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The Importance of the Internet in the Life of Students of Media Studies

ABSTRACT

Nowadays in the information period, the Internet has an important place in the lives of people, especially in the lives of young people. Its functionality is varied and offers many benefits. An important research question is to find out how and for what purpose the students of media studies use the Internet and what is their motivation. The aims of this study are to explain the motivational factors related to the use of Internet services, to find out what services the students consider important and which they use in the process of learning and other activities in the academic environment. The research sample was composed of 98 students of the first, second and third year of bachelor study at the Faculty of Mass communication at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. The data were gathered from December 2016 to January 2017, using our own questionnaire and a range of motivation from the questionnaire called HO-PO-MO.

Results: We found that students use the Internet primarily for entertainment and the Internet has a rather partial status in the process of their work in the academic environment.

KEY WORDS

The Internet. Student. Education. Information. Social Networks. Entertainment.

1. Introduction

Today, the value of education as a term becomes one of the most complex and at the same time the most problematic notions.¹ The view we use to look at education is often only one-sided, to gain education. In this context the term “education” has two meanings. The first, time spent at the university and subsequently obtaining a certificate of education. The second, which is more important in today’s changing and constantly evolving society, is the acquisition of one’s own desired self-education, based on the individual’s needs to acquire and develop new and unknown worlds. Through society’s development, we have been able to see how the most powerful and the most mysterious factors, which are media, influence us. Today, the internet has taken its role. The world which is provided and opened to us by the Internet is a great asset, a mystery, but at the same time a great risk of falling into the maze, which, if we do not know the way back, will expose us to great danger → influencing. The influencing itself may not be bad, as long as one learns to navigate this maze correctly. The Internet is still a mystery to us, but its proper use in education can bring us just what we need → develop technical skills and creativity, search for, analyze and process the right information. And most importantly, to learn a new way of self-education throughout our whole lives. Because it is not important to know about the Internet, but to know, understand and use it properly.

With the development of the Internet, we are offered new and attractive learning opportunities. A young person is daily connected with the most powerful media of all time, the Internet. The relationship between the Internet and a young person during the process of education is very important, but the student’s attitude towards this medium is decisive. Although today the Internet is a part of every young person’s life, is the Internet used correctly in the field of education? How are students motivated and how can it relate to their activity in the field of modern technology for educational purposes? These questions are very important in this relationship, and we need to keep an eye on them.

The unlimited access to information and knowledge is considered to be the greatest benefit of new media for society. The biggest phenomenon of today, from the point of view of all the achievements of the technology sphere, is the Internet. In today’s society in which interest in new things is dominant, the Internet is a major player. According to Schmidt and Cohen: „*Communication technologies represent opportunities for cultural breakthroughs as well as technical ones.*”² Even today, humanity does not fully understand the Internet, its essence. Looking at how the Internet has shifted tremendously in the past few years and what impact it has on society, we can confirm that it is the largest and most powerful medium of the present. Every new technology is needed to be perceived and thought about why it is really here. No technology is bad or good. It is up to the user to handle it. When it comes to modern learning, it is the contemporary problem of teaching in pedagogy and psychology, which defines how to acquire skills and develop an individual during his or her life. This issue is known as 21st century skills. The skills that person should acquire and develop in the 21st century include: communication, creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and technological literacy.³ Motivation is process based on the theme and it is important for a pedagogue to know the individual hierarchy of dominant student needs.⁴ If a teacher does not know what is the student’s motivation, he can not motivate him or her to work, shape his or her attitudes, values, interests, and influence his / her activity.⁵ Thus, the learning process is activated by student motivation - it dynamises and directs it. By motivation the pedagogue finds out by what leads a student to certain

¹ SIROTOVA M., DROSCAK M. Value orientation preference of children, adolescents and young adults via quantitative optics. In *The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education*. Vol. 5, No. 3, p. 139.

² SCHMIDT, E., COHEN, J.: *The New Digital Age: Transforming Nations, Businesses, and Our Lives*. New York: Vintage Books, 2014, p. 5.

³ ZOUNEK, J., SUDICKÝ, P.: *E-learning: učení (se) s online technologiemi*. Praha: Wolters Kluwer, 2012.

