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Utilisation of Social Media to Bring Back Users for Effective Use of Physical Academic Libraries in the 21st Century in Nigeria

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Abstract

Utilisation of social media in the 21st century libraries enable libraries to provide attractive library services to achieve the ultimate goal of marketing library and information services and reaching out to users to effectively patronise and use the physical library and its resources. The paper investigated the utilisation of social media to bring back users to effectively use the physical academic libraries in the 21st century in Nigeria. The paper also determined the challenges to utilisation of social media to bring back users to effectively use the physical academic libraries in the 21st century in Nigeria. The research method adopted for the study was Survey Design of correlational type. Three academic libraries and 55 librarians were totally enumerated. Questionnaire was used to collect data for analysis. The research instrument was validated, to consider its suitability for the study. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, frequency counts, simple percentages, and mean. The findings showed that academic libraries under study underused social media with mean scores below 2.50 criterion benchmark. The paper concluded that the utilisation of social media in library services academic libraries in Nigeria could market, advertise library products and services, promote brands of library images to bring back users to effectively use the library in this 21st century. The paper recommended that state governments, university authorities and library management should tackle the problems of funding, infrastructural facilities, irregular power supply, among others for efficient and high level utilisation of social media for services delivery in academic libraries for adequate teaching and learning in academic institutions in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Academic libraries, Library Usher, Social media, Effective use.*

1.1 Introduction

Academic libraries in Nigeria are hubs around which academic activities of academic institutions revolved. They are one of the most essential units in institutions that established them. According to Ottong, (2014), academic libraries play important roles in the

intellectual and academic development of various categories of users such as students, lecturers, researchers and the communities they serve. The provision of quality services in academic libraries is very important because the efficiency and effectiveness of every academic library are not only

determined and measured based on completeness and balance collections but also quality of services being rendered. Library service delivery which is the delivering of library information products and services to users in order to satisfy and meet their information needs, also involves the interaction between library staff and users where the provider (library staff) offer quality services which could actually occur either in a traditional or virtual form, and users in turn, find value in the services. The world, including the library, according to Ezeani (2010), is witnessing a revolution as a result of developments in ICTs that has permeated all sectors.

Developments in ICTs in this 21st century have changed the role and position of academic libraries and their librarians, offering challenging opportunities that require them to respond positively in all facets of their services and functions to remain relevant. The 21st century libraries have moved on with the wagon and trend of information and communication technologies. They are very relevant and efficient in library services delivery (Eyo, 2022). Unfortunately, most libraries still operate the traditional system of services delivery without the inclusion of ICTs in their services. These libraries are not computerised, nor do they make moves for transition and transformation accompanied with sophistication in the changing pattern in information needs of users which is growing rapidly. Furthermore, due to the rising tide of discontent in traditional library services in university libraries where library users get frustrated and spent much time in search of information materials, it is observed that, nowadays, the academic library users irregularly visit and use the physical library and its resources. They delight in using materials in the Internet which are not evaluated, sieved by professionals (Eyo &

Afebende, 2020).

Today, the 21st century contemporary practice in academic library services is being propelled with the inclusion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in all aspects of library services. The academic libraries in 21st century focus more on the area of digital or virtual libraries also known as libraries without borders all of which have transited and transformed the academic library environment. A variety of manual methods are replaced by computerised system which provides opportunity for online accessibility. The traditional library services delivery and inclusion of information and communication technologies into library services and functions are relevant. For academic institutions to measure up to expectations in 21st century, they must meet the demands of 21st century users, as well as their means of survival. Twenty-first century services delivery of academic libraries in Nigeria can be possible through the integration of social media, which is a new service models, methods and technologies that can be adopted to improve library services as well as bring back users to regularly visit and use the physical library and its resources.

Furthermore, librarians are expected to leave their comfort zones and offices to deliver services to users outside the traditional services delivery. Twenty-first century librarians are not expected to stay in the library building to promote library services, but to meet users where they are, make their presence and that of the library felt by users in the web, keep library's image alive as well as key into the current trend by actively being wherever users are in the Internet. With the use of social media, academic libraries can make a difference by creating a new idea beyond books; that is, ensuring that wherever library service is accessed it is clear that the library provides it. By so doing, this will help to overturn some outdated perceptions of library users to persuade them of the value of library

and its services in their educational pursuit, as well as enhance the library patronage by users. Where this is lacking in Nigerian academic libraries may impact negatively on academic libraries and their users. This deserves serious attention.

