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ANKSİYETE, DEPRESYON VE DEMANS TEDAVİSİNDE YENİ BİR YAKLAŞIM: FİTOTERAPİ	654
KARACİĞER HASTALIKLARINDA DESTEKLEYİCİ OLARAK KULLANILAN BİTKİLER.....	656
TEMPOROMANDİBULAR EKLEM RAHATSIZLIĞINDA ÇİGNEME KASLARININ DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİNDE YÜZEYEL ELEKTROMİYOGRAFİNİN KULLANIMI.....	658
ADİPOZİT HÜCRELERİNDE <i>Pseudevernia furfuracea</i> ÖZÜTÜNÜN SİTOTOKSİK AKTİVİTESİNİN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ.....	667
<i>Usnea florida</i> LİKEN EKSTRAKTININ HT29 KOLON KANSERİ ÜZERİNDEKİ SİTOTOKSİK ETKİSİNİN ARAŞTIRILMASI	675
<i>Myrtus communis</i> L. EKSTRAKTLARININ KARACİĞER KANSERİNE KARŞI SİTOTOKSİK ETKİLERİNİN BELİRLENMESİ.....	682
MİKROPLASTİKLERİN KARACİĞER EPİTEL HÜCRELERİNDE OLASI BİRİKİMLERİNİN <i>In Vitro</i> ARAŞTIRILMASI	687
DENEYSSEL HİPOTİROİDİ MODELİNDE OLUŞAN METAPLASTİSİTE BOZUKLUĞUNDAN AKTİVİTE PROTEİNİN AZALMIŞ AKTİVASYONU SORUMLUDUR	694
KARACİĞER HASARINDA İTO HÜCRELERİ.....	696
ENDOMETİROZİS ve İNFERTİLİTE.....	701
DİYARBAKIR İLİNDE BİR ÇİFTLİĞİN BAZI REPRODÜKTİF VERİLERİNİN YILLIK DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ.....	707
TESTUDO GRAECA TÜRÜ BİR KARA KAPLUMBAĞASINDA PELVİS KEMİĞİNİN MAKROANATOMİK OLARAK İNCELEMESİ	714
ANADOLU MANDALARINDA GEBELİĞİN GÖZ İÇİ BASINÇ ÜZERİNE ETKİSİ	721
SİĞİRLARDA LİMAX.....	726
Effects of partial substitution of soybean meal with heat treated – dehulled sweet lupin seed meal (<i>Lupinus angustifolius</i>) on egg production and egg quality parameters	730
Physiological responses of Arsi-Bale goats to cold and hot environment thermal stressors under three agro-ecologies of Ethiopia.....	731
KIRIKKALE YÖRESİNDEKİ TAVUKLARDA SİNDİRİM SİSTEMİ PARAZİTLERİNİN YAYGINLIĞININ ARAŞTIRILMASI.....	732
EVALUATION OF GENETIC VARIABILITY OF GROWTH AND REPRODUCTIVE TRAITS OF POLLED DORSET AND IT CROSSES UNDER CLIMATIC CONDITIONS OF KASHMIR.....	734
AĞRI İLİ BÜYÜKBAŞ HAYVANCILIĞININ MEVCUT DURUMU.....	736
CAMİLERİN KONUMLARININ VE KULLANIM KAPASİTELERİNİN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ: KONYA BOSNA HERSEK MAHALLESİ ÖRNEĞİ	743
SOCIAL MEDIA AS A LEARNING RESOURCE IN INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE DESIGN STUDIO	763
YAPI DENETİMİ VE KALİTE SORUNLARI.....	777
ISI POMPALARININ MİMARİDE KULLANIMI VE AVANTAJLARI	781
ÇELİK TAŞIYICI SİSTEMLERDE YANGINDAN KORUNUM: TÜRKİYE ULUSAL MEVZUATI ÜZERİNE KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR DEĞERLENDİRME.....	802

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A LEARNING RESOURCE IN INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE DESIGN STUDIO**Shirin IZADPANAHI**

Antalya Bilim University, Faculty of Fine Arts and Architecture, Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design,

ORCID: 0000-0001-8395-7155**ABSTRACT**

Like many other fields of education, using social media has gained popularity among interior architecture students. Interior architecture is primarily based on communicating through visuals and drawings and since social media is primarily image-based, it's understandable to see students' high demand for using social media for educational purposes. Recently the number of studies about the use of social media within education is on the rise however, only a few studies have researched the role of these platforms in improving teaching and learning in design studios. The present paper intends to discuss the approaches and challenges which are associated with using social media in higher education and suggest teaching strategies for using social media as a teaching/learning tool of design studio practice. With this intention, this paper reviews the use of social media in higher education conducted by existing researchers. Additionally, the advantages and disadvantages of implementing social media in teaching and learning are also reviewed. Results from the reviews show that using social media as a learning tool can be advantageous in the interior architecture instructional cycle. These results can provide an educational framework to improve the implementation of using social media in design studio practice.

