social network systems as an important tool for communication.

4.2 Social Media as a Lecturing Tool: Perceptions of Students

In line with the examination of the perception of lecturers regarding the use of social media network systems as a lecturing tool, the perceptions of students were also investigated by requiring respondents to indicate their level of agreement with various statements relating to the ease of use of social media network systems, social media network systems as a means to enhance learning, their attitude towards social media network systems, the intention of use of social media network systems and the general importance of social media network systems. Furthermore, respondents were required to indicate whether they felt it was important to communicate with lecturers using social media, the method they preferred for additional instruction, what form of social media channel they felt lecturers/tutors could use as a form of communication as well as which media channels could be used to enhance normal class discussions.

4.2.1 Ease of Use – Students

The overall mean about the ease of use of social media network systems for students amounted to 4.67. Overall, the student group thus indicated an above average level of agreement (> 4) in terms of their perception regarding the ease of use of social media network systems.

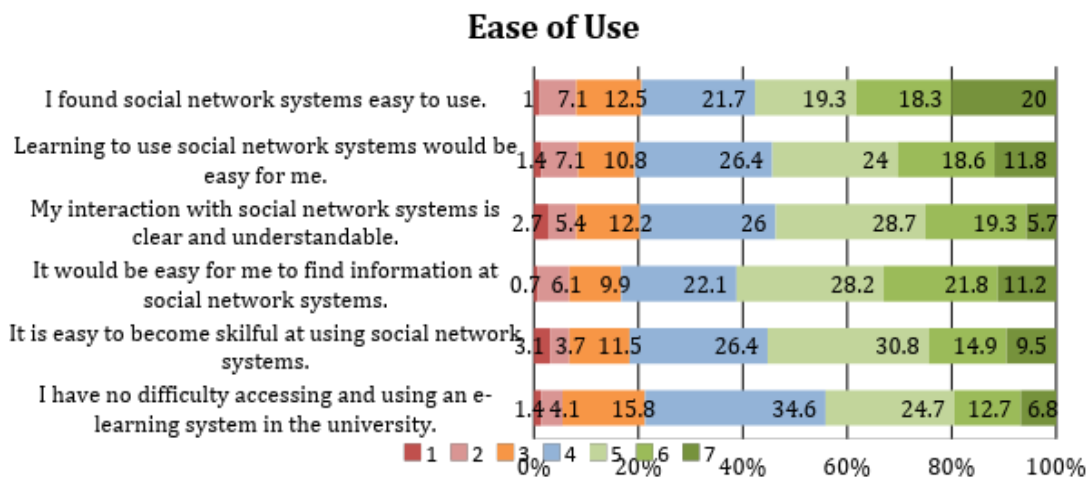


Figure 8: Perceptions regarding ease of use of social media network systems – students

Most respondents within the student group indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the various statements related to the ease of use of social media network systems, with respondents predominantly assigning ratings of ‘5’, ‘6’ and ‘7’ (see figure 8). On further examination it is also clear that between 22 and 35% of students tended to also assign a rating of ‘4’ in terms of agreement with the various statements, indicating a neutral position regarding ease of use (see figure 8).

Table 9 provides a breakdown of the mean ratings in terms of agreement with the various statements related to the ease of use of social media network systems for the student group:

Table 7: Perceptions regarding ease of use mean scores – students

	Mean
Ease of use	
I found social network systems easy to use.	4.86
Learning to use social network systems would be easy for me.	4.68
My interaction with social network systems is clear and understandable.	4.53
It would be easy for me to find information on social network systems.	4.81
It is easy to become skilful at using social network systems.	4.61
I have no difficulty accessing and using an e-learning system in the university.	4.42

‘I found social network systems easy to use’ and ‘It would be easy for me to find information on social network systems’ were found to have the highest mean ratings, with ratings of 4.86 and 4.81 respectively (see table 7). All the mean ratings in terms of the level of agreement of the student group regarding the ease of use of social network systems were found to be above average (> 4) (see table 7).

