

The Impact of Twitter Ban on Online Services Delivery to Nigerian University Library Users

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Abstract

Rationale of Study – The study investigated Twitter features that aid the delivery of online library services to users, online library services rendered via Twitter, and the extent to which the indefinite ban of Twitter in Nigeria has affected the delivery of online library services among Nigerian university libraries.

Methodology – The paper adopted an online survey method to collect data from 81 librarians working in university libraries in Nigeria. The collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics and presented in the form of frequency counts and simple percentages.

Findings – The study revealed that images and audio sharing, retweeting posts, and following accounts are the most prominent Twitter features that enable the delivery of online library services to users. These features accelerate the delivery of services such as user education, enquiry, and current awareness. Similarly, the study revealed that the Twitter ban in Nigeria has affected the delivery of online library services to a large extent, especially in creating current awareness as well as promoting library events and programmes.

Implications – This study can help university libraries to diversify their online presence by creating multiple digital outlets for engaging users. This would avert the breakdown of online library service delivery in the event of a lack of access to a particular platform like Twitter.

Originality – Until the time of conducting this research, no particular study had been carried out to investigate the effect of Twitter's ban on the delivery of online library services in universities in Nigeria.

Keywords

Online Services, Nigeria, University, Twitter Ban, Library Users

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1 Introduction

Undoubtedly, social media technologies are increasingly dominating the online landscape without an end in sight. Social networks are being launched virtually every day as a result of a competition to become standard platforms for channelling information (Dijck, 2012). One of such online social networking sites is Twitter. According to Carscaddon and Chapman (2013), Twitter is a microblogging service that enables users to send messages (tweets) of up to 140 characters in length and have them broadcast instantly via the Internet, mobile devices, and other applications. Unlike on other social networking sites, relationships on Twitter can be purely one-sided, meaning a user can follow another without the latter being obligated to do so. Since its inception in 2006, Twitter's membership has increased to the current level of over 192 million daily active users (Wagner, 2021). Worthy of note is the fact that Nigerians, especially young people, form an active segment of the global daily Twitter users.

Aharony (2010) noted that Twitter was initially launched as another tool to help friends and family to stay connected. Fiander (2012) added that Twitter's creators envisioned it as a broadcast medium: a means of swiftly communicating one's location and what one is doing, feeling, or thinking. To that end, the microblogging platform includes a variety of features such as tweeting, retweeting posts, tagging accounts, pinning tweets, direct messaging, follower and following, and Twitter chatting (Del Bosque, Leif, & Skarl, 2012). With these essential features, Twitter has quickly become a popular resource for businesses, news outlets, celebrities, intuitions and more (Del Bosque, Leif & Skarl, 2012). Twitter account holders leveraged its features to post information or updates, share pictures, interact through chat, upload videos, and seek opinions through a Twitter poll. Beyond this, Twitter affords users the opportunity for live video streaming and live-tweeting, which involves following an event on Twitter and sending a series of tweets about various facets of the event as it progresses. All of these possibilities have repeatedly proven to be strong selling points for the platform.

Given the enormous benefits of Twitter, a social media presence is being established in many academic libraries across the globe (Stvilia & Gibradze, 2014). Previous studies have affirmed that Twitter is one of the most extensively used and researched social media platforms in libraries (Shulman & Tomé, 2015; Harisanty, 2018). This is all the more important because Twitter is primarily a medium for delivering quality services to user populations and improving the interaction with patrons. In affirmation, authors

have noted that Twitter provides a golden opportunity for libraries to build and maintain online connections with members of the library community and organisations within their communities (Bell, 2012; Gunton & Davis, 2012). Equally, Twitter is maximised in libraries to promote programmes and services, get feedback from customers, initiate conversations with users, and address users' concerns (Carscaddon & Chapman, 2013). Aside from the foregoing, Twitter is a potent tool for contemporary libraries to market resources, educate users, create current awareness, and share links to the most recent news articles as well as fresh blog posts by librarians or organisations (cross-promotion) (Fiander, 2012).

