



Internet Usage among Undergraduate Student in Malaysia

¹Yung Chiau Sian, ¹Fadhilah Mat Yamin and ²Wan Hussain Wan Ishak

¹School of Technology Management

²School of Computing

Universiti Utara Malaysia, MALAYSIA

ycxiang_88@yahoo.com, {fmy, hussain}@uum.edu.my

Abstract

The internet is one of the main resources for information. Through internet information can be disseminated and retrieve from any location regardless of the political and geographical boundary. The ease of the internet encourages institutions of higher learning to employ the internet to support students' learning. Many studies have been conducted to access students' perception towards the internet usage. This paper aim to re-access the student usage of the internet to support their learning. The assessment is vital in order to understand students' internet usage as different group of student may perceive internet differently. Undergraduate students were chosen as they are among the active group of internet user. The findings show that all students are actively using internet to fulfill their academic requirement and social needs. The findings reflect that most of the undergraduate students pay high responsibility towards the use of internet as this facility is freely provided by their institution of higher learning.

Keywords

Internet Usage, Internet Utilization, E-Learning

1. Introduction

The Internet is a global system of interconnected computer networks that consists of millions of private, public, academic, business, and government networks, of local to global scope. Since it was popularized in 1990s, the Internet has become one of the enabling technologies that allow communication in real time at any time regardless of the geographic location.

Through the Internet, information sharing typically the digital content can be distributed and shared among Internet users worldwide.

The web is known as one of the main sources of information. It is very popular among users which include professionals, students, household, clerk, and others (Large, Tedd and Hartley, 2001). The web provides information that serves many purposes including research (Herring, 2001; Downs and Friedman, 1999), entertainment (Spink, Bateman and Jansen, 1998; Park, 2009), travelling information (Gursoy and McCleary, 2004; Heung, 2003) and business (Spink et al., 1998). Previous study (Chavez, 1997) pointed that Internet and computer usage has impacted positively on critical thinking, problem solving, prompt feedback and networking.

According to Internet World Stats, the number of Internet users worldwide in June 2010 reached 1.97 million and will increase continuously. Specifically, the usage of the Internet has now broadened the horizon of the opportunities among institutions of higher learning, giving hopes to members of academic communities to co-operate with their counterparts all over the world (Collis et al., 2002).

To date, the Internet has also been seen as an important medium for proper higher education to greater heights as the world moves further into the knowledge economy. Most of the university provides students and academic staffs an email account to encourage them to communicate through the internet. Secure internet connection through cables and wireless are also provided. Moreover, most of the university's computer labs have been equipped with the latest and high-speed computer technology that enables fast access to the internet (Scherer, 1997). At very least, these terminals are being used for email when the students are not engaged in academic work. Additionally, institutions of higher education are

increasingly using Internet as a method of disseminating information (Song, Zhao, and Zheng, 2009). Professors increasingly use the Internet as a means of distributing assignments, readings, grades and course syllabi.

This study aims to investigate the extent of Internet usage among final year undergraduate students. Through the survey the frequency of internet usage, purpose and the most used internet resources have been identified.

2. Internet Usage in Education

The Internet is an inseparable part of today's educational system. The academic increasingly depends on the Internet for educational purposes. A majority of academic and research institutions provide internet service to students, teachers and researchers (Kaur, 2008). According to the literature, teachers and students are the main users of the Internet. They found that the internet is convenient and useful for educational activities (Jones, 2002). Some students were found to enjoy using the internet in conjunction with the physical library (D'Esposito and Gradner, 1999). Furthermore, internet usage has been observed to improve student performance (Kubey, Lavin and Barrows, 2001).

Internet usage has the potential to improve the quality of education. This is supported by Laurillard (1992) who postulated that computer-based learning can increase understanding of theoretical and critical concepts. The value of the Internet for educational purposes was further supported by Charp (2000), who stated that the Internet brought about positive changes to teachers and instructors, who taught students to learn, work, communicate and play.

Learning Management System (LMS) is another technology that support teaching and learning. This technology utilized internet as the medium for information and document sharing (Min et al., 2012b). Recent study by (Min et al., 2012a) shows that LMS has an impact on students' learning.

According to Dryli and Kinnaman (1996), the Internet enables students to find information and experts, as well as allow users to think critically and creatively, become collaborative and cooperative, and solve problems. The comprehensive literature available shows that the Internet has the following functions in education: (i) storehouse of information, (ii) communication without boundaries, (iii) online interactive learning, (iv) electronic/online research, (v) innovation in the new world, (vi) improves interest in learning, (vii) global education, and (viii) information catalogues.

3. Methodology

A total of 50 students were randomly selected from a list of final year undergraduate students. They were asked to answer a questionnaire which was adopted from Kumar and Kaur (2006). Descriptive analysis was then conducted to look into the frequency of Internet use, amount of time spent on the Internet, most frequent Internet access point, purposes of browsing the Internet, Internet services, problems encountered while using the Internet, influence on academic efficiency and satisfaction with Internet facilities.

4. Findings

The findings show that all students accessed to the internet every day. Almost half of the students spent more than 20 hours a week on the internet (Figure 1).