⁴ NUTTIN, J.: *Théorie de la motivation humaine*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996.

⁵ LOKŠOVÁ, I., LOKŠA, J.: *Pozornost, motivace, relaxace a tvořivost dětí ve škole*. Praha: Portal, 1999.

activity or inactivity, why it is manifested in a specific way and based on that knowledge the pedagogue looks for an effective and optimal way to educate the individual.⁶

2. Objective

As part of our research, we have identified the following research questions. Today the Internet is a part of every young person's life, but is it used correctly in the field of education? Does a young person identify with the real potential of the Internet or is he exposed only to his "pretentious"? On the basis of these origins, we have directed part of the research work towards what motivates the student to develop. How are the students of the Mass communication study program motivated and how this can be related to their IT activity at the faculty related to education?

The aim of the research is:

- Determine the importance of the Internet in educating students of mass media studies. For this reason, it is necessary to know how students use the Internet, how they work with it and how they can use it in education. Once the main goal is met, we will be able to suggest recommendations to improve this process.
- Find out what motivates students.

3. Methods

The research sample consists of students of Mass communication of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, from the first to third years of bachelor studies. This research sample consisted of 128 students, but after the evaluation of the so called lying questions we have included in the research to verify the truthfulness of the answers, the sample was settled on 98 students, of which 20 are first year students, 40 are second year students and 38 are third year students.

The questionnaire about the importance of the Internet in education was drawn up on the basis of our own construction and consists of 24 main questions. Questions are made in several ways:

- rating based on the scale 0-5, which has been generalized to the 3 required categories in the evaluation process,
- own space to express what helped us to find out their own attitude and attitude to the issue,
- questions in which students had a wider choice of options.

As a method of testing - determining the activity of the direction of the participating students, we used Range of motivation from the questionnaire of values, attitudes and motivation, which is written by J. Vonkomer. The questionnaire - the scale of motivation, consists of thirty questions that determine the direction of the participants' activity, their motivation. The role of the participant is to organize options in each block - three blocks of ten questions - by scoring from ten to one for the least motivating option. The size of the research sample on motivation is 88 students - due to the number of returned questionnaires surveyed (filled in correctly).

⁶ GROFČÍKOVÁ, S.: Učiteľ – motivácia – študent, In MATTOVÁ, I., PLEŠCHOVÁ, G.: (eds.) *Ako kvalitne učiť? Skúsenosti začínajúcich VŠ učiteľov*. Bratislava : Alternatíva – Komunikácia – Občania, 2007, p. 15-16.

4. Findings & discussion

Based on the research *The Importance of the Internet in FMK Student's Education* after evaluating the obtained data we found out that the Internet has a role as a 'quick assistant' in student education instead of a real provider of new opportunities and ways to educate. Students pay the biggest attention to the Internet when fulfilling their study duties and also when searching for study materials.

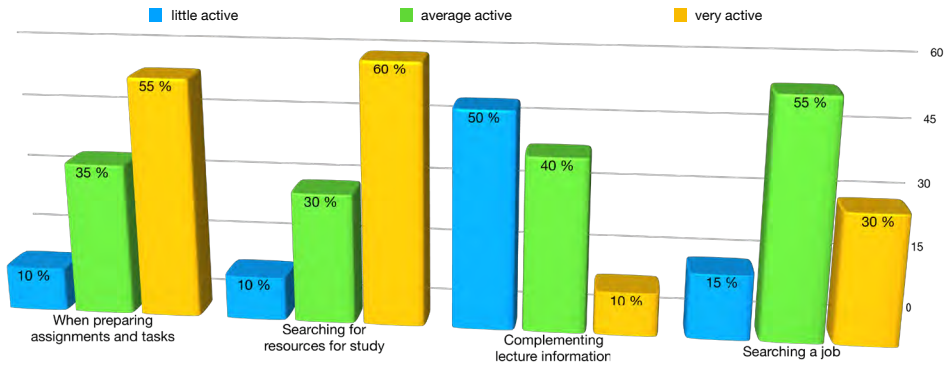


CHART 1:

For what purpose do you use the Internet? - 1st year

Source: own processing

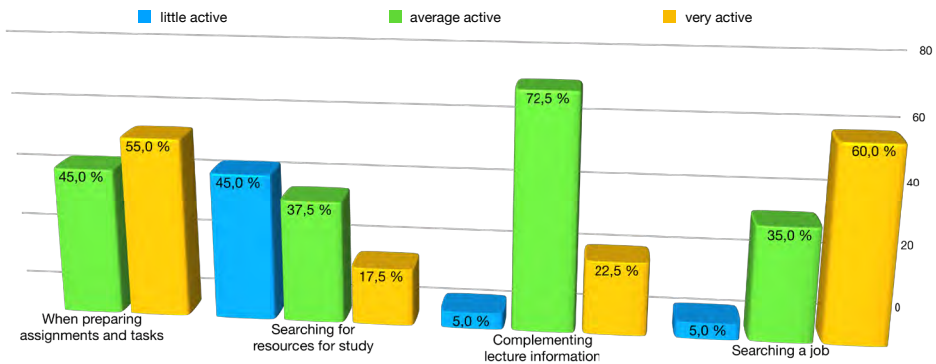


CHART 2:

For what purpose do you use the Internet? - 2nd year

Source: own processing

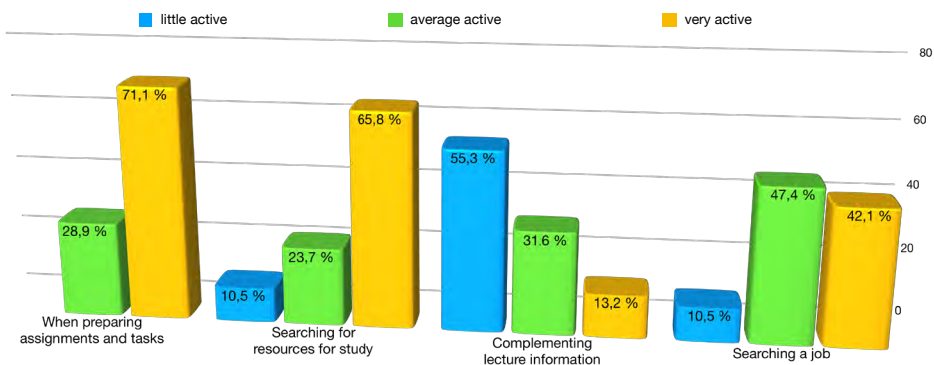


CHART 3:

For what purpose do you use the Internet? - 3rd year
 Source: own processing

Such a (passive) use of the Internet extinguishes its real potential, which has zero chance of further developing. It is a great shame that, despite what the Internet offers, students perceive it only as a source of rapid and often unorganized grouping of information into one form, which in this case represents our student duties. In such a 'quick review' students have no chance to understand and not even to learn how to work with information: search, select, analyze and use correctly. During the research, the assumption that activity with the Internet of students of the 3rd year (searching for materials for study as well as processing assignments and tasks) will be higher when comparing to the 1st and 2nd years, as the main factor of working on their bachelor thesis and their preparation for the state exams, was confirmed. It was also confirmed that the biggest attention to the Internet is devoted to leisure activities, entertainment and online communication with friends (95-100% activity in each of the years researched).

With the Internet in education, students do not even agree with the use of its trend-setting options, such as better, more modern and more engaging learning. Today we can hear about online courses almost everywhere. It is a mystery why so many young people do not use/do not want to use them.