Despite the positive impact of Twitter on library services, the Nigerian government, through the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, indefinitely placed a ban on Twitter's operation in the country on June 4, 2021, on the grounds that the platform was "persistently being used for activities that are capable of destabilising Nigeria's corporate existence" (Abdulaziz, 2021). This abrupt decision has been reported to have taken a toll on Nigeria's digital economy, e-commerce, and other online transactions supported by Twitter. However, there is limited empirical evidence on the effect of Twitter's suspension on the provision of online library services in Nigerian university libraries. Since Twitter is of enormous interest to university libraries and librarians, particularly in rendering efficient and effective services to a community of users, it becomes empirically pertinent to find out whether or not its ban in Nigeria affects the delivery of online services in university libraries in the country.

The purpose of the study was to identify Twitter features that facilitate the delivery of online library services; examine library services that are rendered via Twitter in Nigerian university libraries; and investigate the extent to which Twitter's ban affect the delivery of online library services in Nigerian university libraries.

2 Literature Review

Internet technology has dramatically increased the reach of the media to a global audience and has improved the possibilities for people to interact remotely and timelessly (Kwanya, Stilwell & Underwood, 2014). The conception of microblogging and networking sites such as Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and others has enabled connections among people in the contemporary world (Kwanya & Stilwell, 2015a). Simply put, social networks are virtual communities that are commonly found on the Internet where people with common interests or goals share a

limitless quantity of information (Delayco & Walcutt, 2010; Siegel, 2004). These social networks have exploded in popularity over the past few decades, providing a more efficient and user-friendly way to maintain social connections and share information in different forms and mediums (Benson, Filippaios & Morgan, 2010; Kwanya & Stilwell, 2015b).

Of the many social networks available today, Twitter has been a focus of interest for regular Internet users (Yazdanifard et al., 2011). In support of this view, Xie and Stevenson (2014) noted that Twitter is a prominent social media platform for connecting to and communicating with audiences. Andre et al. (2012) defined Twitter as a large-scale microblogging system with social networking capabilities. In other words, it is referred to as a microblogging system because it uses the technique of posting small amounts of digital content, such as text, images, links, brief videos, or any other type of media, via the internet (Java et al., 2007).

In recent times, libraries have included Twitter in the list of social media tools used to engage with users (Xie & Stevenson, 2014). This is because Twitter possesses features that are being used to facilitate the delivery of effective library services to user populations. Empirical evidence suggests that Twitter is one of the most widely utilised and studied social media platforms in libraries (Shulman and Tomé, 2015; Harisanty, 2018). Xie and Stevenson (2014) asserted that many libraries have decided to use Twitter to connect with their clients by delivering relevant information promptly and widely. VanScoy, Hicks and Cavanagh (2018) found liking (79.4%) and retweeting (62.73%) as the major Twitter features that enhance users' engagement with the library. In Nigeria, Oyeniran and Olajide (2019) found chatting, posting, and sharing images and videos as the major uses of social media for delivering library services.

In a study, Mnzava (2021) found that libraries use Twitter accounts to interact with users, support various information services, and collect feedback from users on the services provided. In another study, Del Bosque, Leif, and Skarl (2012) found that Twitter usage among libraries is mainly for discussion of resources (55%), library events (24%), and hours (14%). The study conducted by Xie and Stevenson (2012) revealed that digital library tweets revolve around addressing problems, promoting collections, finding related resources, maintaining social connections, and social identity. Similarly, VanScoy, Hicks and Cavanagh (2018) discovered that libraries frequently tweet about programmes (29.86%), user queries (19.91%) and collections (15.28%). In Nigeria, Quadri and Idowu

(2016) discovered that libraries use Twitter to disseminate information. Other studies have shown that libraries use Twitter to promote library services, such as document delivery services, current awareness services, circulation services, reference services, selective dissemination of information, marketing of information products and services, (Fasola, 2015; Adewojo & Mayowa-Adebara, 2016; Ateka & Kwanya, 2019; Obi, Okore & Kanu, 2019; Oyeniran & Olajide, 2019).

