Researchers' Strategies of Using Social Media in Scientific and Innovative Spheres from the Perspective of Sochi Linguistic & Rhetorical School

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Abstract

The paper outlines a new project of the Sochi Linguistic & Rhetorical School aimed at developing a researcher's strategy of using social media. It is revealed that with the current increase in the technological speed of contemporary society development the practices concerning research experiences get considerably altered. One of the most prominent tools of this change is the social media viewed as a multidimensional phenomenon reflecting the current social and professional challenges and requiring thorough investigation.

Keywords: social media, researcher's personality, Russian research community, Sochi Linguistic & Rhetorical School.

Introduction

The significance of social media in the contemporary world cannot be underestimated. An increase in research into various aspects of social media is characterized by a special focus on their role in marketing and branding, business development and innovation. A number of scholars have been trying to identify the frequency and efficiency of social media use for maintaining public relations in business and insurance as well as for applied purposes including boosting event attendance, promoting business, marketing, finding a job and even for academic purposes. However, we haven't found much research into the use of social media for scientific purposes.

Discussion

Marcia W. DiStaso and Tina McCorkindale (2013) have provided a thorough literature review of the use of social media for public relations purposes, as well as an analysis of the strategic use of social media for most advanced U.S. companies on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube [1]. In a number of publications much attention has been given to the use of social media for researchers' professional development and promotion. Argenti emphasized that "embracing social media is no longer a strategic business option, but a necessity, and a huge opportunity" [2]. In their seventh annual survey, Wright and Hinson (2012) reported that public relations practitioners agreed more in 2012 than in the previous years that social and other emerging media were changing the way public relations were maintained. Social media are also responsible for the success of the groundswell, i.e. a spontaneous movement of people using online tool to connect, to take charge of their own experience and get what they need – information, support, ideas, products, and bargaining power – from each other. Wright and Hinson's 2012 survey found Facebook was accessed by 80% of public relations practitioners with some degree of frequency, followed by Twitter (73%), and YouTube (52%) [3].

Yet, the potential of social media has not been thoroughly revealed and discussed. Therefore we intend to dwell on it within the paradigm of Neohumanist Education, i.e. a new platform for the development of research into social media. This paradigm as a product of the Neohumanism philosophy introduced by Prabhat Raijan Sarkar in 1982 [4] is rooted in India's philosophical past and intertwined with its religions and spiritual development. However, as Devapriya underscores

in his article "Educating Balance in an Accelerating World", Neohumanist Education has not remained a culturally isolated phenomenon limited to India, rather it has flourished abroad achieving a progressive blend of Eastern subjective and Western objective approaches [5].

Developing the ideas of Neohumanistic Education, Burukina and Kleiner (2015) have identified factors impeding the development of economic education in Russia and put forward a development plan capable of solving the problem with the cargo effect in the current economic education in many universities [6].

Goleman in his research on emotional intelligence has challenged the existing educational paradigm with academics at the core of the traditional education processes and approaches to them stating that possession of certain skills such as good communication, self-control, zeal and self-motivation is a more important indicator for success in life than IQ [7].

Burukina and Yandovsky (2015) have revealed a set of key characteristic inherent in the professional personality developed in the sphere of humanities including tourism industries [8].

In our view, the use of social media can significantly contribute to researchers' personal and professional development including their communicative competencies as well as leadership, management and organizational skills.

Research Objectives and Tasks

Within an inter-University research cooperation we have been conducting the research project entitled "Konstantin Ushinsky: Linguistic Personality of a Fundamental Researcher in the Neohumanist Educational Paradigm". As an important part of the project we develop a strategy of using social media in scientific & technical innovative spheres as a globalization product: this strategy is called the Neohumanist Educational Paradigm of Information Society.

The three of the most popular social media platforms used by Russian and foreign researchers to communicate information and to engage with their peers are LiveInternet, Google Analytics and LinkedIn.

The **objective** of this study is three-fold. *First*, it is to examine the legislative, organizational and managerial conditions of the use of social media in the multilingual context of the research both in Russia and worldwide.

The ***second objective*** of this research is to examine, with the help of two empirical studies, the role of social media in the promotion and facilitation of academic processes in Russian and foreign Universities as well as other institutions of higher education.