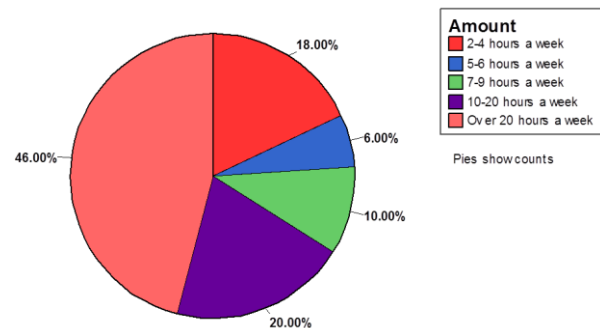


Figure 1. Time Spent on the Internet

The students were asked to state the purpose for which they used the Internet. Students are allowed to select more than one answer based on the multiple choice questions provided. The top five most popular activities on the internet are e-mailing (98%), searching information (94%), downloading multimedia materials (88%), online chatting (78%) and listening radio (60%).

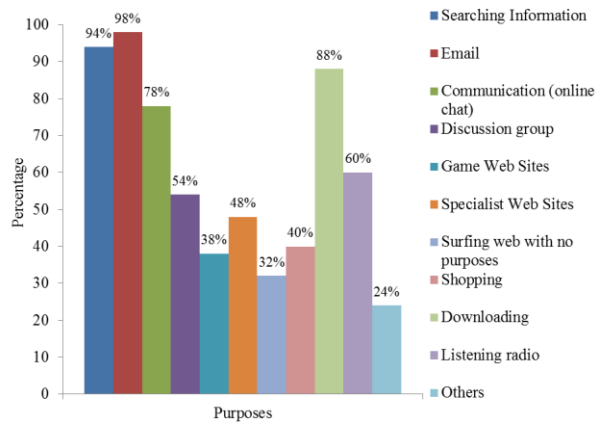


Figure 2. Purposes of using Internet

In line with the purpose, search engine was ranked as the most frequently used internet services (94%). Email is the second (60%) and chatting the third (40%). In this study students are allowed to select more than one internet services.

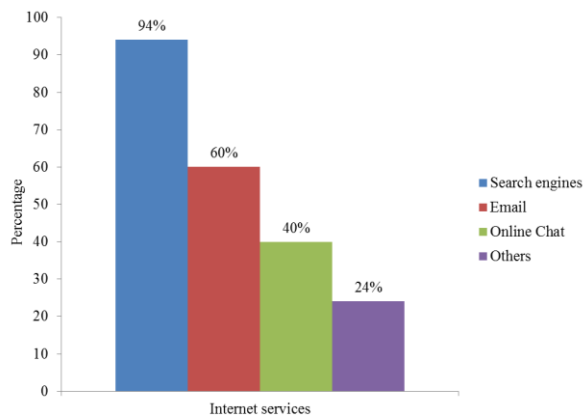


Figure 3. Use of Internet Services

Students were also asked to state the problems they faced when accessing and using the Internet services. The results are depicted in Figure 4. Based on figure 4, three major problems that disrupt students are internet speed (96%), slow page loading (70%), and difficulty in finding relevant information (64%).

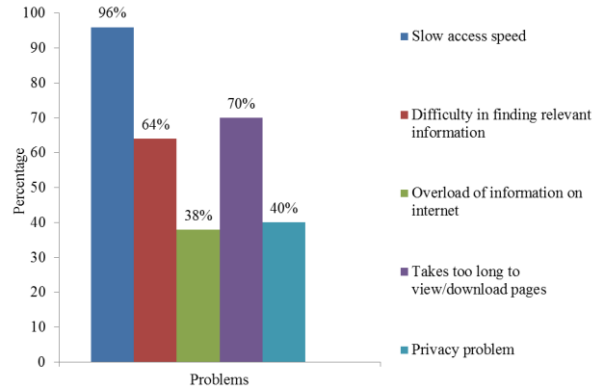


Figure 4. Problems when using internet

Students' satisfaction on the internet facilities is shown in Figure 5. The result indicates that only 18% of the students are fully satisfied with the internet facilities, while, 30% of them feel less satisfied. Most of the students (38%) are partially satisfied.

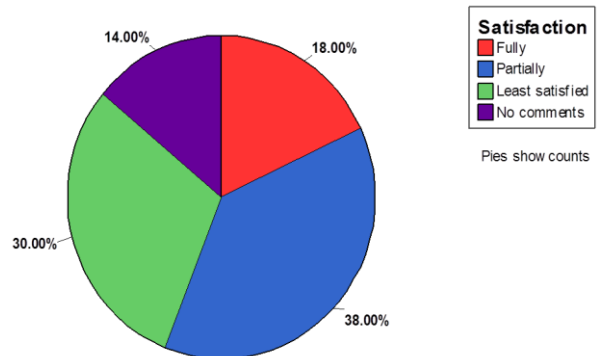


Figure 5. Satisfaction with Internet Facilities

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The findings show that students are actively using the internet to fulfill their daily academic and social needs. It is believed that Internet influences students' academic efficiency, such that it provides access to unlimited information from various sources. The access to the information is fast and typically without time limit. Almost half of the respondents spent over 20 hours on the internet a week indicate that they are serious internet user. Though, their main activities on the internet are more on searching, downloading and networking. To complement their academic activities, most students use the search engine to search information, while email was used as the main communication and networking tool.

Internet speed is one of the main problems faces by the students. The internet speed may affect from the condition of internet infrastructure and number of users

connected to the internet. This problem causes difficulty to the student to find, retrieve and browsing information on the internet. Long waiting may reduce their time effectiveness which might affect their learning performance.

Further study should be conducted to further assess the impact of internet on students' learning performance. The study should focus on how the internet can enhance student learning despite of the limitation and technical difficulties that the students might face.

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