Social media is a powerful new form of communication which the world of librarianship is drifting toward this 21st century to promote and market services and different events offered manually by libraries. Social media is a way for people to communicate and interact online. It is creating more friendly, social, and fun environments for retrieving and sharing information. The common social media platform people share information encompasses Facebook, Blogs, Wikis, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, RSS, Flickr, SlideShare, LinkedIn, Google Plus (g⁺), MySpace, WhatsApp, Academia.com, Social Marks, Podcasting, Mash-up, Tag Cloud, Folksonomy, among others (Kemrajh, 2013; Eyo, 2022). Social media is an offshoot of information and communication technology (ICT). The integration of social media into library services is a way of advertising and branding products and services. These tools can connect librarians with customers and offer key information about library business, products, services, and upcoming events. It can be used for communication and to build strong relationships with library users. It can be used to connect with people or users, send automated messages to users whenever a new product or services is launched.

The adoption and use of social media tools in library services delivery could help mitigate users' stress, frustration, suffering, and spending of much time in search of information materials due to the old library traditional system operations. Use of social media tools could provide flexible services platforms to users, as they provide interactive opportunities beyond the conventional platforms for the dissemination and delivery

of library materials and events. In the same vein, the social media tools would make it easier for library users to remotely access library collections, individually and as group for independent as well as group learning. They possess outreaching influence which the conventional media lack. It therefore goes a long way towards developing a dynamic and interactive library, brings visibility to the library, its collections, and enhancement of its services and their reach to users, along with these benefits, it also brings responsibilities too.

However, these services demand commitment, awareness and understanding of current technological trends, regular monitoring of user needs and expectations and marketing of the services and products. Social media is important in university libraries in Nigeria, to create relationships with users on social media, understand users' needs for libraries to partake in users' conversation and serve them better. Social media tools can be used by university libraries to interact and serve faculty member staff and students and create awareness of importance of libraries, events, new arrivals, and so on. With social media, librarians and users can stay in touch even outside the library period, also engaged with users directly by allowing them to send them messages, and their questions can be answered quickly. It also allows library users to interact with librarians and access a variety of library collections/materials in real-time. It is better for libraries to be part of the conversation in delivering library services.

Nevertheless, students use of the academic library in the 21st century is determined by the integration of social media in the services of academic libraries in Nigeria. Therefore, where these are lacking it has negative impact on libraries and students use of physical academic library, resources and services. These have remained one area of concern. Consequently, despite the importance of social media in 21st century and efforts made

to adopt the technologies for improved library services as reported in the literature, little success has been recorded. This study was therefore carried out to investigate the utilisation of social media to bring back users to effectively use the physical academic libraries in the 21st century in Nigeria. The study would help to add to the scarce literature in library science from Nigeria, therefore, bridging the gap in literature on utilisation of social media to bring back users to effectively use the physical academic libraries in the 21st century in Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The researcher's observation and preliminary investigation of some academic libraries in Nigeria revealed that most academic libraries are yet to utilise social media in their services. These, probably, could have negative impact on the services delivery of the 21st century academic libraries. However, evidence from studies have shown that despite the use and benefits derive from social media by Nigerians, generally, and particularly, those in university libraries, these have not been well documented. Studies have further shown that no study has been carried out in relationship to the utilisation of social media to bring back users to effectively use the physical academic libraries in the 21st century in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that the study investigated the use of social media to bring back users to effectively use the physical academic libraries in the 21st century in Nigeria.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study was to investigate utilisation of social media to bring back users to effectively use the physical academic libraries in the 21st century in Nigeria. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. determine the challenges to utilisation of social media to bring back users to

effectively use the physical academic libraries in the 21st century in Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the challenges to utilisation of social media to bring back users to effectively use the physical academic libraries in the 21st century in Nigeria?