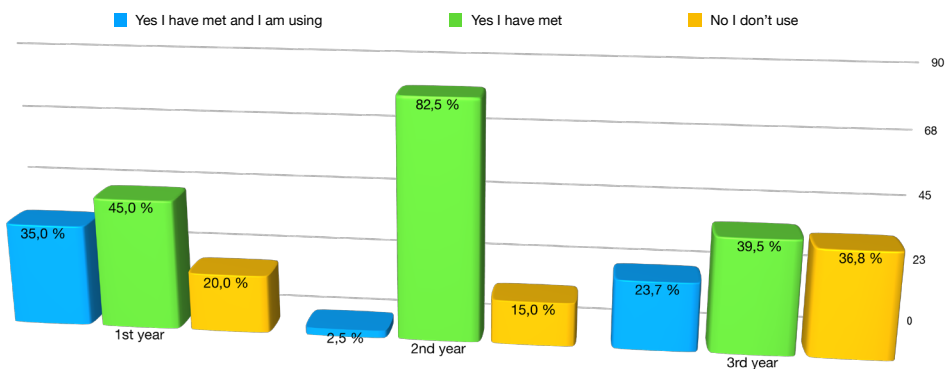


CHART 4:

A graph showing the interest in online courses.
 Source: own processing

After the findings with the situation with online courses for students of mass media communication we can say that the interest in such form of education is very small, and although the students encountered some courses, it was probably all they could get. It is surprising that they are not interested in such a modern form of education. There can be several reasons why

they do not use them: they do not care, they do not have time, they do not know how to work with them? If we focus on the reason that they do not know how to work with them, in this case it is crucial for the whole issue, why a young person should acquire and develop new skills with modern, educational benefits for society. In this case that idea cannot be forced onto the student. Students themselves need to realize their need and the need of contemporary society, and most importantly, they must realize that they have a tremendous amount of opportunities to improve in every field of life. For now, the Internet offers a world of lifelong learning.

Students who are using or were using the courses mentioned courses such as:

JA Slovensko, language courses, educational portal ted.com, courses from Google, Digi academy, Photovia and various video tutorials on YouTube.

One of the most striking findings we found on the basis of our evaluation was that, despite everything that the Internet offers to us, the most reliable source of information for students are books. This is why our assumptions were reversed because we assumed that students are more focused on the Internet.

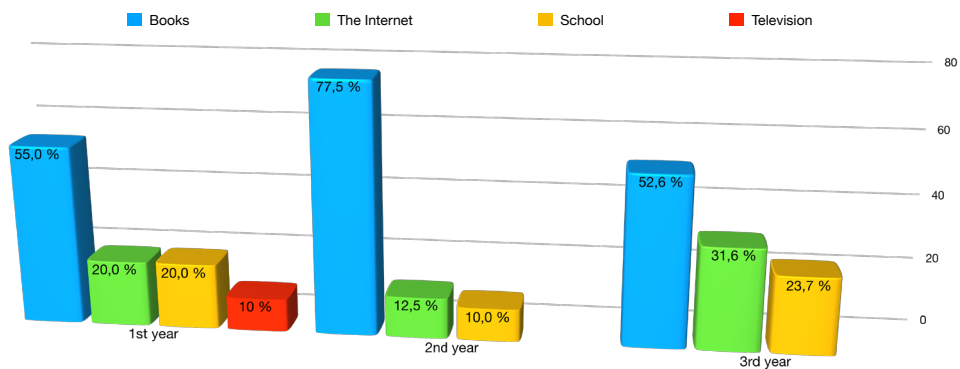


CHART 5:

A graph that points to what is the most reliable source of information for students.

Source: own processing

With gradual findings, even on the basis of the theory, we can agree with this finding. Although the internet represents a world of 'all' information, no one can guarantee the truth of this information. And from the other side, one does not find such elaborated, selected and processed information on the Internet as we can find in books. In short, despite all the new ways, books still have their rightful place.

In the rest of the collected data we were again able to confirm how students use modern tools in the learning process. We do not find anything revolutionary about these findings, but what we think is beneficial, is that students are aware of the educational benefits of social networks (we are talking about Facebook, where they spend most of their time according to research) despite the overall time they spend on the Internet (which is about 5 hours per day).