Keywords: Social Media, Higher Education, Interior Architecture, Design Studio, Teaching Strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent studies claim that educators need to know how students are using social media tools to integrate those tools into teaching and learning activities (Liu, 2010). It is also discussed that according to students, social media and mobile devices are cheap and convenient tools for obtaining significant information (Ansari, Khan, 2020). A study from the University of Central Florida emphasized that electronic devices and social media provide opportunities for students' collaborative learning (Gikas & Grant, 2013).

The role of social media as a learning tool has raised concern due to certain advantages its platform proposes for educational development. These advantages can be listed as self-directed learning, raising critical awareness, and offering the freedom to connect and collaborate beyond the physical classroom (UAGC Staff Member, 2021).

Covid-19 has a significant impact on educational society and consequently on learning resources. During the pandemic, physical learning resources such as books, magazines, and classrooms change into non-physical

resources such as the internet, applications, and, most importantly, social media (Kilpatrick, Sengchanh, Namvongsa, & Gray, 2019). The compulsory change of teaching/learning resources during covid-19 pandemic has changed the academic community's thinking about digital learning methods. While some academicians believe that face-to-face education is the best option, the number of academicians who decide to use the advantages the digital resources is rising.

Learning resources shape the basis of knowledge in learning. Social media is now discussed to be a useful source for advanced adaptive learning (Greenhow & Lobelia, 2009). Exploring social media in the learning process will educate and enrich students with new insights about themselves (Thaariq, 2020). There is no doubt that social media is already impacting the way students learn and interact, so integrating social media into a traditional learning environment can support students' freedom, creativity, and self-engagement.

Considering the essential role of social media in showing and expanding interior architects' designs and the advantages of integrating social media as a learning tool in higher education, the current study explores the methods that will help instructors to integrate social media into the interior architecture learning process. With this intention, this study focuses on strategies that will propose a positive correlation between social media and design studio performance. Since social media can offer user-friendly learning resources, findings from the current study will identify the advantages of using social media as a learning resource in design studios which will facilitate learning with no boundaries in time and place.

2. METHODOLOGY

The method used in the current study is a literature review. The aim of using a literature review was to explore the existing studies and findings related to the focus of the research. Furthermore, it is intended to build a bridge between the collected data and possible strategies that will contribute to using social media as a learning resource in interior architecture design studios.

The literature review consists of four stages. In the first stage, relevant data was collected. The collected data were analyzed in the second stage, and the analysis was described in the third stage. Finally, a conclusion was conducted out on the analysis and descriptions. The literature review was conducted by considering three main aspects: (1) the current condition of social media as a learning resource in higher education, (2) the development of social media as a resource in education and the profession of interior architecture, and (3) the advantages social media can purpose for enhancing the interior architecture design studio learning progress.

3. SOCIAL MEDIA AS A LEARNING RESOURCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Current studies claim that integrating social media in higher education proposes valuable resources for learning, new channels for students' communication, and, rich information resources (Ajjan & Hartshorne, 2008; Junco,

2011, Romero, 2015). Selwyn (2010) argues students who start university are highly connected to social media and therefore, “user-driven” education seems as a necessity in higher education, however, evidence suggests that educators are not interested in nor willing to use social media as a teaching tool (Piotrowski, 2015).

Dogari and Apuke (2019) established research on students’ and lecturers’ perspectives on the integration of social media into the Nigerian University educational system. Results revealed that both students and lecturers confirmed the advantage of social media for novel and collaborative learning. However, lecturers have hesitations about the issues such as privacy, poor network, and possible distractive tendencies that will direct students to use social media for personal intentions rather than academic purposes.

