

## **SOCIAL MEDIA ADOPTION BEHAVIOR AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE TRANSNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: A CASE STUDY BASED ON WUHAN UNIVERSITY IN CHINA**

**Chuanfu Chen<sup>1</sup> and A.W.V Athukorala<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Graduate School  
Wuhan University, China

<sup>2</sup>Sri Palee Campus,  
University of Colombo, Sri Lanka  
watsalaa@yahoo.com

### **ABSTRACT**

The use of communication technologies is strongly related to how social relations are developed. The understanding of technological use and transnational contacts provides an excellent opportunity to study how this relationship applies to immigrants' adoption. Social scientists have long been interested in how immigrants are incorporated in to new countries. Few researches of social media based on analysis to multicultural perspective and most of social media studies based discuss on social networks sites. However Social media is broad concept and, social networks sites are one part of its category. Unique characteristic feature of media usage in China is applying restriction for popular media sites and introduced alternative Chinese popular native social media sited instead. Therefore learning native language will benefited approaching to social media. Hence, it can be concluded that, native social media usage in China is positively affected by Chinese language proficiency. Social media have become more integrated in to the host culture during their adoption, the international students' expectation of highest amount of credibility of using social media may badly influence in establishing and maintaining relationships with their host culture.

**Keywords:** Social Media, International Students, Legal Risk, Credibility, Individual Expectation, adoption behavior

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the past decades, China has made noticeable progress in the education sector, especially, with regard to increased immigration of international students (Nzivo & Chuanfu, 2013). According to the CSC (Chinese Scholarship Council) data China has become a leading country in Asia to receive international students with 6% of the total international mobility. This results in converting the Chinese University Community to a Transnational Community. There is a closed relationship between transnational society and the communication technology. According to Giddens' Structuralism Theory (1990), transnational concepts represent the 'embedding" activities that help emigrants reconnect with local structure and institution despite their physical absence from the community (Fong.et al, 2010). The use of communication technologies is strongly related to how social relations are developed (McLuhan and Powers, 1989). The understanding of technological use and transnational contacts provides an excellent opportunity to study how this relationship applies to immigrants' adoption. Social scientists have long been interested in how immigrants are incorporated in to new countries. Now scholars ever more recognize that some migrants and their descendants remain strongly influenced by their continuing tier to their home country or by social networking that strengthens across national borders (Levitt & Schiller 2004). Objective of this paper is to identify nature of adoption behavior of social media

among International Students in the Transnational Environment in the Wuhan University in China.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Literature reveals that although there are contradictions among academicians, most researchers use the word transnational to explain immigrant students' communities. Recent scholars understand transnational migration as taking place within fluid social space that are constantly reworked through migrants simultaneously embedded in more than one society. Basch et al (1994) define 'transnationalism' as the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement (Basch et al, 1994).

literature shows that in recent years, it is general phenomena that more and more students migrate from one country to another country for the purpose of higher academic achievement and influencing many of other economic, cultural, political and other factors of both countries. In recent years, among international students migration China has become a leading country in Asia to receive international students with 6% of the total international mobility. In 2012, china fetching 328,330 international students from different countries to study in the best Chinese higher education institutions, an increase of 12% since 2011(CSC, 2013). It is worth to conduct studies on international students and local students to understand the new phenomenon of the Chinese society.

Further, according to the above literature two things can be highlighted. They are a few research of social media based on analysis to multicultural perspective and most of social media studies based discuss on social networks sites. However Social media is broad concept and, social networks sites are one part of its category (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Furthermore, literature clearly shows that international Students in a transnational environment face many problems. According to the literature it shows that international students in the transnational environment face many more problems to adjustments with the host culture. Most of literature has highlighted that language barrier as a recognized problem of the transnational environment. As international students may have diverse cultural, social, religious and political backgrounds, they tend to share certain characteristics (Thomas & Aithen, 1989). They always face challenges such as adjusting to food, weather, financial arrangement, health care, accommodation and local language, while financial and language limitations add to the difficulties for the new comers (Tseng & Newton, 2002; Lin & Yi, 1997; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). On the other hand, failure to interact with local people may cause cultural shocks and miscommunication which can lead to lack of social support (Chen, 1999). Failure to adjust to new environment will cause international students to experience psychological symptoms (Tseng et al. 2002; Lin et al. 1997; Mori, 2000) such as feelings of inferiority, confusion, home sickness, loneliness, anxiety anger, isolation, loss of identities, insomnia, low motivation, unable to focus and lacking in self-confidence (Mahmuda, Amata, et all, 2010). In this situation it is important to understand their sense of social media to the process of social connectedness. Specifically, social connectedness is defined as an aspect of the self that manifests the subjective recognition of being in close relationship with the social world (Lee and Robbins, 1995, 1998). Therefore, it is assumed that international students with high usage of social media are adjust to the transnational environment more easily and will experience fewer problems than students with low usage of media. Further this trend can be studied through factors that influence use of social media. However literature review shows that there is lack of literature related to this topic.