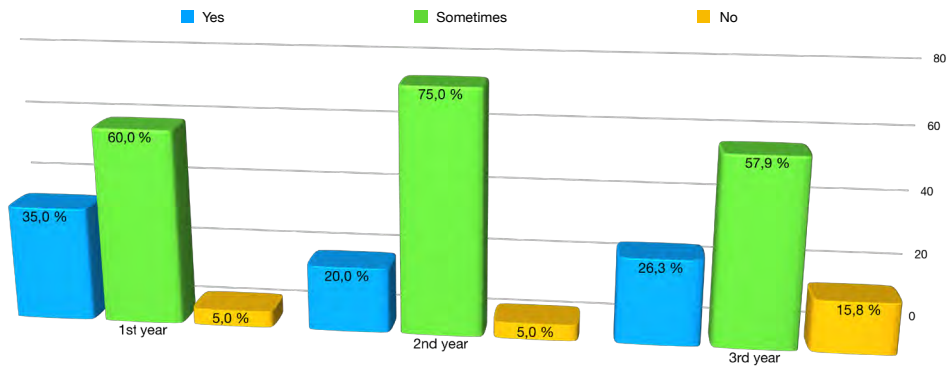


CHART 6:
Does the social network help you in learning?
Source: own processing

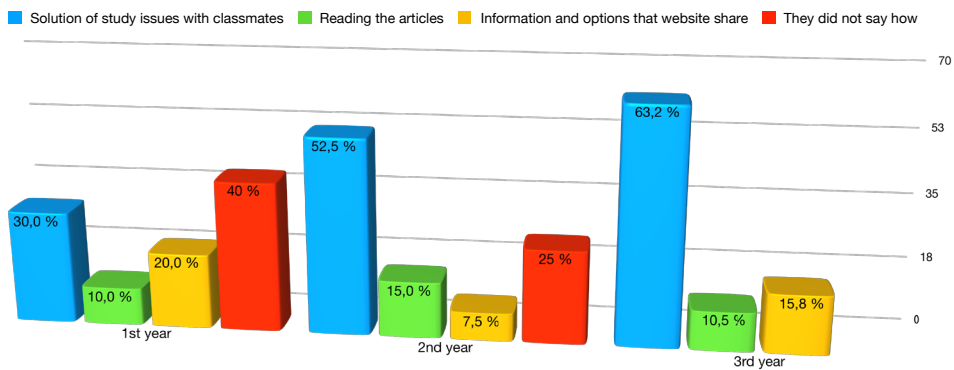


CHART 7:
If the social network helps you, for what purpose?
Source: own processing

Social networks have expanded considerably in the last couple of years, From normal communication, an auxiliary form of education has been transferred to several forms. Today, most people use social networking (Facebook in particular) as a method of exchanging study materials with their classmates, discussing, reading articles or tracking offers/options that share sites (most often sharing interesting articles, videos, stays or invitations to various events and lectures). With regard to social networks, we have decided to make an overview about with which social networks students have an account.