The ***third objective*** of this study targets the improvement of the national and international systems of researchers' communication through the identification of key generic and professional competencies developed with the help of social media and offering a competency model to be further improved and used in institutions of higher education.

The purposes of the research include the development of a number of guidelines aimed at:
▪ integration of Russian social media and communications with traditional media;
▪ integration of foreign social media and communications with foreign colleagues;
▪ integration of social media and communications with the help of Internet video channels.

The **tasks** of the research include:
• conducting an analytical study of the impact of social media on information processes in scientific technical and innovation spheres;
• analysis of foreign and domestic experience of the use of at least five social media, including international, in the processes of scientific technical and innovation activities;
• compiling a list of typical information processes in scientific technical and innovation spheres, using social media;
• developing proposals for the use of different types of social media in the processes of scientific technical and innovation activities;
• elaborating a strategy for using social media in the processes of scientific technical and innovation activities.

This research is based on a system approach incorporating two empirical studies aimed at finding answers to the research questions outlined above.

The proposed methods are quantitative analysis and auditing of website availability and efficiency which includes counting the number of visitors; the number of pages viewed; average

time spent on a website; the ratio of new and old visitors; traffic sources. In addition, the following methods are employed: the method of event marketing and media releases with research into their validity and sufficiency; the method of content analysis. The latter is aimed at identifying semantic units of content analysis, which can include: concepts expressed in particular terms; themes expressed in whole semantic paragraphs, parts of texts, articles, etc.; the names of people; events, facts, etc.; the meaning appealing to the potential recipient.

The method of content analysis is widely used in psychology, sociology and other fields to analyze open questions of the questionnaires, materials on the observations, results of psychological testing, and the results in the method of focus groups. Similar methods are also used in the studies of mass communications, marketing and many others.

Expected Results
The research is to resolve the following problems:
- the enormous economic potential of the social media to solve urgent scientific and innovative problems has not been identified to the fullest degree;
- non-coordinated, inefficient and routine work of numerous groups and authors from low-level network communications in Russian Federation shows low productivity and does not correlate with the current international experience. However, according to various estimates, they have a considerable growth potential which varies about 50% and has an aggregate socio-economic effect;
- the state and society create significant challenges associated with finding and implementing breakthroughs in science and education, due to the significant geographical and temporal gap between the potential participants of the communicative interaction within the information and discursive processes in the field of scientific technical and innovation spheres, as well as due to the lack of a unified strategy, methodology and technology of crowdsourcing;
- so far, social media have been used in innovative and scientific-technical spheres as tactical objectives at the level of specific solutions;
- methodology and promotion of social media for research purposes are not effective enough to implement projects in scientific and technical innovation;
- insufficient legal and institutional regulation in the sphere of networking due to security restrictions in the author's civil rights and security of the service information;
- conservatism of the mature part of the Russian research community reveals the dominance of traditional, classical methods of experience exchange, primary personal contacts with colleagues at conferences, symposia and other events, which dramatically reduces the possibility of using social networks in the mass practice of scientific technical and innovative activities;
- the fundamental methodological problem of using social media in the knowledge-intensive and innovative activities at the present stage of its formation in the Russian Federation is a contradiction between the intensiveness of the development of information processes and technologies in different areas of social communication, including communication in scientific technical and innovation spheres, and insufficient level of understanding the theoretical foundations and specific methods of social media research from the abovementioned perspective;
- contradiction of opinions on the use of online media in developing the processes of scientific technical and innovation spheres with numerous examples of their application without providing an acceptable way of monitoring and evaluating performance indicators.

Meanwhile, it is possible and urgent to move to a fundamentally new level of social media use for the solution of strategic tasks of contemporary Russian science, which can meet the requirements of two types of society: modern information and post-information developing in the West.

The paramount task of the contemporary research is not only the formation of a positive image of Russian science and popularization of its major achievements, but above all, is the promotion of the creation of common communicative space for Russian researchers, which stimulates the permanent formation of temporary research teams applying the method of "brainstorming" in remote mode to form different kinds, types and genres of collective scientific technical and innovation discourse.

Achievements of the Russian Researchers as Social Media Users

Although network services for scientific purposes appeared in Russian Internet known as Runet relatively recently, they have already received a wide range of IP-performance evaluations. The range of approaches is quite broad and contradictory: from the evaluation of the content of social networks as information "garbage" to a meaningful study of their characteristics and prospects [9].