Literature shows that, there are limited literature on how social capital can help to reduce of international students stress and other problems. Therefore; we expect that international students in transnational environment will be positively associated with social adjustment to college through the social media sites. More research will be needed to conduct to find out the real situation of this phenomenon. Therefore present research helps us to add new knowledge to the social media field.

According to the literature survey on social media shows that most of university students in the world are commonly used social media networks to disseminate information and support the communication among them. Many researches have shown that Social adjustment plays a critical role in student persistence at college. Therefore, we expect that social media may positively associate with social adjustment to international and local students in the transnational environment. China is known for the huge population of Internet users and the stringent regulation on the use of the Internet. College students are an important component of Chinese Internet users and they have been criticized for egoism, materialism, declining commitment to social responsibility and spending too much time on SNS websites (Zhong, 2014). However lack of literature related to the social media usage of international and local student's in the Chinese society can be marked as a drawback to understand the real picture of the social media studies.

Further, limited studies are found about Social Media Adoption behavior among International Students in the Transnational Environment. Few researches discussed that factors such as privacy, copyright and time affect barriers for the use of social media. Therefore, this study has taken an initiative to fill the gap of previous studies.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A survey method was used to collect data. The population sample was selected from among individuals who are studying in Wuhan University in China. Wuhan University is a comprehensive institution covering a whole range of disciplines with unique feature. It is one of the best universities with particular achievement of education in China. Data collected from the office of the College of Foreign Students Education and General Administration office at Wuhan University shows that the number of intake of international and local students has been steadily increased in the recent years. Therefore it is reasonable to select sample for the research from the Wuhan University. To determine that Social Media Adoption behavior among International Students in the Transnational Environment international students at the Wuhan University selected as sample and a questionnaires were adapted to collect data. The questionnaire is designed for the international students in the Wuhan University. The questionnaire is aimed to answer research objectives. Hence, the questionnaire is used as research instrument to collect primary data.

The questionnaire is designed mainly with structured, close-ended and, open- ended questions, multiple choice questions and attitude scales to obtained necessary information to satisfy the objective of the study. Structured close ended types are used as they are normally characterized by a group of fixed responses and respondents are allowed to choose one or more responses that are designed to reflect various views. An attitudinal scale is designed to obtain a variety of opinions about attitudes. Open ended questions are formulated to allow respondents to express their views freely. Despite the distribution of 250 questionnaires to international students, only 216 (86.4%) were received from them.

The appropriateness of this questionnaire was tested through a reliability analysis. Documentary evidence from the office of the Collage of Foreign Students Education used to identify enrollment of international students, and to obtain other record of

international students attached to the Wuhan University. The data collected were methodically entered into SPSS package for analysis. Descriptive statistics enable the selection of frequencies, description and cross –tabulation.

## **RESULTS**

A complete inspection of the questionnaires of the international students shows that 57.52% of the students were Asian countries while 25.91% were from the European countries. 16.57% were from the African countries. Their language distribution indicates that 16.66% use French as their native language. 13.42% uses Korean, 13.8% English, 4.62% Russian, 4.62% Hindi, 5.55% Thai, 6.48% Vietnam, 4.62% Urdu, 3.24% Portuguese, 2.31% German, 1.85% Italian, 1.85% Bangla, 4.62% Nepal, 2.31% Sinhala, 2.77% Malagasy, 1.85% Spanish, 4.16% Kazakh, 1.85% Arabic, and 0.92% Tamil. These distributions of various language categories show that Wuhan University consists of a multicultural community from different parts of the world. According to the sample distribution Chinese language proficiency standard of the majority is average [eg. speaking (34%)], where as 15% of the student manage the language in fluently (excellent standard). Category “good speak” consists of 31%. Some are capable with complete language proficiency (Speak, Listening and writing). When consider writing, (9%) of student are excellent and (40%) of students are categorized as below average. Hence, native social media usage in China is positively affected by Chinese language proficiency. Greenberg and Ilan argue that students from different native language groups from various cultures and background seek information, the differences in their information behavior and their differences in overcoming language barrier[s] (Greenberg and Ilan, 2013). Their research findings imply that there is a significant difference between native language groups with regard to the use of search engines. Migration Experiences of the transnational environment elaborates that the tendency of involving in social media by international students is higher. Whereas more than 7 years of international students (4%) who stay in university environment in the sample. Even though, the numbers of international students are low, their knowledge of social media would be very advance. The majority is represented by masters (46.2%) and/or above levels of study in the international student’s sample. According to the sample, “Content of social media” is predominantly used by international students in the transnational environment. According to the data, international students use the above site as “frequently” and “very frequently”, which is 78% of the total international student.