The above findings from different studies suggest that Twitter is of paramount importance to the effective delivery of library services in Nigeria and the world at large. This is true because the lack of social media tools can hinder their usage in libraries, especially in delivering library services (Adewojo & Mayowa-Adebara, 2016; Kwanya, 2014). However, at the time of this review, no particular study was found that had investigated the effect of the indefinite ban of Twitter on the delivery of online library services in the country. This gap motivated this study.

3 Methodology

The online survey method was employed for the study. Online survey design is a method used for gathering relevant information from research subjects, generally through exploiting online platforms to send invitations to the appropriate respondents to complete a structured questionnaire over the Internet. Nwakaego (2021) noted that online surveys have become a popular way of eliciting information from a larger population because they have the benefits of ease of use, low cost, and quick response rate. This method was adopted in this study because the research subjects were widely dispersed. To overcome the limitations of time and space, the Internet was leveraged considering the opportunity it has created for wider reach without physical contact.

A self-drafted questionnaire based on the insights garnered from the literature review was adopted and used as a framework for developing the online questionnaire for this study. The questionnaire was developed with the aid of Google Form, and invitations were sent to the online platform of the Nigerian Library Association and allied groups, requesting only responses from librarians working in Nigerian university libraries. The justification for this decision rested on the discovery, through preliminary study, that the majority of the library Twitter accounts within Nigerian cyberspace were owned by university libraries (UniRank, 2021). This qualified the university librarians to be the most suitable population to provide accurate data for the study.

After constant reminders for eight months, a total of 81 librarians working in the Nigerian university libraries completed and submitted the online questionnaire. As per the submission of Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), a minimum number of cases can be used in a study as long as the main features of the population are covered. Therefore, data collected from the 81 librarians (minimum cases) out of the many Nigerian Librarians was used for analysis and reporting since they were conversant with the use of Twitter technology for the delivery of online library services. In analysing the data, descriptive statistics in the form of frequency counts and simple percentages were used.

4 Results

Table 1 shows Twitter features that enhance the delivery of online library services in Nigeria. A look at the table reveals that the respondents agreed on the majority of the Twitter features considered in this study, but with varying percentage scores. Sharing images and audio (71.6%), following accounts (67.9%), retweeting posts (65.4%), and direct messages (64.2%) attracted the highest responses from the respondents. On the other hand, pinning tweets (43.3%), Twitter polls (45.7%), and Twitter moments (48.1%) received the lowest percentage scores from the librarians who formed the population of the study. It can, therefore, be reliably concluded that images and audio sharing, following accounts, retweeting posts, and direct messaging are the topmost Twitter features that facilitate the delivery of online library services to users in Nigerian university libraries.

Table 1: Twitter Features that Facilitate Online Library Services Delivery

S/N	Twitter Features	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	Retweeting posts	53 (65.4%)	18 (22.2%)	10 (12.3%)
2	Twitter chatting	39 (48.1%)	28 (34.6%)	14 (17.3%)
3	Live video streaming	44 (54.3%)	26 (32.1%)	11 (13.6%)
4	Tagging account	40 (49.4%)	27 (33.3%)	14 (17.3%)
5	Pinning tweets	35 (43.3%)	33 (40.7%)	13 (16.0%)
6	Live-tweeting events	46 (56.8%)	22 (27.2%)	13 (16.0%)
7	Twitter polls	37 (45.7%)	34 (42.0%)	10 (12.3%)

8	Direct messaging	52 (64.2%)	19 (23.5%)	10 (12.3%)
9	Following accounts	55 (67.9%)	16 (19.8%)	10 (12.3%)
10	Images & audio sharing	58 (71.6%)	15 (18.5%)	08 (09.9%)
11	Twitter moments	39 (48.1%)	32 (39.6%)	10 (12.3%)

Table 2 displays the online library services that are delivered to the user population through Twitter among Nigerian university libraries. From the table, it is evident that the percentages of agreement by the respondents are higher than the percentages of disagreements in virtually all the questionnaire items, except in the case of the online referral service. The majority of the respondents agreed on user education service (50.6%), enquiry service (48.1%), current awareness service (48.1%), and selective dissemination of information (54.1%). While conference alert service (33.3%), online referral service (39.6%), and study support service (39.6%) were least agreed upon by the respondents. As a result, it can be concluded that the most prominent online library services rendered by Twitter technology among Nigerian university libraries are user education, inquiry service, current awareness service, and selective dissemination of information.