4.2.2 Enhancement of Learning – Students

The overall mean about the perceptions of students on social media network systems as a tool to enhance learning was found to be 4.64. Overall, an above average (> 4) level of agreement was indicated by the student group regarding the perception that social media network systems can be utilised as a tool to enhance learning.

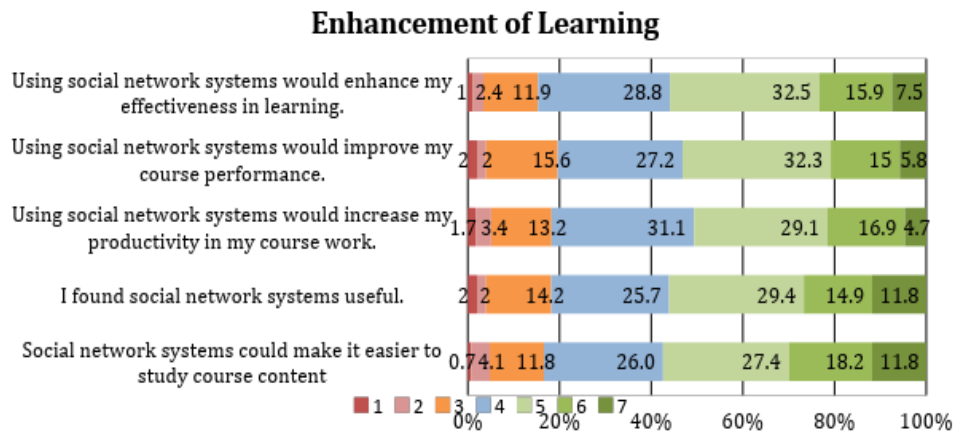


Figure 9: Perceptions regarding social media network systems for enhancement of learning – students

Most respondents from the student group within the sample assigned ratings of ‘5’, ‘6’ and ‘7’ to indicate they agreed to strongly agreed with the various statements related to social media network systems to enhance teaching (see figure 9). Neutral ratings of ‘4’ in terms of agreement were also assigned to the various statements by approximately 26 to 31% of students (see figure 9).

Table 10 below provides a breakdown of the mean ratings in terms of the agreement for the student group with the various statements concerning the social media network systems as a tool to enhance learning:

Table 8: Perceptions regarding enhancement of learning mean scores – students

	Mean
Enhancement of teaching/learning	
Using social network systems would enhance my effectiveness in learning.	4.67
Using social network systems would improve my course performance.	4.54
Using social network systems would increase my productivity in my coursework.	4.52
I found social network systems useful.	4.70
Social network systems could make it easier to study course content	4.77

‘Social network systems could make it easier to study course content’ and ‘I found social network systems useful’ were found to have the highest mean rating in terms of agreement within the student group, with mean ratings of 4.77 and 4.70 respectively (see table 8). Overall, above mean ratings (> 4) were found for all the statements related to social network systems as a tool to enhance learning within the student group.

4.2.3 Attitude towards Use – Students

In terms of the attitude of students towards the use of social network systems, the overall mean amounted to 4.43. The student group thus indicated an above average positive attitude (> 4) towards the use of social network systems.