Developed and tested at Sochi State Economic University, the cognitive-productive method of implementing the concept of social constructionism training based on the use of network and media interaction (R&D project grant under AVCP "The Development of Scientific Potential of Higher School (2009–2011)" is a significant scientific and practical basis for future solution of the existing problem with the help of a science-based network complex.

The research has revealed the specificity of educational technologies based on the concept of social constructionism, considered with regard to conceptual position of Sochi Linguistic & Rhetorical School [10–13]. Taking into account the achievements of foreign colleagues and the Russian realities of the educational process, this research has revealed a system support of the educational process based on Moodle.

The results obtained with respect to their degree of innovation for education include:

a) brand new outcomes:

▪ the implementation of the social constructionism pedagogy results in a lower cost of education while creating a more effective system of information provision based on the software;

▪ reduction of non-productive costs of the resources of educational institutions in the academic processes through the electronic services of accommodation, transfer, management of training elements and analysis of their use by the trainees which contributes to the high degree of potential implementation of the state policy in the sphere of education.

b) new results essential for the modern Russian practice of educational institutions:

✓ the proposed foundations of a new educational paradigm as a system of interdependent ideological, methodological and technological approaches contribute to the implementation of the state policy in the field of education;

✓ the outlined perspective of this paradigm development takes into account the limited ability of many Russian educational institutions and immediately improves the efficiency of the educational process;

✓ the elaborated system models of economic-managerial phenomena contribute to the development of the existing methods of systems analysis.

Sochi State University and Moscow (Senkevich) State Institute for Tourism Industry have gained experience in creation and practical application of open social network communities, including development of the system of education and research. For instance, Associate Professor Dr Yu. Belonozhkin (Sochi State University) is the author of the project network community (http://elpronet.ru/) involving to date 1474 participants from managers and teaching staff of educational institutions of the Russian Federation, representatives of the CIS and UNESCO.

Sochi State University has developed an educational web platform based on Moodle LMS embracing a wide range of proven and integrated media solutions including webinars, videoscreening, instructional videos, distant teaching participation, structured networking, collaboration, and virtual reality. These achievements represent the core of practical actions in the course of this project.

The achievements based on the elaborations considered above include the following:

• creating a common space for communication in the social media which is important for the development of scientific, technical and innovation spheres;

• a unified common information space for scientific communication has been constructed and elaborated;

• conditions for finding colleagues researching similar issues have been largely improved;

• conditions for learning about the latest publications on the integration basis of educational content and the subject have been considerably updated;

• the research ability to identify the current trends in the study of the chosen subject and to assess the degree of elaboration are considerably increased and developed;

- young researchers find more and better opportunities to find mentors, advisors and supervisors;
- researchers get more opportunities to contact the colleagues with similar research interests and participate in research programs and grant competitions;
- the possibility of organizing and conducting research mediated by the Internet has been considerably developed and widened;
- researchers' opportunities to access their colleagues' statistics and databases have been largely developed and considerably facilitated;
- high quality learning and education in the field of science have been considerably developed and promoted;
- academic and non-academic opportunities for participants in the project on social media are considerably increased;
- the professional interests of the Russian research community are represented better and at a wider scale;
- popularization of scientific data with Russian population serves the public at large;
- in general, the formation of a common communicative space provides a synergy of information and discursive processes in the scientific technical and innovation spheres, which is beneficial for developing research in Russian and worldwide.

Conclusions

The findings of the project demonstrate that though some research has been conducted to show the high potential of social media and their applicability to the development and promotion of research in various fields of science and academic processes, much is to be done to prove their efficiency. The research outcome also shows that the system of social media use has to be further improved taking into account the researchers' strategies of using social media in scientific and innovative spheres from the perspective of Sochi Linguistic & Rhetorical School and competency approach as well as the current achievements of social media theorists and practitioners. The high public recognition of Sochi State University and Moscow (Senkevich) State Institute for Tourism Industry as initiators of researchers' online communities has been confirmed by opinion polls and ratings as well as the first place award in the nomination of "Innovative Technologies" along with the tenth place of Sochi State University among Russian universities. These institutions are ranked high in applying systems of electronic education essential for meeting the current challenges of the information environment and strive to contribute to the development of Neohumanist Education.

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