Researches underline the role of social media in higher education as a positive resource for participatory learning (Manan et al. 2012; Manca 2020; Duta and Martinez-Rivera 2015), a tool for enhancing self-reflection and social interaction (Deng and Yuen 2011), and an environment for students to engage and communicate (Lederer 2012, Vandeyar, 2020). Similarly, Amin and Rajadurai (2018) state that social media may transform teaching through “collaborative learning, flexible learning environments, and interactive user-centered learning (cited in Vandeyar, 2020)”.

According to the study by Selwyn (2012), students have reshaped the course content by using social media and mobile devices. Therefore, it is discussed that these innovative technologies have developed a new learning culture that offers students more exploration and collaboration. Seemingly, findings from a study by Ansari and Khan (2020) claim that social media can be used for collaborative learning and can bring huge changes for international collaborative learning purposes in higher education. Allen and Nelson (2013) studied the integration of social media in an online graduate course at North California State University, and according to the results, students have developed skills and knowledge about the use of social media in their professional life.

It is important to pay attention to the fact that there are a variety of social media platforms and all of them cannot be a good choice as a learning resource. The content and the way users engage in social media should be relevant to the content of the education to make that platform a good learning resource. Table 1 summarizes the literature about the most popular social media platforms and their role as learning resources.

Table 1. Popular social media platforms and their role as a learning tool in higher education

Platform	Content	Learning Resource
Instagram	Provides users with instant ways to capture and share their life moments through a series of filters or frames (Hu et al., 2014).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Support effective and efficient learning (Gonulal, 2019).- Supports technology-based learning (Azlan, Zakaria, & Yunus, 2019).- Improve social skills, creativity skills, and technology literacy (Manaroinsong, 2019).
YouTube	Allows the formation of social relationships that revolve around uploaded	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Build imagination and joyful learning (Berk, 2009)- Developing skills in decision-making and

	videos (Moghavvemi, Sulaiman, Ismawati Jaafar & Kasem, 2018)	problem-solving (Bonus, 2010). - Enhancing visual learning (Johnson & Mayer, 2009). - Support flexible learning due to its diversity of contents (Glimpse & Ford, 2008) - Showing real-life examples (Cooper et al., 2011) - Meeting the diverse learning needs of students (Al Jarf, 2012). - Improve lecturers' and students' information technology skills (DeWitt et al., 2013)
Facebook	Allows people to create and share content and build relationships (Chugh1 & Ruhi, 2018)	- Enhanced collaboration amongst peers and promoted a sense of belonging (Chugh1 & Ruhi, 2018). - Support reflection and organization of ideas, sharing practical experiences, and group learning (Chen, 2015). - Enhance problem-solving behavior and contribute to students' stronger sense of community (Whittaker et al. 2014)
WhatsApp	Free messenger application that works across multiple platforms widely is used to send multimedia messages (Gon1 & Rawekar, 2017).	- Yielding desired learning as well as social benefits (Alenazi, 2017). - Develop motivation toward reading (Plana et al., 2013) - Easy knowledge sharing (Amry, 2014).
Pinterest	A visual discovery tool that allows finding new ideas for all your projects and interests (Pinterest, 2014).	- Allow students to connect, interact, and share information outside the classroom (Baker & Hitchcock, 2017). - Allow the exchange of ideas and resources, which adds multiple nodes to the learning network (Dunaway, 2011). - Expand the visual information which contributes to students' practice (Schroeder, Curcio & Lundgren, 2019). - Enhancing students' media literacy skills (Gammon & McGranahan, 2015). - Enhancing student to build their learning networks (Herbert, 2012). - Allow students to store online resources (Huber & Bates, 2016).

4. INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON INTERIOR DESIGN/ARCHITECTURE

Social media is an essential tool for interior architects. Interior architects can easily learn about the recent developments in interior design and the latest trends by exploring social media. They also use social media to show their designs to a bigger audience and expand their network. On the other side, like many designers, interior

architects are using different social media platforms to present educational content. Below main aspects that reinforce the connection between social media and the interior architecture profession/education are briefly listed.