## **CONCLUSION WITH OUTCOMES**

Objective of this paper is to identify nature of adoption behavior of social media among International Students in the Transnational Environment in the Wuhan University in China. Migration Experiences of the transnational environment elaborates that the tendency of involving in social media by international students is higher. The majority is represented by masters and/or above levels of study in the international students sample causes higher usage of social media, Media adoption.

Research finds that Legal risk, privacy, credibility, convenience, copyright, cost, time and permanency are influenced to adoption behavior of social media among International Students in the Transnational Environment in the Wuhan University in China. A “content of social media” is predominantly used by international students in the Wuhan University. These media sites are used by post graduate students to achieve their educational and entertainment purposes. When consider major study area variation of using social media can be observed even among the students in the same major subjects. The usage of social media would be determined by the individual expectation of the international students. Although social media like face book, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs, wikis, and other virtual communities help create new

opportunities to build up diverse relationships with each other, there are many inherent legal risks that everyone has to face unenthusiastically. According to the literature review, it is elaborated that, the content of social media (Yahoo, Google, Flickr and MSN etc), is used by most of the international students. In some psychological studies have discussed these sites become an alternative means to minimize the mental stresses of students when they have to isolated from their relatives/friends and live in an unfamiliar environment/ country. The same fact can also be highlighted by the present study. The university students are more concerned about legal risk, the frequency with which they use for a social media sites decreases. Most of the previous literature related to transnational environment studies has highlighted that language barrier as a recognized problem. According to the Thomas and Aithen (1989) explained, one of the major problems is language barrier for the students those study overseas. Chinese education system (most of universities) has established a mechanism to overcome this language issue by introducing Chinese language as a mandatory subject for international students. Language improving effort by international students of a transnational environment leads to facilitate for adaptation process. As elaborated in the profile information of international students, mother language of many students is not English but they use their own native languages. Therefore learning Chinese language will be an advantage for studying and social affair in the transnational society. Unique characteristic feature of media usage in China is applying restriction for popular media sites and introduced alternative Chinese popular native social media sited instead. Therefore learning native language will benefited approaching to social media. Hence, it can be concluded that, native social media usage in China is positively affected by Chinese language proficiency. Social media have become more integrated in to the host culture during their adoption, the international students' expectation of highest amount of credibility of using social media may badly influence in establishing and maintaining relationships with their host culture.

## REFERENCES

- CHARLES, N., NZIVO AND CHEN CHUANFU (2013). International students perception of library services and information resources in Chinese academic libraries. *The journal of Academic Librarianship*-39. Available at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com). [Accessed: 08th Feb. 2015]
- GIDDENS, A. (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- PEGGY, L AND NINA, G (2004). Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society, *International Migration Review*. Vol.38, No.3. The Center for Migration Studies, New York. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27645424>.. [Accessed: 10th March 2015]
- MCLUHAN, M, AND BRUCE, R. (1989) *The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- ZHI-JIN ZHONG. (2014), *Computers & Education*. Civic engagement among educated Chinese youth: The role of SNS (Social Networking Services). bonding and bridging social capital, available at :[www.elsevier.com/locate/compedu](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/compedu) [Accessed: 10th March 2015]
- KAPLAN, A.M. & HAENLEIN, M. (2010). Consumer use and business potential of virtual worlds: The case of Second Life. *The International Journal of Management*. 13. Available at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com) [Accessed: 20th March 2015].
- BASCH, ET AL. (1994). *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects. Postcolonial Predicaments and DE territorialized Nation-States*. London/New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers.