

Introduction

In June 2016, the Student Engagement team carried out a survey with current students to research their communications attitudes and behaviours. 2121 students completed this survey and the respondents reflect our overall student profile. Compiled here are results related to students' Social Media usage and preferences, as well as personal comments provided in the survey. Social Media platforms' students' usage data is available on Figure 1.

Key findings

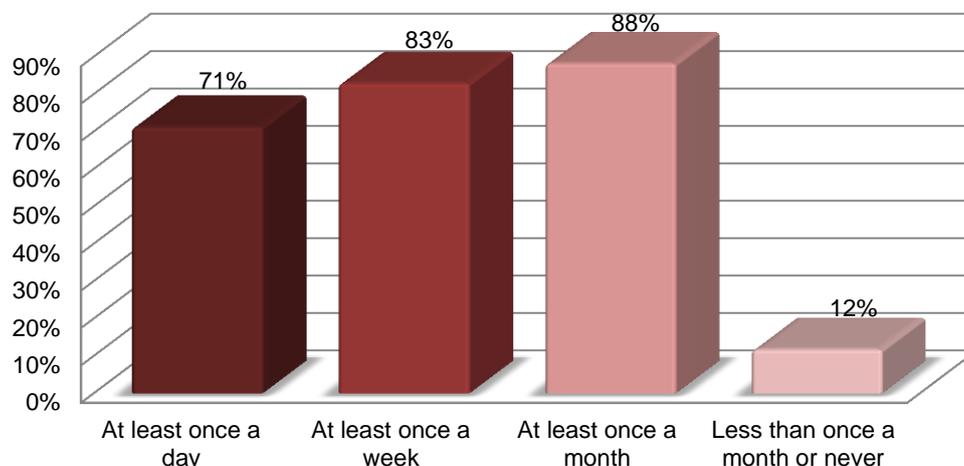
The key findings discussed in this report revolve around students' usage and engagement with various social media platforms and their propensity to utilise such platforms to not only communicate with Middlesex University but also learn and improve their academic knowledge through Facebook and other social media channels:

1. 71% of students admit that they use social media at least once a day – however this is likely to be a conservative estimate
2. WhatsApp and Facebook are the most commonly used channels (83% and 77% respectively), however Instagram and YouTube are both also used by over 50% of students
3. 80% of students who have Facebook either use it to engage with the University in some way or would be happy to do so in the future
4. 67% of students say that social media is a preferred channel of communication for community information (e.g. events and University news); compared to only 36% of students who say that social media is a preferred channel of communication for information about their academic life
5. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram are all channels that students would be happy to use to engage with the University – each with a net positivity score of above 25% (calculated by subtracting the percentage of students that would *not* be happy to engage with the University on that channel from the percentage of students that would)

Overall social media usage

71% of students state that they use social media channels at least once a day during term time; 7% responded that they *never* check social media during term time (see Figure 1). It is likely that these figures underestimate the usage of social media amongst students, as students

Figure 1: “How often do you use or check these channels in term time (even if not to communicate with the University)?” – Social media option only

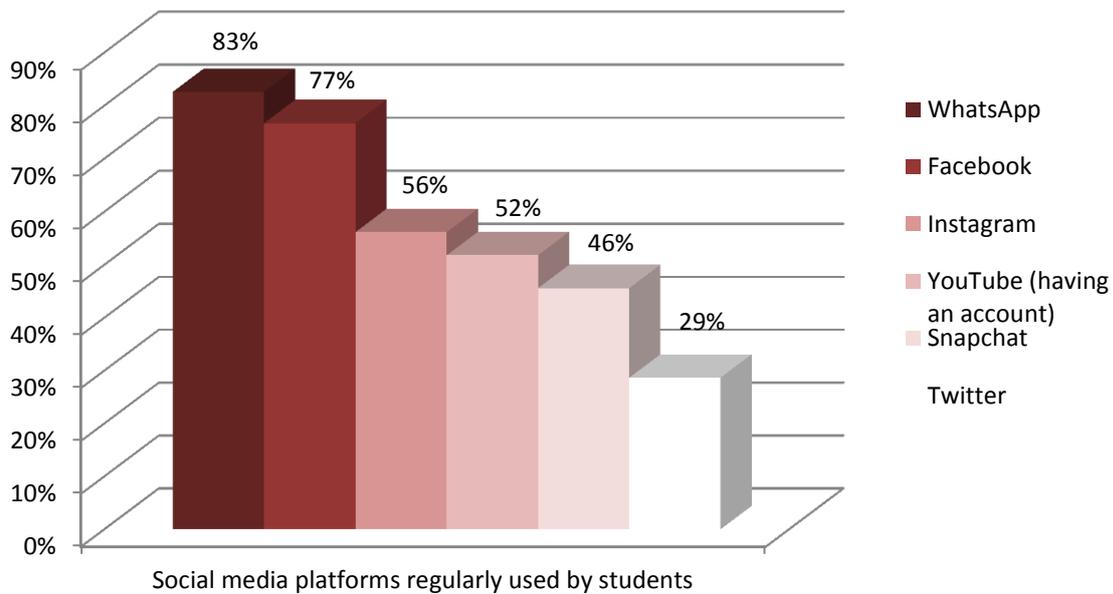


Frequency of students' usage of social media channels (even if not to communicate with the University)

Student Engagement Team, Middlesex University

Students also expressed which social media platforms they used more frequently. **WhatsApp** is the most used platform at (83%); **Facebook** is used by 77% of students; **Instagram** and **Snapchat** by 57% and 46%, respectively. **YouTube** is highly used as well, with 52% of the students having an account and uploading videos. Students interact via **Twitter** with usage of 29%. We also gathered data on a number of other social media platforms; however none of these were selected by over 25% of students.

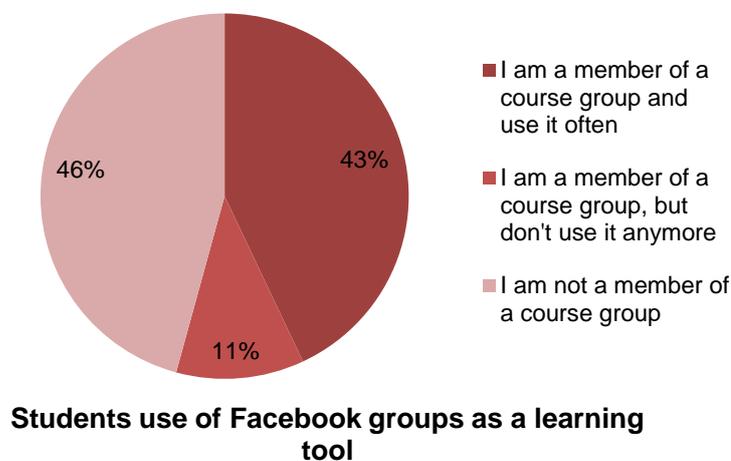
Figure 2: “Which social media platforms do you regularly use? (Tick all that apply)”



Facebook usage as a learning tool

Another important finding was related to how students utilise Facebook as a tool for learning. There was a fairly even split between students on Facebook who do engage in course specific groups (54%) and those who don't (46%). Of the students that are a member of a course specific Facebook group, 80% said that they still use it often and 20% reported that they don't use it anymore.

Figure 3: “How do you use Facebook for learning (Tick all that apply)” – Only responses with regards to Facebook groups



Through this question on how students use Facebook as a learning tool, we also collected a number of other interesting statistics, which are displayed in figure 4.

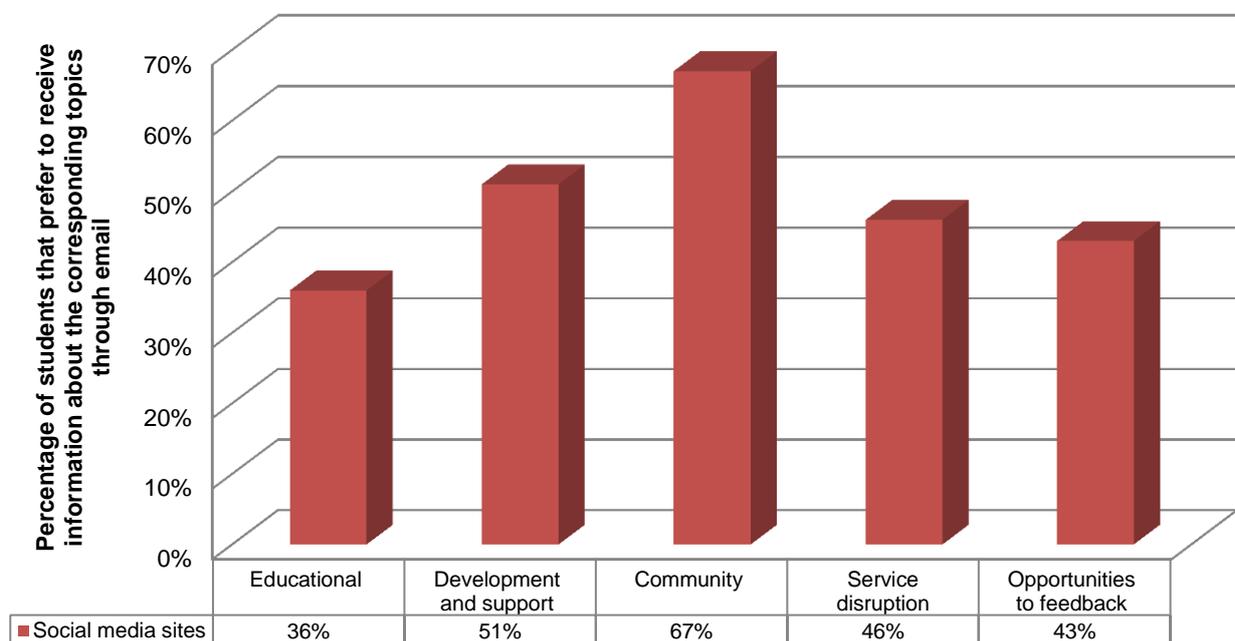
Figure 4: “How do you use Facebook for learning (Tick all that apply)”