4.1 Curatorial Labor

Collecting images on platforms such as Pinterest and Instagram is counted as part of the professional life of interior architects. Scolere & Humphreys (2016) has identified this effort as “curatorial labor” meaning ‘collecting, understanding, relating, and arranging’ the digital images. Curation is described as the selection and display of artifacts (Belk, 2006) and a curator is a person who creatively and carefully arranges the collections for institutions such as museums (O’Neill, 2012). Today, doing good digital curation is a skill that interior architects can use for their professional development. Good skill in digital curation allows interior architects (Espino, 2021):

- To be inspired and create a source of inspiration
- To push the boundaries of creativity and design
- To criticize and review the design industry
- To discover the old and the new

4.2 Marketing

Interior architects need to have an iconic presence on social media to add credibility to their business. The interior design industry is very competitive and consumers are getting smarter and more aware every day, therefore the right social media marketing seems essential for sharing interior architects’ vision and showcasing their talents (Butler, 2021). Good social media marketing for interior architects can (Swink, 2022):

- Grow their business
- Help them reach the potential audience/customer
- Showcase their projects globally

4.3 Professional Networking

In addition to marketing, social media helps interior architects to build meaningful relationships with other professionals in their industry or relative fields. The competitive industry of design has made social networking a necessity to advance a career. Social media platforms are great potentials to enhance networking, collaboration, and sharing of experiences among professionals (Chisenga & Rehema, 2012). Social media is a good resource for interior architects to build a professional network because (Sreenivasan, n.d., Holtzman, 2018):

- It connects them with folks they know, like to know, or should know
- It offers features that let them drill down into networks of people or companies
- It has fewer risks and fewer barriers to access to potential connections

4.4 Online Exchange of Professional Practices

Social media has empowered professionals to express their knowledge and experiences with other individuals through video-sharing, images, and descriptions on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, etc. Currently, many educators, professionals, and academicians have their channels on platforms like YouTube where they upload content related to subjects within their knowledge to make learning more interesting and engaging (Sharma & Sharma, 2021). The main types of profiles that are counted as reliable sources that contribute to interior architecture students' learning can be classified as:

- Professional designers who share their experiences or knowledge on specific subjects within the field of interior design/architecture
- Profiles managed by educators or professionals sharing educative content related to the profession of interior design/architecture
- Profiles managed by interior design/architecture educational institutions

4.5 Self-Directed Learning

In self-directed learning, learners are required to take control of finding and directing the resources to achieve a learning goal (Robertson, 2011). As Grover and Stewart (2010, p.11) stated "Social media provides access to new sources of knowledge and new opportunities for learning both within the traditional model and in new and evolving ways" and therefore is considered a good resource for self-directed learning. Video-sharing sites and in particular YouTube are no longer only for entertainment, but also a source of learning as many universities and educational institutions are uploading plenty of lectures and courses (Moghavvemi et al., 2017).

There is no doubt that social media is considered a personal learning environment where learners are allowed to be self-directed and take the responsibility for organizing their learning path, individually (Haworth, 2016). The key aspects that social media offer for supporting self-directing learning can be listed as (Hauenstein, 2014):

- Allowing learners to publish their learning goals to other individuals who are able and willing to help them
- Allowing learners to shape development circles where they can get feedback, support, resources, and encouragement
- Offer learners search and filtering options that help them organize the educative content quickly and easily
- Allow learners to gain recognition by being able to publish their learning accomplishments

5. ADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE DESIGN STUDIO

In another study Cho and Cho (2020) examined how the everyday experience of interior design students with social media is related to their academic collaboration and findings implied that students' use of social media in their daily life and its use in their academic setting are not separable. Below main aspects that reinforce the connection between social media and the interior design studio are briefly listed.

and motivate you and finally (d) using social media increase the collaboration between you and the artists and designers.

5.3 Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is another important skill that students need to develop in the design studio. Designers need to apply critical thinking to determine whether their design and idea represent a realistic picture of the user experience (Turnali, 2017). Critical thinking can be defined as the process of conceptualizing, analyzing, and synthesizing, the information collected from observations, experiences, feedback, and communication, as part of believing and acting (Lata, Dhayani & Luhach, 2014).

Some studies claim the use of social media enhances students' critical thinking ability (Xu et al., 2019, Sumanti et al., 2019, Zulkifli et al., 2020) and some studies indicate social media damages the critical thinking of students (Kim, 2014, Wang et al. 2012, Cao et al., 2018), therefore, the important thing is to see the positive aspects and increase students' awareness about these positive aspects.

According to the study by Corso and Robinso (2013) the reasons, social media can enhance critical thinking ability are (a) social media is interest-driven meaning allows students to explore what they are already interested in rather than evoking interest in the pre-set content, (b) is informal which means the learning is happening in a personal manner that lead to creative thinking, (c) propose a platform for students to extend their classroom experiences beyond the school which helps them reinforce learning in multiple environments by linking learning, home, and community, (d) implicates responsible acts on what to post and the constant act of adjusting, critiquing, changing and revising the personal posts enhance the critical outputs, (e) improve academic orientation since the online platforms give time to students to explore without the dominance of direct instruction and finally (f) offers openness to experimentation and social exploration which does not exist in educational institutions.