Table 2: Online Library Services Delivered via Twitter in University Libraries

S/N	Online Library Services	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	Reference interviews	35 (43.2%)	18 (22.2%)	28 (34.6%)
2	Enquiry service	39 (48.1%)	16 (19.8%)	26 (32.1%)
3	Search/research assistance	36 (44.4%)	22 (27.2%)	23 (28.4%)
4	Online document delivery	32 (39.6%)	18 (22.2%)	31 (38.2%)
5	Current awareness service	39 (48.1%)	18 (22.2%)	24 (29.7%)
6	Conference alert service	27 (33.3%)	28 (34.6%)	26 (32.1%)
7	Library resources marketing	33 (40.7%)	22 (27.2%)	26 (32.1%)
8	Events/programs promotion	35 (43.2%)	21 (25.9%)	25 (30.9%)
9	User education service	41 (50.6%)	15 (18.5%)	25 (30.9%)

10	Online referral service	32 (39.6%)	23 (28.4%)	36 (44.4%)
11	Study support service	32 (39.6%)	23(28.4%)	26 (32.0%)
12	Selective Dissemination of info	37 (45.7%)	19 (23.5%)	25 (30.9%)

Table 3 reveals the extent to which the Twitter ban in Nigeria has affected the delivery of online library services to users in Nigerian university libraries. From the table, it is obvious that all the questionnaire items attracted responses from the librarians working at the Nigerian universities, but at differing levels of percentage scores. Online library services such as creating current awareness (56.8%), promoting events or programmes (53.1%), and providing individual users with information (51.9%) elicited the highest percentage scores. Even though none of the services outlined on the table are affected to a low extent, assisting users' research/search (37.1%), conducting reference interviews (37.1%), and referring users to sources of information (40.7%) pulled the lowest response rate. With this analysis and result, it can be inferred that the Twitter ban in Nigeria has affected the delivery of online library services to a large extent, especially in creating current awareness, promoting events and programs, and providing individual users with information.

Table 3: The Extent to which Twitter Ban affected Online Library Services Delivery

S/N	Online Library Services	Large Extent	Moderate Extent	Low Extent
1	Sharing document/information	39 (48.1%)	22 (27.2%)	20 (24.7%)
2	Assisting users' research/search	30 (37.1%)	32 (39.5%)	19 (23.5%)
3	Answering users' inquiries	36 (44.4%)	25 (30.9%)	20 (24.7%)
4	Referring users to sources of info	33 (40.7%)	28 (34.6%)	20 (24.7%)
5	Conducting reference interviews	30 (37.1%)	30 (37.1%)	21 (25.9%)
6	Creating current awareness	46 (56.8%)	16 (19.8%)	19 (23.5%)
7	Providing individual users with info	42 (51.9%)	19 (23.5%)	20 (24.7%)
8	Alerting users of conferences	37 (45.7%)	27 (33.3%)	17 (21.0%)
9	Marketing library resources	38 (46.9%)	23 (28.4%)	20 (24.7%)

10	Promoting library events/programmes	43 (53.1%)	21 (25.9%)	17 (21.0%)
11	Providing user education	39 (48.1%)	24 (29.6%)	18 (22.2%)
12	Supporting users' studies	36 (44.5%)	27 (33.3%)	18 (22.2%)