2.1 Literature Review

The world at present has turned to Information Age. With advances in technologies, more information becomes available through a wide range of media. Information users now seem to rely heavily on information resources in various formats including prints and electronics, especially electronic resources that are accessible via the Internet. There are changes in the 21st Century libraries. The 21st century libraries now integrate social media in their services (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012; Mabawonku, 2017; Eyo, 2022). According to Mabawonku (2017), social media differ from traditional media in terms of quality, reach, frequency, usability, immediacy and permanence. The use of social media to deliver library services enables librarians can keep in touch with hundreds of widely dispersed people, most of whom they have already met in person (Solis, 2011). Furthermore, the simple act of having conversations and creating relationships with patrons is immensely useful. Through conversions on social media, libraries can gain insights into what their users want and need and ultimately understand their users better. Social media opens up a whole new world of communication where the user is the focus (Oriedi, 2011).

Therefore, librarians are expected to take full advantages of social media in delivering library and information services to satisfactorily meet the needs of the 21st Century information users. This corroborates the European Union (2012) statement on the importance of using social media tools (online

tools), as it argues that the Internet has become a primary source of information for today's society through an increase in geographical scope thus increasing the number of participants in activities. In fact, the use of social media in library activities allowed library and users to have direct and intimate relationship, thereby promoting library activities. However, libraries in developed and developing countries are using latest trends to market their services and to connect with library users and to make library programmes and services accessible. Khan and Bhatti (2012) study showed respondents agreement that social media is an important tool for marketing and promoting library products and services among online information users, build discussion groups and collaborative work.

Some purposes for using social media in libraries as observed by Canty (2013) include library marketing and reference services. Hendrix and Zafron (2009) found the main purpose of using social media in libraries include: to market the library, push out announcements to library users, for promotional purpose, to have a presence in the social network, by posting photos and providing chat reference service. Canty (2013) pointed out that multifaceted approach has been adopted by libraries in connection to the use of social media, noting that libraries do not have generally stipulated social media that should be used by all libraries, but each library adopts those suitable for her library services. The Nigerian Library Association (2010) stated that presentations and talks organised on different topics by libraries are disseminated via podcasts. Abubakar (2011), Kemrajh (2013) and Eyo (2022) revealed some social media tools used in library services to include Facebook, Twitter, Flickr for image or picture sharing, YouTube for video sharing, LinkedIn, Foursquare, Tumblr, Vimeo, Pinterest, Wikipedia, Instagram, Sound cloud, Podcast for audio sharing,

mobile sites (2go), among others among others that have the capacity of boosting participation because of their open, conventional nature, connectedness and textual and audio-visual characteristic appeals.

In the same vein, Mutula (2011) study found that the most popular social media in Kenya's libraries is Facebook, followed by Twitter, RSS, SlideShare, YouTube, Flickr and blogs in that order. Santosh (2016) study of new media technologies in selected Indian Universities showed Facebook to be the most used technology attracting 80.26%, Wikipedia attracted 67.11%, blogs attracted 59.21%, while YouTube attracted 55.26% of the respondents. Mwantimwa and Nkhoma-Wamunza (2016) study on adoption and applying new media technologies in selected academic libraries in Tanzania revealed that, 33 (82.5) respondents use new media technologies. In the same vein, 16 (40%) agreed that they used it for library operations, while 5 (26.3%) do not use it. Undoubtedly, the utilisation of social media in academic libraries in Nigeria is, therefore, a veritable tool to market library products, services to users and brand the library's image in the minds of users.

However, despite the benefits of utilisation of social media in academic library services, there are lots of challenges faced by these libraries. According to Brian (2011) assertion, librarians are so busy that social media becomes an afterthought, perhaps even a chore, rather than a major interactive channel. Bakporhonor and Olise (2015) asserted that the unstable and epileptic power supply in Nigeria discourages librarians and users from participating in the online forum. In the same vein, Ossai-Ugbah (2012) stated that power outage increases the general overhead and running cost thus having a negative impact on the use of social media for marketing library and services in Nigerian university libraries. Ezeani and Igwesi (2012)

added bandwidth problems to this, noting that most institutions have limited bandwidth to support this practice. Poor connectivity can frustrate effective online participation. Multichips Technologies (2018) stated that some social media problems in university libraries include growing their social audience, no enough time and resources, technical difficulties, measuring their social media efforts, money spent is a major challenge for librarians use of social media just like other professionals, and privacy concerns.