5.4 Visual Communication

Visual communication is one of the main learning skills students develop in interior design studios. Visual Communication for designers means the art of designing a concise, clear, and effective visual presentation. The main challenge students face in communicating their design is that the presentation should be made visually and not always the message they intend to send end up being the exact message the audience received (Fletcher, 2021). Today, the importance of developing an ability for effective visual communication goes beyond the necessity of the profession of design and is a necessity of the digital age.

In today's digital age, visual perception is an extremely important aspect of communication. Communicating your design on online platforms requires accommodating visual stimulation and passing the information to the global society (Janzen, 2016). Visual communication is also a key aspect of social media and students are active users of these platforms and are the audience and resource for uploading visual content. In popular platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Pinterest, visual images are preferred to complement text and words causing the audience to understand a message faster. It

is also discussed that visual images create meaning and sometimes they may include multiple meanings (Russmann and Svensson, 2017, Hand, 2017). Consistent with the solid link between social media and visualization, students' visual communication competencies can be enhanced by interaction with images on social media. These competencies can be listed as (Adami and Jewitt, 2016):

- Emerging genres and practices: Social media platforms and related apps are easy-to-use software that allows students to create and share multimodal artifacts in their feeds. These actions can contribute to their visual communication skills in the design studio.
- Identity construction: Social media users express their identities through the visuals they share online. This awareness can be adopted for helping students organize better visual communication about the identity/concept of their project.
- Everyday public/private practices: Communication through online visuals is students' everyday routine, so linking the logic of visual communication in social media and the design studio will engage students in ongoing visual communication practice.
- Transmedia circulation, appropriation, and control: Social media users are learning to evaluate the appropriateness of the text and visual content and sometimes revise the content before sharing. The act of considering the appropriateness of specific visual materials and controlling the content may be good practice for students to improve their visual communication skills.

5.6 Budgeting and Pricing

Establishing a realistic budget is a critical task in every interior architecture project. Interior architects have to include the price of a variety of items in calculating the total cost. Shopping features on platforms like Pinterest or Instagram allow students to learn about the prices of specific materials or elements. As Dan Seifert editor for the US tech blog, The Verge states "Instagram is to Millennials today what the QVC teleshopping channel was to previous generations" and as Amy Vener head of Retail Strategy & Marketing Pinterest describes "Pinterest is a visual discovery engine and our users have a very different way of thinking than in social networks. They come to prepare a personal project and to be inspired in their daily life they are actively considering what to buy next (Botting, 2020)". Informing students about getting benefits from the shopping feature in social media will encourage them to improve their knowledge about the prices and expenses in the current market.

6. CONCLUSION

However, social media is not developed to enhance the design, designers, and design education, due to the interactive, open, and adaptive nature of social media, designers are currently using social media platforms in their design process (Muñoz-Alcántara et al. 2015; Popescu 2014, Cho, and Cho, 2020). In addition to professional designers, social media is also used by students in the design studio (Cho et al. 2016).

Recent studies have focused on the integration of social media into the learning process in higher education. Since social media plays a crucial role in the professional life of interior architects and the personal lives of students, the current study aimed to explore the methods that will help instructors to integrate social media into the interior architecture design studio. Based on the findings from the literature certain strategies could help design instructors to lead students for using social media platforms for their learning process in the design studio.

These strategies in summary can be defined as:

1. Create groups/channels/profiles based on the content of the design studio and encourage students to engage in these spaces and communicate and collaborate about the content of the design studio outside the classroom.
2. Share techniques that students can adopt to use their interaction with social media for enhancing their creativity
3. Suggest reliable profiles and resources that will contribute to students' critical thinking in design and design studio
4. Allow students to use social media-related apps and editing techniques for expressing their design visually
5. Encourage students to follow brands and firms that sell materials and design elements on platforms that offer price tags and use this technique to create a price list for their design project

This study implies that social media can support the learning process in the interior design studio, but it is necessary to educate and train the students about its usage. To expand this understanding, there is a need for empirical research on the effect of the strategies suggested in current research on the outcome of the design studio.

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