5 Discussion

First and foremost, the study sought to identify Twitter features that facilitate the delivery of online library services. As contained in Table 1, the study revealed that images and audio sharing, following accounts, retweeting posts, and direct messaging are the topmost Twitter features that can be engaged to render online library services to users. As against the popular notion, this study proves that Twitter is not just a platform for social interactions. Conversely, it is a viable channel through which university libraries can build productive digital connections with their audiences by leveraging the interactive features of the platform. This discovery sends a clear and loud message to university libraries in the country and beyond to take full advantage of relevant Twitter features to improve their engagement with users. The outcome of this study comes to terms with the study conducted by Oyeniran and Olajide (2019) which found images and videos sharing and posting as major uses of social media for delivering library services. Also, the study corroborates the findings of VanScoy, Hicks, and Cavanagh (2018), who discovered retweeting (62.73%) as the major Twitter feature that enhances users' engagement with the library. This current study marks an improvement over the previous studies because it found live video streaming and live-tweeting events as the latest additions to twitter that make it more endearing to university libraries. This implies that, out of the many social media networks available today, Twitter is consistently confirmed to hold a lot of potential to enrich university library services.

The study also investigated the online library services that are offered through the Twitter platform. The results of the analysis, as shown in Table 2, reveal that user education service, enquiry service, current awareness service, and selective dissemination of information are the most pronounced services rendered to users through Twitter. This indicates that the university libraries under study are leveraging on Twitter to provide online library services thereby demonstrating their commitment to serving the online community of users irrespective of their physical location and time. However, the percentage scores of most of the listed online library services were less than 50%. This implied that the technology is not yet fully mainstreamed in the delivery of library

services to users. This finding should urge university libraries in Nigeria and beyond to enhance their Twitter presence by building more stable engagement and community for effective service delivery to users. The outcome of this study supports that of Del Bosque et al. (2012), VanScoy et al. (2018) and Mnzava (2021) who are united in their assertion that libraries use Twitter to provide online library services such as current awareness services, users' enquiries, and selective dissemination of information (Fasola, 2015; VanScoy, et al., 2018; Oyeniran & Olajide, 2019). Moreover, this study added reference interview and research assistance to the catalogue of library services offered via the Twitter platform.

Finally, the study ascertained the extent to which the Twitter ban in Nigeria has affected the delivery of online library services in university libraries. The results of this inquiry, as displayed in Table 3, shows that the Twitter ban in Nigeria has affected the delivery of online library services among university libraries to a large extent. The services affected include current awareness, promotion of events and programmes, and individualised information services. By implication, the lack of access to Twitter within the Nigerian cyberspace has limited the opportunities of university libraries to engage and interact with their far-flung users who are increasingly demanding timely and remote responses to their information needs. Library users are especially in a disadvantaged position now because they rely more on technology on account of the COVID-19 pandemic. This finding helps to firm up the standpoint of Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara (2016), who noted that a lack of social media tools can hinder their usage in libraries, especially in delivering library services. Top on the list of these library services, as found in this study, is current awareness service and promotion of library programmes and events.

6 Conclusion

University libraries at a global level have added Twitter to their catalogue of social media tools as a way of maintaining online interaction with their patrons. As a result, Nigerian university libraries also are creating Twitter accounts to stay connected to their teeming users. Image and audio sharing, following accounts, retweeting posts, and direct messaging have emerged from the study as the foremost Twitter features that facilitate the delivery of online library services to users. Additionally, this study concluded that the studied university libraries are using Twitter to deliver services such as user education, enquiry, current awareness, and selective dissemination of information. However, the

study revealed that the Twitter ban in Nigeria has affected the delivery of online library services to users to a large extent.

7 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

- University libraries should exploit to the fullest capacity the relevant Twitter features to connect users with topics and discussions that are important and meaningful to their academic endeavours.
- The management of university libraries in Nigeria should consider exposing their librarians to additional training on the use of the technology in providing online library services in order to gain more benefits from Twitter.
- University libraries should diversify their online presence by creating multiple digital outlets for engaging users. This would avert a breakdown in the delivery of online library services in the event of a lack of access to a particular platform.

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