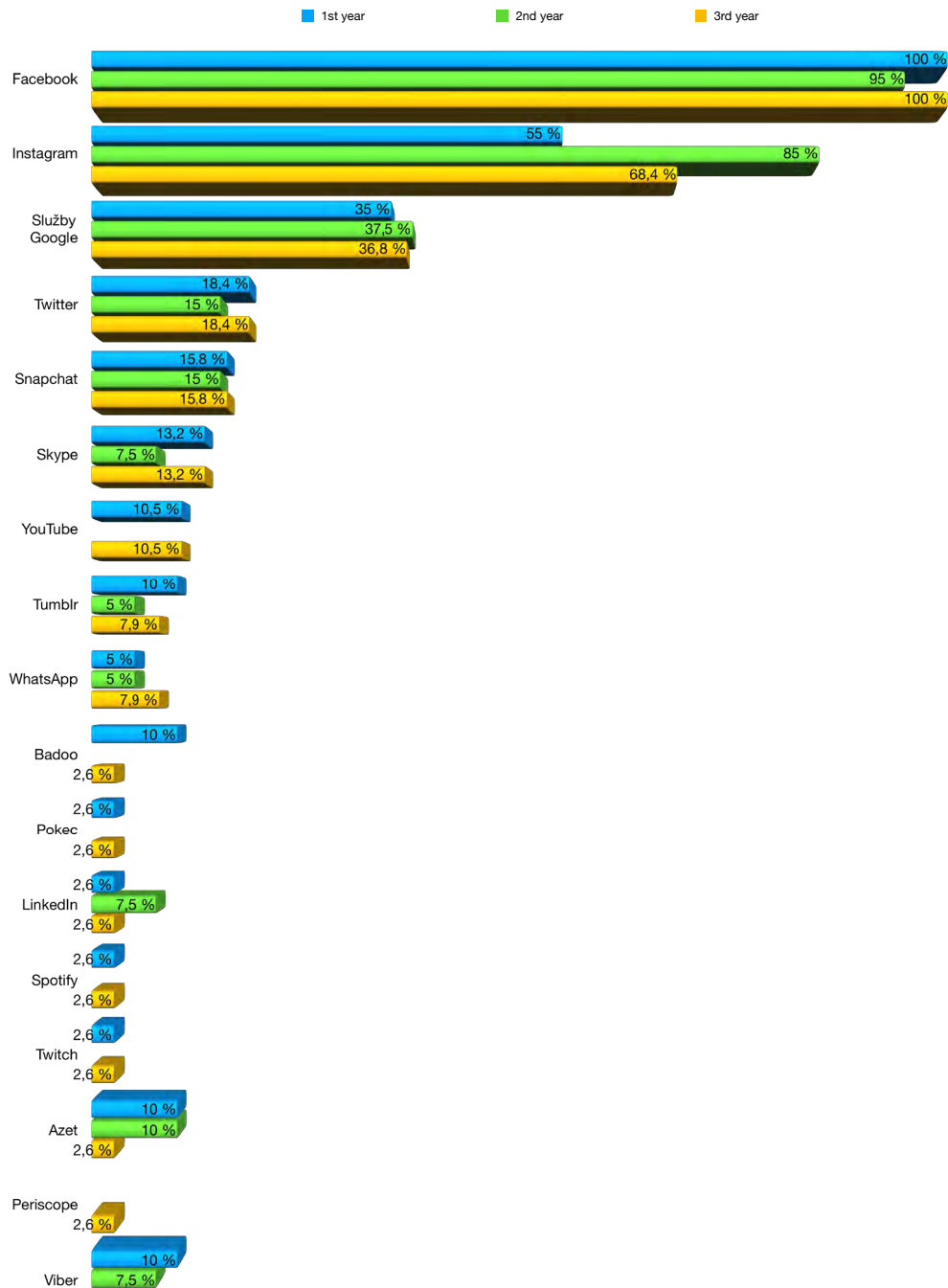


CHART 8:

On which social networks do you have an account created?

Source: own processing

In our thesis we also focused on how often students visit the website of FMK (www.fmk.sk). The reason was/is simple. Our faculty website is not only for information about teachers and contacts, but students can also find offers and opportunities for internships, invitations to extra-curricular lectures and various other events which connect and educate.