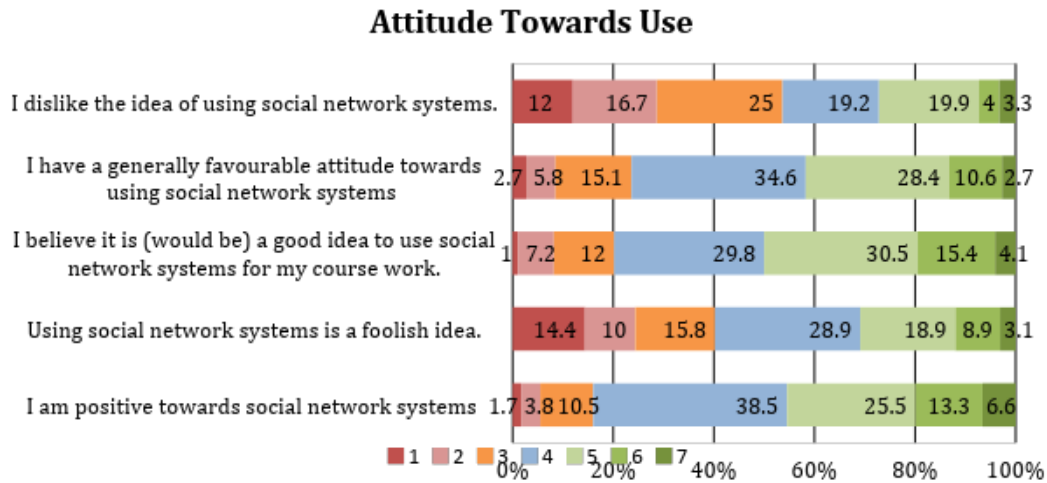


Figure 10: Attitude towards use of social media network systems for learning – students

Most respondents from the student group indicated that they agreed to strongly agreed with the statements related to a positive attitude towards social network systems, predominantly assigning ratings of ‘5’, ‘6’ and ‘7’ to the statements phrased in a positive manner compared with the percentage of students who assigned ratings of ‘3’, ‘2’ and ‘1’ (see figure 10).

In terms of the two statements phrased in a negative manner: ‘I dislike the idea of using social network systems’ and ‘Using social network systems is a foolish idea’, most respondents within the student group indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with these statements, with ratings of ‘1’, ‘2’ and ‘3’ being primarily assigned (see figure 12). While this may be the case, a large percentage of respondents (30.9%) agreed to some extent with the statement: ‘Using social network systems is a foolish idea’ (see figure 12). Approximately 19–39% of respondents indicated a neutral rating of ‘4’ for the various statements relating to their attitude towards the use of social network systems (see figure 10).

Table 9 below provides a breakdown of the mean rating in terms of agreement with the various statements related to the attitude of students towards social media network systems:

Table 9: Attitude towards use of social media network systems for learning mean scores – students

	Mean
Attitude towards use	
I dislike the idea of using social network systems.	3.43
I have a generally favourable attitude towards using social network systems	4.23
I believe it is (would be) a good idea to use social network systems for my coursework.	4.44
Using social network systems is a foolish idea.	3.67
I am positive towards social network systems	4.49

‘I am positive towards social network systems’ and ‘I believe it is (would be) a good idea to use social network systems for my course work’ were found to have the highest mean ratings of 4.49 and 4.44 respectively (see table 11). About the statements expressing a negative attitude towards social network systems ‘Using social network systems is a foolish idea’ and ‘I dislike the idea of using social network systems’, the mean ratings were found to be 3.43 and 3.67 respectively, indicating disagreement from the respondents and reflecting a positive attitude towards the use of social network systems (see table 9).

4.2.4 Intention of Use – Students

In terms of the intention of students to use social network systems as a tool during learning, an overall mean of 4.54 was found. The student group within the sample thus indicated an above average level of agreement (> 4) about their intention to use social network systems as a learning tool.

