

‘When Instagram gets too much’: exploring social media fatigue and its impact on student VLE engagement and learning experience

Since early 2020, much of our daily life has moved online, with an unprecedented and rapid rise of online technology use. Universities enabled virtual learning in a multitude of ways, by moving from face to face teaching and learning to online/hybrid learning models. Based on extant studies, which posit that inter and intra-organisational factors play an important role in perceived and expected benefits of VLE engagement (Jackson and Fearon, 2013), higher education institutions further extended existing technologies to adopt pedagogic strategies to mimic social media format. This trend towards more interactive, two-way, real time online learning has been claimed to facilitate a multitude of benefits (Dunn, 2013), including the development of employability skills. This is particularly pertinent in the context of educating future marketers, as professional competence in the use of online technology is highly desirable in marketing environments (Doyle, 2020). It is, however, concerning that the recent CIM’s Digital Marketing Skills Benchmark report indicates a decline in digital marketing skills since 2020. The reported decline is most pronounced for content marketing skills (CIM, 2022) – a skills set that could be developed by engaging with social media style learning.

The CIM maintains that ongoing learning can only take place if institutions create opportunities and individuals adopt these (CIM, 2022). However, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that the heavy use of social media during the pandemic has led to “social media fatigue” (Zhang et al, 2021) especially among generation Z (Liu et al, 2021). Students may also be affected by “Zoom fatigue” (Ramachandran, 2021). This study aims to investigate if current Marketing students’ learning experience, particularly the intention to engage in online learning is impacted by these phenomena. The authors hypothesise that students’ social and behavioural characteristics, their technology and social media use, academic self-efficacy, their perceived level of social media and Zoom fatigue have an impact on learners’ intention to engage in online learning. In particular we expect self-efficacy to moderate the impact of social media and Zoom fatigue on learning experience.

The study employs a mixed method approach consisting of a survey and focus group interviews based on using a sample of undergraduate and postgraduate Marketing students at two UK universities.

The survey consists of a descriptive section with demographics and questions concerning which online tools and platforms are used. The main section of the survey is based on the Task-Technology-Fit Model (McGill and Klobas, 2009; Al-Rhami et al 2020) and the combined Expectation Confirmation/Technology Acceptance Model (Joo et al, 2017). This also includes the outcome variable Intention to Use. Social Media Fatigue is measured by using Zhang’s (2021) scale; Zoom fatigue by using Fauville et al’s scale and academic self-efficacy through the use of Sachitra and Bandura’s (2017) scale.

Given that during the pandemic learning in universities has moved online, and that hybrid learning models are likely here to stay, this study aims to contribute towards the

development of innovative strategies for marketing educators to increase the intention to engage with online learning.

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