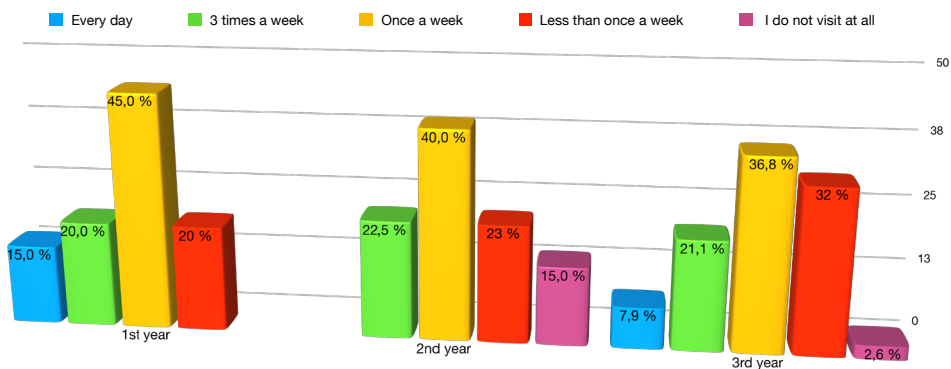


CHART 9:
How often do you visit FMK website?
Source: own processing

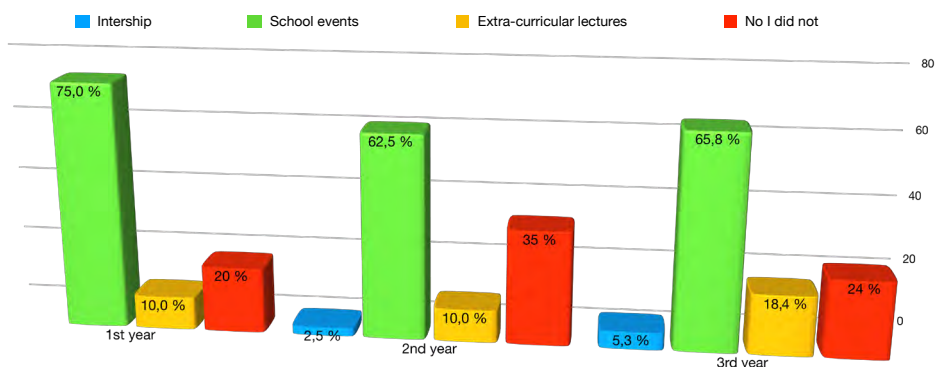


CHART 10:
Did you get involved to something thanks to FMK website's offerings?
Source: own processing

Note:

School events: Beánia, Univerzitovica, FMK DAY and so on.

Extra-curricular lectures: all that does not fit into compulsory education (Week of Science and Technology, Conferences, Lectures with invited guests during the study)

Part of each education must also be feedback on whether the learning process is beneficial, what could be improved, changed or eventually express satisfaction. Staffing FMK, which has been operating since January 2016, responded to this idea. From the identified information (from 27 February 2017) that 211 students (200 thanks, 11 remarks) have used it so far. From our results we can confirm that application usage activity is very small, despite the previous use. It may be that the students do not know enough about it.

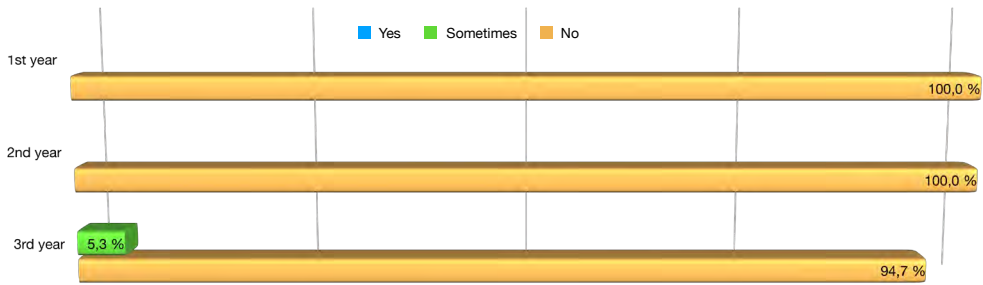


CHART 11:

Do you use Staffino?

Source: own processing

In terms of the research problem 'how students of mass media communication are motivated and how it may be related to their educational activity', we discovered from the data found after evaluating the questionnaire the scale of motivation:

The following results are given in the score summary

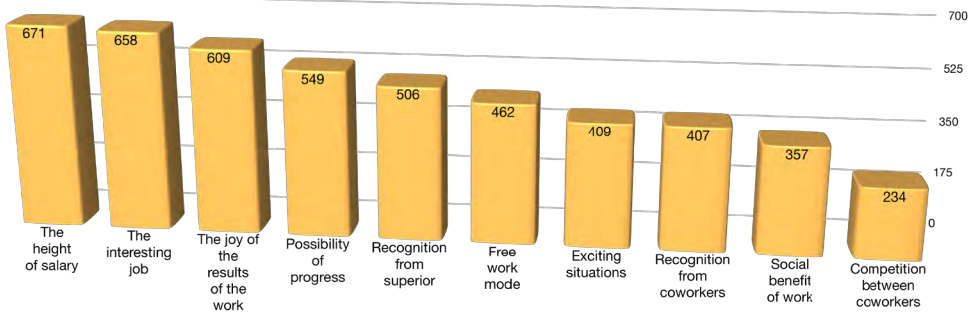


CHART 12:

What contributes to achieving good job results?