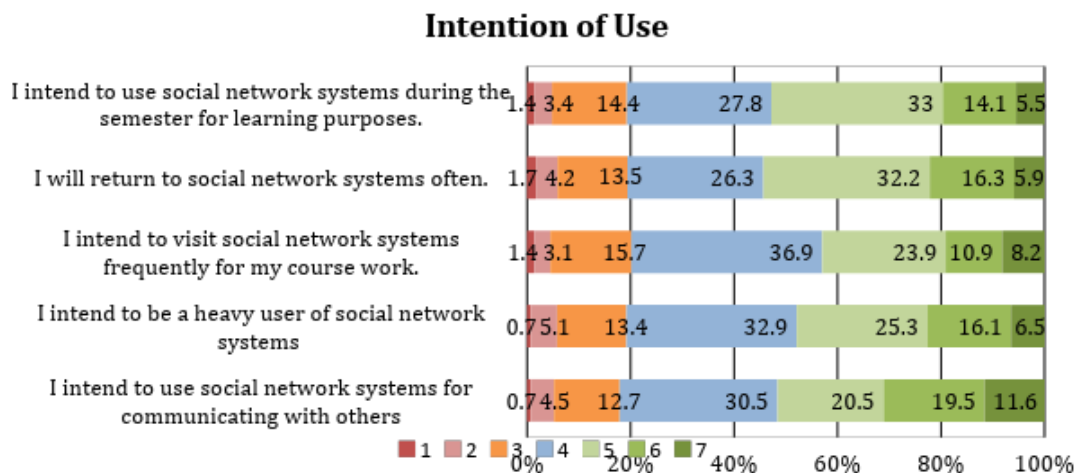


Figure 11: Intention to use social media network systems for learning – students

Most respondents from the student group indicated that they agreed to strongly agreed with the various statements regarding their intention to use social network systems, assigning mostly ratings of ‘5’, ‘6’ and ‘7’ (see figure 11). Approximately 26–37% of students selected the neutral option ‘4’ about the various statements related to the intention to use social network systems for learning purposes.

Table 10 below provides a breakdown of the mean ratings for the various statements regarding the intention to use social network systems by students:

Table 10: Perceptions regarding importance of use of social media network systems for learning mean scores – students

	Mean
Intention of use	
I intend to use social network systems during the semester for learning purposes.	4.52
I will return to social network systems often.	4.55
I intend to visit social network systems frequently for my coursework.	4.44
I intend to be a heavy user of social network systems	4.51
I intend to use social network systems for communicating with others	4.71

‘I intend to use social network systems for communicating with others’ and ‘I will return to social network systems often’ were found to have the highest overall mean ratings with ratings of 4.71 and 4.55, respectively. Overall, all the statements were found to have above average mean ratings (> 4).

4.2.5 Importance of Social Media – Students

Concerning the value and importance placed on social network system by students, the overall mean was found to be 4.62. Overall, an above average (> 4) level of agreement was thus indicated by the student group in terms of the importance and value of social network systems within the learning environment.

Importance of Social Media

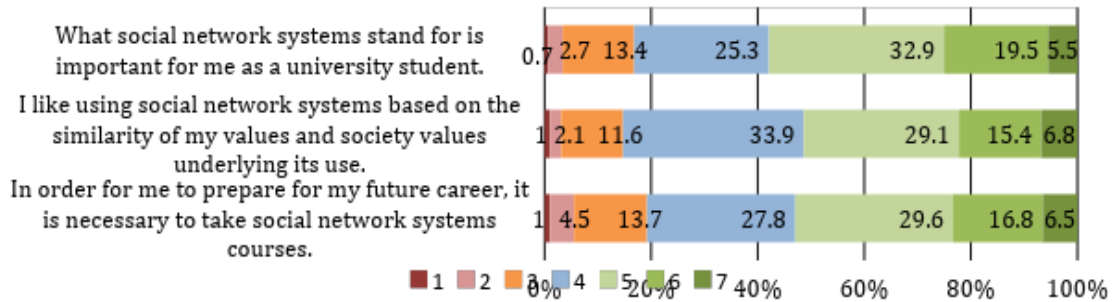


Figure 12: Perceptions regarding the importance of use of social media network systems for learning – students

Most respondents within the student group indicated that they agreed to strongly agreed with the statements related to the value and importance of social network systems, predominantly assigning ratings of ‘5’, ‘6’ and ‘7’ (see figure 12). Approximately 25–34% of students assigned a neutral rating of ‘4’ (see figure 12).

Table 11 below provides a breakdown of the mean ratings for the various statements in relation to the importance and value students place on social network systems:

Table 11: Perceptions regarding the importance of use of social media network systems for learning mean scores – students

	Mean
Importance	
What social network systems stand for is important for me as university student.	4.67
I like using social network systems based on the similarity of my values and society values underlying its use.	4.62
In order for me prepare for my future career, it is necessary to take social network systems courses.	4.57

Overall, the mean ratings in terms of agreement for the student group were above average for all the statements regarding the value and importance of social network systems (see table 11).

4.2.6 Communication through Social Media – Students

To further investigate the perceptions of students regarding the importance of social media as a means of communication with lecturers/tutors, respondents were asked to indicate whether they thought it was important to communicate with their lecturers on social media:

Table 12: Social media communication important – students

		n	Percentage
Students			
	Yes	253	85.5
	No	35	11.8
	Missing	8	2.7

A total of 85.5% (n = 253) of respondents within the student group indicated that they did think it important to communicate with their lecturers using social media, with only 11.8% (n = 35) indicating otherwise.

4.2.7 Additional Methods and Channels to Enhance Instruction

To further examine the perceptions of students about the use of social media networks as a means of instruction and communication, respondents were required to indicate which additional methods of instruction they would prefer, which forms of social media could be used as a means of communication, and which media channels could be utilised to enhance normal class discussions.

To examine the additional methods of instruction students preferred, respondents were required to rank the following options for additional instruction in order of preference:

1. Tutor classes
2. E-tutor classes (online)
3. Discussion classes
4. Video conference
5. Social media

A mean score was derived for each of the additional methods of instruction based on the rankings from the respondents. Figure 13 below provides a breakdown of the mean scores for the various additional methods of instruction:

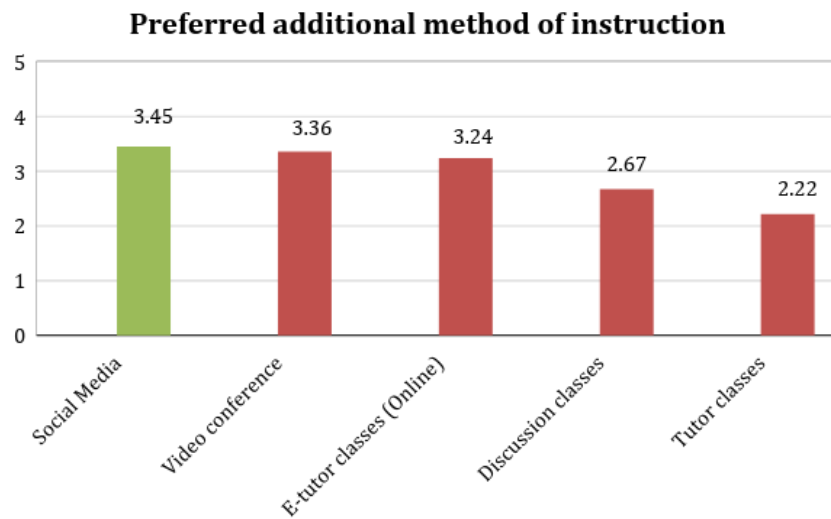


Figure 13: Preferred additional methods of instruction

In terms of preferred additional methods of instruction, social media emerged as the preferred choice followed by instruction using video conferencing and online e-tutor classes (see figure 13).

Figures 14 and 15 below provide a breakdown of the forms of social media that could be used for communication according to students and the media channels identified by students to enhance normal class discussions respectively:

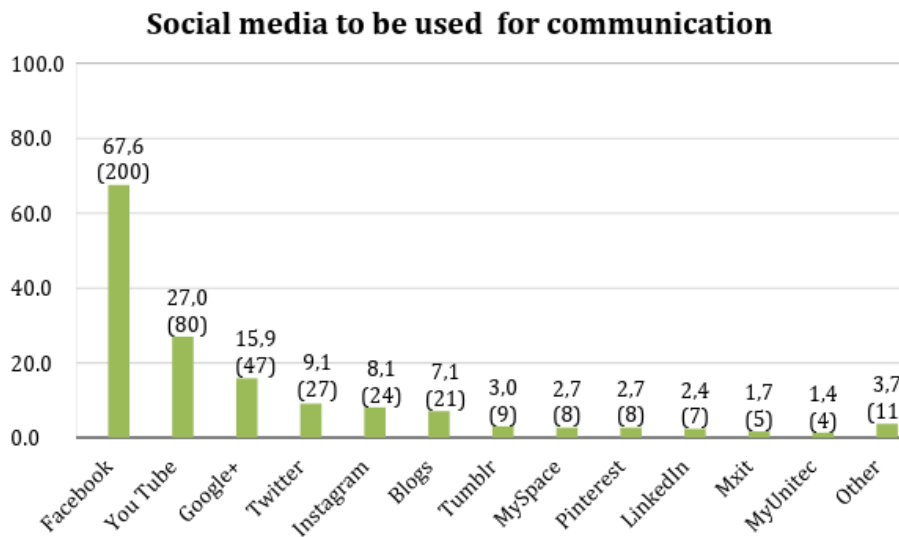


Figure 14: Form of social media to be used for communication

Most respondents (67.6%, n = 200) indicated Facebook as the primary form of social media to be used as a form of communication with lecturers. This was followed by YouTube (27%, n = 80) and Google+ (15.9%, n = 47) (see figure 16).

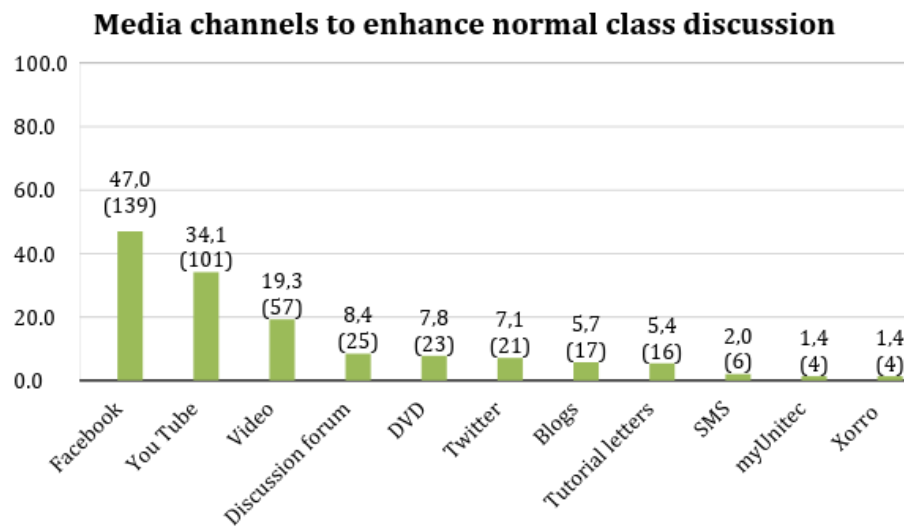


Figure 15: Media channels to enhance normal class discussion

In line with the above findings, most respondents highlighted Facebook (47%, n = 139) and YouTube (34.1%, n = 101) as the primary media channels to be utilised to enhance normal class discussions. Additionally, the use of video (19.3%, n =57) was also highlighted by respondents as a media channel to be used to enhance normal class discussions (see figure 15).

4.3 Statistical Comparison between Lecturers and Students

In addition to the descriptive analyses of the perceptions of lecturers and students regarding the use of social media network systems, statistical comparisons were also investigated.

Table 13 below provides a breakdown of the statistical differences between the lecturer and student groupings in terms of the overall means for the various elements investigated:

Table 13: Mean differences between students and lecturers overall

		Lecturer Mean	Student Mean	P-Value
	Ease of Use	5.20	4.67	.013*
	Enhancement of teaching/learning	4.87	4.64	.258
+	Attitude towards use	4.91	4.43	.020*
	Intention of use	4.42	4.54	.548
	Importance	4.29	4.62	.296

+Negatively phrased statements were reverse scored in order to obtain an accurate mean score.

*Significant at the $p < .05$ level

No significant statistical differences were found between the groups in terms of enhancement of teaching/learning, intention of use or importance of social network systems ($p > .05$). However, a significant statistical difference was found between the lecturer and student groupings for ease of use as well as attitude towards use ($p < .05$), with lecturers obtaining a significantly higher mean score than the student grouping for both these elements. This may indicate that lecturers perceive social network systems as easier to use than the student grouping and have a generally more positive attitude towards the use of social network systems (see table 13).

To examine the differences between the lecturer and student groupings in more detail, the groupings were also statistically compared on each of the various statements related to the different elements investigated. Table 14 below provides a breakdown of the statistical differences between the lecturer and student groupings on the various statements regarding the use of social network systems as a lecturing tool:

Table 14: Mean differences between students and lecturers on statements

		Lecturers mean	Student mean	P-value
Ease of use				
	I found social network systems easy to use.	5.31	4.86	.058
	Learning to use social network systems would be easy for me.	5.24	4.68	.044*
	My interaction with social network systems is clear and understandable.	5.31	4.53	.004**
	It would be easy for me to find information on social network systems.	5.14	4.81	.231
	It is easy to become skilful at using social network systems.	5.14	4.61	.048*
	I have no difficulty accessing and using an e-learning system in the university.	5.07	4.42	.011**
Enhancement of teaching/learning				
	Using social network systems would enhance my effectiveness in teaching/learning.	5.10	4.67	.070
	Using social network systems would improve my course performance.	4.76	4.54	.254
	Using social network systems would increase my productivity in my teaching/course work.	4.62	4.52	.673

	I found social network systems useful.	4.93	4.70	.328
	Social network systems could make it easier to study course content	4.93	4.77	.452
Attitude towards use				
	I dislike the idea of using social network systems.	3.34	3.43	.788
	I have a generally favourable attitude towards using social network systems	4.90	4.23	.006**
	I believe it is (would be) a good idea to use social network systems for my teaching/course work.	4.90	4.44	.063
	Using social network systems is a foolish idea.	2.93	3.67	.019*
	I am positive towards social network systems	5.07	4.49	.016*
Intention of use				
	I intend to use social network systems during the semester for teaching/learning purposes.	4.38	4.52	.554
	I will return to social network systems often.	4.21	4.55	.172
	I intend to visit social network systems frequently for my teaching/course work.	4.14	4.44	.223
	I intend to be a heavy user of social network systems	3.83	4.51	.008**
	I intend to use social network systems for communicating with others	5.55	4.71	.002**
Importance				
	What social network systems stand for is important for me as university lecturer/student.	4.31	4.67	.298
	I like using social network systems based on the similarity of my values and society values underlying its use.	4.31	4.62	.390
	In order for me to prepare students for their future careers/to prepare for my future career,	4.28	4.57	.250

it is necessary to take social network systems courses.			
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*Significant at the $p < .05$ level & ** Significant at the $p < .01$ level

While no statistically significant differences were found between lecturers and students for the majority of the statements regarding the use of social network systems as a lecturing tool ($p > .05$), several such differences were found between statements specifically related to ease of use, attitude towards use and intention of use of social network systems (see table 14).

In relation to ease of use, statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level were found between the lecturer and student groupings for the statements: ‘Learning to use social network systems would be easy for me’ and ‘It is easy to become skilful at using social network systems’ (see table 14). Lecturers obtained a significantly higher mean score for these statements, indicating that they have a greater perception that learning to use, and becoming skilful at the use of, social network systems would be easy in comparison to the student grouping.

In addition to the above, statistically significant differences at the $p < .01$ level were further found between lecturers and students for the statements: ‘My interaction with social network systems is clear and understandable’ and ‘I have no difficulty accessing and using an e-learning system in the university’, with lecturers obtaining a significantly higher mean score in comparison with students (see table 14). Lecturers thus seem to have a greater perception regarding their ability to interact and understand social network systems than students, as well as the perception that accessing and using an e-learning system at the university would be easier in comparison with students.

In terms of their attitude towards the use of social network systems, significant differences were found between the lecturer and student groups at the $p < .05$ and $p < .01$ level respectively for the statements: ‘I am positive towards social network systems’ and ‘I have a generally favourable attitude towards using social network systems’ (see table 14). Lecturers were found to have obtained a significantly higher mean score for these statements and may thus display a greater positive attitude towards the use of social network systems in comparison with the student grouping.