Tang and Muhammad (2021) highlighted challenges while adopting the social media in academic libraries as follows: lack of time to use social media, lack of skills and knowledge to use social media, too many social media tools to learn and so on. According to Tion, Ilo and Beetesh (2019), some issues in the university libraries include: poor Internet, lack of qualified staff, lack of proper skills and behaviour of library staff to adopt social media in their respective libraries to enhance their services. Tella and Akinboro (2014) mentioned users orientation, organisation support, culture, usability and resources as the major challenges that prevent the use social media in the libraries. Bakporhonor and Olise (2015) listed other problems in the use of social media in libraries to include: lack of technical knowledge and expertise, high cost of ICTs, corruption and negligence, little intervention, resistance to change among others.

Eyo (2017) reported that the challenges of utilisation of social media in libraries include: poor funding, general lack of awareness of use of social media in libraries, insufficient library personnel with ICT and technical skills, electricity failure, lack of adequate knowledge regarding the integration of social media, lack of knowledge on how to use social media to promote services, lack of inadequate training opportunities to use social media, among

others. Furthermore, the study by Bakporhonor and Olise (2015) showed the major challenge as privacy concerns ($x = 4.16$), low level of technology penetration ($x = 4.03$) and network problem ($x = 3.96$). Other challenges such as lack of awareness ($x = 2.78$), lack of funds ($x = 2.38$), lack of social media skill ($x = 2.87$), and erratic power supply ($x = 2.23$) were not significant challenges since they had a mean score below the criterion mean of 3.00 for their study. Brian (2011) conducted a very informal, unscientific, non-generalisable study reviewing the social media sites of many academic libraries, the study showed that he felt somewhat disappointed.

Bakporhonor and Olise (2015) study stated that till date, some librarians do not see the need to promote library and information services. Adeyinka and Akinboro (2015) observed that limited libraries are adopting social networking sites for rendering services to their patrons and this consequently results in limited patronage and response from users. The researcher also opined that social media is underutilised and even in some cases are never used in university libraries in Nigeria. Nigerian libraries and their librarians should seriously embrace these tools to market their products and services, showing the relevance and importance of libraries in this 21st century, to encourage and enable library users to effectively patronise academic libraries in Nigeria to meet their needs, thus bringing back library users who had left the library to really patronage and use the physical academic libraries for their studies and learning.

3.1 Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was the survey design. The study population consisted of fifty-five (55) librarians working in 3 state academic libraries in Nigeria. The state academic

libraries are: Akwa Ibom State University library, Ikot Akpaden, University of Cross River State (UNICROSS) library, Calabar and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education library, Port Harcourt. A total enumeration was adopted as sample technique. A questionnaire was used to collect data for analysis. The research instrument was subjected to face validity. The reliability of the

instrument was ascertained by involving librarians who were not included in the population of the study. A pre-test was conducted to ascertain the content validity. The research instrument was validated and considered reliable and suitable for the study. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts, simple percentages, and mean.

4.1 Results and Analysis

Table 1: Questionnaire distribution and response rate

S/N	Name of institution	No. of questionnaire administered	No. of questionnaire returned	Response rate (%)
1	Akwa Ibom State University, Ikot-Akpaden, Mkpat Enin LGA	18	13	23.6
2	University of Cross River State, Calabar	22	20	36.3
3	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port-Harcourt	15	10	18.2
		55	43	78.1%

N = 78.1%

Table 1 showed that out of 55 questionnaires distributed to the respondents, only 43 usable questionnaire were completed and returned. This accounted for 78.1%. The study investigated the types of social media use in library services in academic libraries in Nigeria as presented in Table 2 below.

4.2 Challenges to Utilisation of Social Media to bring back users

Table 2:Challenges to utilisation of social media to bring back users for effective use of physical academic libraries in the 21st century in Nigeria.