Source: own processing

To achieve the best results at work 'salary' has 671 points and the lowest 'competition among colleagues' has 234 points.

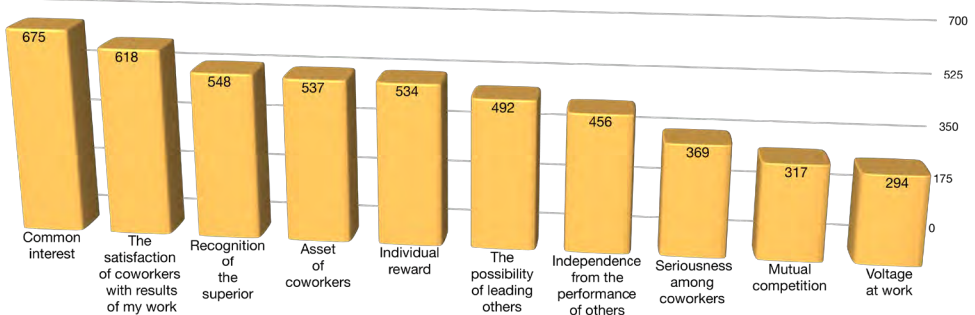


CHART 13:

If the outcome of the work - the solution of the task is dependent on the pair of workers or the whole group, what will positively affect the individuals the most?

Source: own processing

If the result of the work - the solution of the task is dependent on the pair of workers or the whole group, what most positively affects among individuals is the 'common interest'- 675 points and the least is stress at work - 294 points.

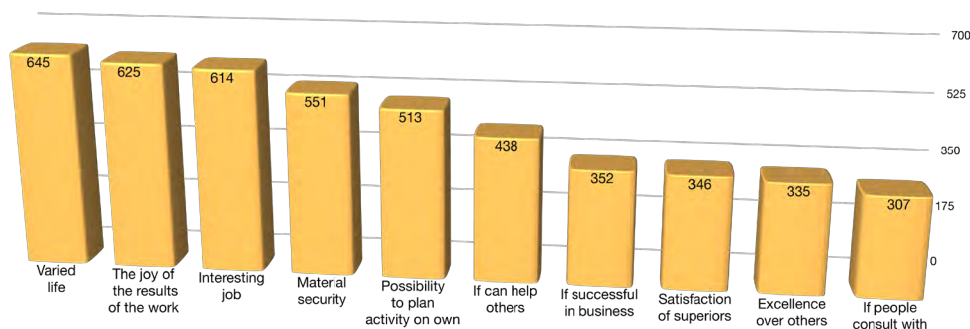


CHART 14:

What contributes to the satisfaction of the individual?

Source: own processing

To the satisfaction of the individual the 'varied life' contributes the most and the least it is 'if people are consulting with him' - 307 points.

We discovered the most motivating factors in our research sample were:

- the amount of salary in the case of individual activity
- common interest in teamwork
- varied life in the field of individual satisfaction

5. Conclusion

Here the question is how to encourage students to make more use of the Internet, particularly its educational opportunities? Responding to it is not easy, but we think it is important, because the Faculty of Mass Media Communication offers students many opportunities to learn not only in compulsory study but also to increase their professional level during education and after graduation, which they can implement into their working career.

Based on what we discovered, it is crucial for a student to realize that although a strong media stands before him, it is only up to him to learn how to work with it (which is also his condition, if he wants to fit into today's constantly changing society).

Community media create a completely new sphere of media landscape.⁷ The Internet, as a powerful and modern medium is still in a state of change and development, but the way a person/student treats and uses it in education is variable only on condition that he will learn how to work with it and realize new possibilities, which with the right approach can turn into new knowledge. It is easy to look for obstacles, only the negative, but when we look at the deeper meaning of these things, we see that we were wrong. This is also the idea of the Internet. Although, of course, we don't have to attribute value to the Internet for everything that we achieve and that we improve in, but in most cases the Internet is a great inspiration. Therefore, the Internet should not only be viewed as a means of entertainment but also as a means of providing unlimited opportunities for education and development.

⁷ ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Motivations and Incentives of Community Media Content Creators: A Case Study of SpodNás. In *Communication Today*. Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 40.

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