Furthermore, a statistically significant difference was also found between the groups at the $p < .05$ level about the statement: ‘Using social network systems is a foolish idea’ (see table 14). Students obtained a significantly higher mean score for this statement, indicating that they may hold a greater negative attitude towards the use of social network systems than lecturers.

Overall, lecturers thus seem to have a generally more positive attitude regarding the use of social network systems in comparison to students.

Finally, in relation to intention to use social network systems, statistically significant differences at the $p < .01$ level were found between the lecturer and student groupings for the statements: ‘I intend to be a heavy user of social network systems’ and ‘I intend to use social network systems for communicating with others’ (see table 14). Lecturers obtained a significantly lower mean score for the former statement and a significantly higher mean score for the latter statement in comparison to students. Lecturers thus do not

intend to use social network systems as heavily as students in general yet may be more willing to utilise social media network systems for the specific purpose of communication than students.

5. Discussion

From the data it is evident that both lecturers and students have a generally positive attitude towards social network systems as a tool to be used in the academic environment.

In terms of the effectiveness of social network systems as a lecturing tool, both lecturers and students held the perception that it would serve to enhance teaching and learning within the university environment. Furthermore, both groupings perceived social media network systems as having value and being important in the preparation of students for their future careers.

In line with the above, and in relation to the extent to which lecturers and students are prepared to utilise social network systems, most respondents indicated that they felt that it was important for both lecturers and students to communicate through the use of social network systems and both groupings were found to have positive intentions regarding the use of social network systems. While lecturers did not necessarily indicate the same intent regarding the level of use of social network systems in general, compared to students, they indicated a high intention for using social network systems as a means for communication.

In further examining the perceptions of students regarding preferred additional methods of instruction, it was found that students preferred social media as an additional method of instruction. Students further identified Facebook and YouTube as social media channels for communication and as means to enhance normal class discussions. While students identified social media as a preferred additional method of instruction, lecturers were also found to have a significantly higher mean score regarding their attitude towards the use of social network systems and the ease of use associated with these. From both the perspectives of students as well as lecturers there is thus openness to the use of social network systems as a lecturing tool. Because both lecturers and students identified similar accounts in terms of the accounts they use and the frequency with which they use these accounts, the utilisation of the correct or optimal social media network system may ultimately have an impact on the effectiveness thereof. The utilisation of a social media network system which is already in use may improve its effectiveness as a lecturing tool.

Considering the fact that these are the predominantly social media accounts already utilised by lecturers and students, in conjunction with the positive attitude of lecturers and students regarding the use of social network systems, their positive attitude towards the use of social network systems and their positive perceptions regarding the ease of use of these systems, it is clear that the utilisation of social network systems can serve as an effective tool for enhancing teaching and learning within the academic environment from the perceptions of both lecturers and students.

6. Limitations

While the data in the current study provides a robust indication of the perceptions of lecturers and students regarding the use of social network systems as a lecturing tool, the small sample size of the lecturer group within the sample may have had an impact on the findings, with smaller sample sizes being less robust about outliers within the data.

7. Conclusion

The current study investigated the perceptions of lecturers and students regarding the effectiveness of social media network systems as a lecturing tool, the extent to which social network systems are utilised, and the extent to which lecturers and students are prepared to communicate using social network systems. Overall, both lecturers and students were found to have generally positive perceptions of the use and effectiveness of social media network systems as a lecturing tool, with positive perceptions stemming from both groups regarding the ease of use of social network systems, the enhancement of teaching and learning using social network systems, their intention to use social network systems and the importance and value of social network systems.

With most respondents already having social media accounts and indicating the importance of communication between lecturers and students using social media and in light of the predominantly positive perceptions with regard to the use of social media network systems as a lecturing tool, social media network systems represent a possible effective means to enhance teaching and learning within the academic environment.

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