UNIVERSITY STUDENTS´ EXPERIENCE WITH PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL NETWORKS

ERIE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2020

Abstract: Professional social networks are becoming a part of preparing students for future employment. The usual standard is to use personal social networks. Students do not have much experience with professional networks which is an important tool in building professional contacts. The article deals some university student´s experience with professional social networks by selected dependencies between study, gaining practical experience of students in employment or internship and using professional social networks. The research addressed a total of 1,383 university students in economics of the 3rd year of Bachelor's programs and the 2nd year of Master's programs. By addressing these students, their increased interest in establishing professional contacts could be expected.

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Introduction

Most of the available social networking studies are focused on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube (Pilar et al., 2019). Less attention is paid to professional social networks. The interconnection of professional social networks and university studies brings benefits in the form of establishing contacts with practice. These can be used to acquire practical skills and experience of students, for example through internships or cooperation in writing the final thesis. Especially at the end of their studies, the use of professional networks can bring benefits in the form of employment.

The aim of the article is to identify the behavior and experience of university students in economics with the use of professional networks. Given the possibilities offered by professional networks to students (internships, theses, getting a job or employment), attention is focused on students in business-oriented courses in the last year of study.

There are several studies on the effects of technologically advanced feedback on learning outcomes (Tanes et al., 2011), interest in learning analytics is growing (Tempelaar, Rienties, and Giesbers, 2015) and social networking (Benson, Morgan and Filippaios, 2014). There are now countless types of social networks with the same or different focus.

The research questions are as follows: the first research question concerns the potential difference in attitudes and use of professional networks by students. The second research question is about the dependence of the use of professional networks on the level of study. The third research question targets on potential dependence between using of professional network and inviting to a job interview. The final research question is, whether using a professional network increases the likelihood of getting a job through this channel.

Materials and methods

Materials

The theoretical background of this paper has been based on an analysis of secondary sources gained from scholarly papers, specialized literature, and official web portals. Primary data have been obtained through an own conducted survey by electronic questionnaires. The target group of respondents was students of FEM CZU in Prague, who finished the study of some "trade" subject and during the education process, they were informed about the possibilities of using professional social networking. The research data were collected from 1st February 2018 to 30th November 2019 (i.e. 3 ended semesters, each student filled the questionnaire only once) and contains answers from full-time and distance students.

Methods

Primary descriptive statistics are used to analyze the basic characteristics of respondents. The multi-dimensional analysis is used for finding the answers to the above question. There is an analysis of the dependence of two variables written into contingency tables. The contingency tables are the basis for testing the previously formulated hypotheses. The chi-square test for independence of attributes was used for testing in contingency tables. The precondition for using this test was met. It means is that expected frequencies in individual cells must not be lower than 5 at least in 80% of cells, and in the remaining cells, theoretical frequencies must not be lower than 1 (Pecakova, 2008). For the test of statistical hypotheses and the following analysis the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$ was used. Only answers without missing values were taken into account in the calculation. The calculations were made with the statistical software SPSS version 25.

Results

Basic results of the questionnaire

1383 respondents (students of FEM CZU in Prague) participated in data collection. According to the student structure on the faculty, 378 men and 1005 women were asked to fill in an online questionnaire. The most frequent age group (80%), in agreement with the structure of FEM students, was the 21-25 age group (1107 respondents). The survey was determinate for students at the end of the study of "trade subject" (and study program), namely 778 students in the Bachelor's program (56.3%) and 605 students in the Master's program (43.7%). 75% of the interviewed students were in full-time study (presently form of study). According to the results, 90.2% of the total of 1,383 students (1248) already work in some form (student job, part-time, full-time). Taking into account distance learning, there is a large volume of full-time students who are already working in some form of study

Two-dimensional analysis of relations between selected aspects

The first research question concerns the potential difference in attitudes and use of professional networks by students. It is likely that students who already have practical experience in the labor market will benefit more from professional networks.

Formulation of null hypothesis:

H0: There is no statistically significant difference in the use of professional networks between full-time and part-time students. Using the Pearson´s chi-square test for independence on p-value = 65.454, so there is dependence between using of professional networks between full-time and part-time students at the significance level 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The final research question is, whether active using a professional network increases the likelihood of getting a job through this channel.

Formulation of null hypothesis: H0: There is no statistically significant correlation between active using a professional network and getting a job through this network. Using the Pearson´s chi-square test for independence (p-value = 104.058), there is dependence between active using professional network and getting job by this way at the significance level 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. There was counted with expect values. The exploratory sign scheme was used to display the relationship. From this scheme, it is clear that 99.5% reliability has more frequently become getting of job in case of active using a professional network.

Conclusion

Professional social networks are significant to the gradual building of links within professional structures not only for absolvents but also for university students. It can be said that the current utilization rate of professional social networks is particularly low among students of the 3rd year of the Bachelor's program in full-time form. The reason for this may be that students do not realize the fundamental contribution of this type of networking to their future career prospects. Educators should be brought students more to the attention of the importance of professional networks and the possibilities of their use. In addition, attention should be paid to deeper research into obstacles and opportunities for the use of professional networks in academia sphere.

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