S/N	Challenges to Utilisation of Social Media	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	My library lacks adequate funds.	15	25	0	3	3.90	Accepted
2	My library is unprepared to adopt social media in the library services.	23	13	4	3	3.40	Accepted
3	My library lacks technical personnel with expertise in social media.	23	12	8	0	3.34	Accepted
4	My library lacks social media equipment.	19	18	3	3	3.26	Accepted
5	My library services are not automated.	23	13	4	3	3.40	Accepted
6	My library lacks Internet connectivity.	15	3	25	0	2.76	Accepted
7	Staff are not regularly trained and retrained to acquire ICT skills in application of social media services in my library.	15	13	12	3	2.76	Accepted
8	My library is faced with erratic power supply	4	8	13	18	2.76	Accepted
Weighted mean						2.50	

The data presented in table 2 shows eight (8) identified items on the challenges to utilisation of social media to bring back users to effectively use the physical academic libraries in the 21st century in Nigeria. The findings from table 2 revealed that all the eight (8) items listed, My library lacks adequate funds ($\bar{x} = 3.90$), My library is unprepared to adopt social media in the library services ($\bar{x} = 3.40$), My library lacks technical personnel with expertise in social media ($\bar{x} = 3.34$), My library lacks social media equipment ($\bar{x} = 3.26$), My library services are not automated ($\bar{x} = 3.40$), My library lack s Internet connectivity ($\bar{x} = 2.76$), Staff are not regularly trained and retrained to acquire ICT skills in application of social media services in my library ($\bar{x} = 2.76$), My library is faced with erratic power supply ($\bar{x} = 2.76$) respectively had mean (\bar{x}) score above 2.50 criterion benchmark above average. It therefore means that there are multifarious challenges to utilisation of social media to bring back users to effectively use the physical academic libraries in the 21st century in Nigeria.

5.1 Discussion of Findings

The findings on the challenges to utilisation of social media to bring back users to effectively use the physical academic libraries in the 21st century in Nigeria revealed that the challenges are enormous. Therefore, the participants' responses attracted high challenges in the academic libraries under study. These include: lack of inadequate funds, followed by the next highest score which are unpreparedness to adopt social media in the library services and lack of automation of library services. The next are lack of technical personnel with expertise in social media, lack of social media equipment, lack of Internet connectivity, lack of regular trained and retrained staff with ICT skills in application of social media in library services as well as erratic power supply. This is in line with Eyo's (2017) report which include poor funding, general lack of awareness of use of social media in libraries, insufficient library personnel with ICT and technical skills, electricity failure, lack of adequate knowledge regarding the integration of social media, lack of knowledge on how to use social media to promote services, lack of inadequate training opportunities to use social media, among others. Furthermore, the study corroborates Bakporhonor and Olise (2015) study that showed the major challenge as privacy concerns. Other challenges are low level of technology penetration and network problem.

According to Tion, Ilo and Beetesh (2019), Some issues in the university libraries include: poor Internet, lack of qualified staff, lack of proper skills and behaviour of library staff to adopt social media in their respective libraries to enhance their services.

Conclusion

The paper concluded that the utilisation of social media to bring back users to effectively use the physical academic libraries in the 21st century in Nigeria libraries is anchored on improved funding, constant power supply, Internet connectivity, adequate personnel with ICT/technical skills, infrastructure, among others. The utilisation of social media in academic library activities has enormous benefits to libraries as opposed to a manual service which is slow, frustrating and tedious. It also enhances the provision and delivery of library services to users in academic libraries in Nigeria.

On the contrary, there are lots of challenges. Therefore, librarians in academic libraries cannot afford to ignore this technology. The library users will find libraries which have not embraced social media in the near future as insensitive, archaic and largely unusable. If the library ever ceases to be growing organism, then it really will become extinct. It is therefore important that librarians of 21st century take an active role in utilisation of social media in library services to bring back

users who abandoned the physical academic libraries to now use the libraries and their resources. It is, therefore, inevitable that librarians need to learn the use of these tools to keep abreast with the ever growing sophisticated library users in academic libraries. The librarians, therefore, need to understand what needs to be done and how it should be done. However, when done correctly and consistently, social media can be a truly powerful tool for cultivating a community.

Recommendations

Significantly, the utilisation of social media in libraries is anchored on improved funding, constant power supply, Internet connectivity, adequate personnel with ICT/technical skills, infrastructure, among others. Therefore, for effective utilisation of social media in 21st century academic library services in Nigeria, stakeholders (state governments, university authorities and library management) should take drastic steps to tackle these problems. Specifically, the present level of funding (budgetary allocation), infrastructural facilities, irregular power supply and investment in staff training and re-training, among others should be improved to encourage efficient and high level of utilisation of social media in academic libraries for provision of effective services to users in academic libraries in Nigeria.

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