59% of students follow University Facebook pages for information	31% of students are a member of a wider University Facebook group (e.g. MDX Open)
16% of students are friends with academic staff on Facebook	20% of students have Facebook, but choose not to engage in University life in any way on the platform

Appropriate content for social media

Students state that the most relevant topic to be communicated about via social media is community information (e.g. social events, extra-curricular, University news). 67% of students would prefer to receive community information through social media; compared to only 36% of students that would want to receive information about their academic life through social media.

Figure 3: “Which channels of communication would you prefer to be used when communicating about the following types of information (Tick as many channels as you like for each type of information)” – Social media results only



Appropriate social media channels to use

In regards to engaging with Middlesex University in social media platforms in the future, the majority of the students replied that they “would engage” with Middlesex in several channels of communication such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. However, there were also a number of channels where high proportions of students said that they “would not engage” e.g. Pinterest, Periscope or Vine.

Figure 5 categorise students’ responses in **Popular**, **Unpopular** and **Controversial**. The **Popular** channels of communication presented the *highest* net scores among all of the options (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Whatsapp), which means that most of the respondents would engage with the University utilising those platforms and only very few would not. In turn, the **Unpopular** platforms (Pinterest, Tumblr, Periscope, Vine, etc.) presented the *lowest* net scores, demonstrating that a high proportion of students would refuse to engage. The third and final category, **Controversial**, encompasses the social media platforms that presented mixed results, very low margins between “would engage” and “would not engage”. The net scores reflect the not only the relevance, but also the level of interaction between the respondents and the social media platforms.

Figure 5: “In the future, how would you feel about engaging with University channels on the following social media sites?” – Channels are categorised into popular (>25 net score), controversial (between 25 and -25 net score) and unpopular (<-25 net score)

Popular	Would engage	Would not engage	Net Score
Facebook	84%	16%	67
YouTube	70%	30%	39
Twitter	69%	31%	38
WhatsApp	68%	32%	35
Instagram	65%	35%	30
Controversial	Would engage	Would not engage	Net Score
Snapchat	61%	39%	21
LinkedIn	54%	46%	8
Google +	44%	56%	-11
Unpopular	Would engage	Would not engage	Net Score
Pinterest	28%	72%	-44
Tumblr	20%	80%	-59
Periscope	18%	82%	-64
Vine	16%	84%	-68
WeChat	15%	85%	-69
YikYak	13%	87%	-74
Weibo	10%	90%	-81

Students' open comments and suggestions

"I think the forum and discussions could be on Facebook as it is more accessible than UniHub. I think the teaching should use more of other forms of media!"

"Use Facebook, Snapchat, LinkedIn Twitter and to communicate with students!"

"Use WhatsApp for short notice announcements!"

"Communicate with students about Safety and Bullying Prevention!"

"Important and urgent messages should be informed through WhatsApp, WeChat, and other messenger. But normal newsletter can be sent through other kinds of social media!"

"Keep communications simple and interesting!"

"Create social media groups with students from the same courses!"

"Keep students always updated on the latest MDX news and events in an interactive and fun way!"

"Personalise communication to students' programme and timetable!"

"Instagram is a massive advertisement for events and could be used more!"

"Serious'/academic communications should take place through the university email!"

"Make content more interesting and funny through YouTube (videos and music)! Maybe even comedy?"