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Awareness and Use of Social Media among Library and Information Science Practitioners in Tertiary Institutions in Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the use of social media among Library and Information Science practitioners in tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria. Four specific objectives with 4 corresponding research questions guided the study. The research design used was a descriptive survey with researcher-made rating scale used for data collection. Population of the study was 154 made up of 75 professional librarians and 79 library officers. A sample size of 154 respondents was used. A total of 131 copies of the instrument out of 154 administered were retrieved and analyzed. Data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation. The study revealed that library and information science practitioners in tertiary institutions in Imo State are aware of social media to a high extent. Few of the social media identified were utilized in the provision of library services; In spite of the numerous benefits derivable from using social media, low bandwidth/slow internet connectivity among other challenges were discovered as limiting the effective utilization of social media. Based on the result of the study, recommendations were made for sensitization of library staff on relevance of social media to library service delivery and integration of other social media not in use to the delivery of library services, including proper and adequate planning for full integration of social media to library and information service delivery.

Keywords: *Awareness, Information Science Practitioners, Library Science, Social Media, Tertiary Institutions, Imo State, Nigeria*

1.1 Introduction

Library and information practitioners by training are involved in the dissemination of the right information to the right users at the right time through the right format. They design and use various tools, strategies and programmes in order to ensure that users have timely access to the right information that meets their needs. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is one of the tools that have been recently embraced by library and information professionals and it is having dramatic influences on the product and services offered to their clients.

Libraries and information centres now leverage social media to help in disseminating information to their clients. Social media tools such as Facebook, YouTube, MySpace,

Linkedlin, Flicker, Slide Share, Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts and Twitter have become dominant tools for creating knowledge, accessing information, collaborating and networking within and beyond a physical community (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012). Social media such as Facebook, twitter and LinkedIn, according to Atulomah and Onuoha, (2011:71) provide opportunities to exchange ideas and resources with students, faculty members, information professionals and professionals in other fields, bringing about the concept of collective intelligence. Social networking tools are used for collaboration and sharing of ideas and are becoming an integral part of library services. The use of social media, such as email, instant messaging, discussion forums, blogs, aggregate sites and virtual worlds, for formal and informal learning environment is now changing how library service is being provided.

However, for library and information practitioners to truly adopt and use the social media in the provision of library and information services, there should be adequate awareness on the availability, accessibility and applicability of these tools to library services. Awareness refers to the ability of people to realize and know that something exists. It is defined as one's knowledge or understanding of a particular subject, situation or trend; the act of having perception or wide knowledge of the existence of something (Okore, 2014). Awareness is to have knowledge or understanding of a subject, issue, or situation and it could be described as being well informed of any subject. However, information awareness is not enough until it is utilized (Aina, 2013). Awareness raises the consciousness and knowledge about something and its social benefits; in order words, it is an important factor or determinant of usage of something. It is therefore imperative that library and information science practitioners have knowledge and adequate consciousness of the various social media tools.

Awareness of social media is very important before library and information science practitioners can adequately maximize and exploit its potentials. It is awareness that influences participation in social networking activities. Awareness of social media can be actualized or attained through effective publicity via various channels accessible by the populace. These avenues can be through radio, television, talk shows, seminars, workshops, conferences, local gatherings, groups and association. It is only when the society is aware of social media tools that these tools could be sought and used effectively.

Use is the ability of utilising something for a purpose. Social media use is the appropriate utilization of the available social media networks. Use of social media is the ability to explore, evaluate, or put to service the various social media. This differs from person to person and from one discipline to another discipline, according to the application of such social media to their professional or daily activities. Use of social media can take many forms and can occur in variety of ways. Social media can be used through smartphone, desktop or personal laptop.

The traditional library processes and structures are proving unsatisfactory to respond quickly enough to technology driven environment and the biggest change in today's patron from those in the past is their intense reliance on technology such as cell phone, computer and access to the Internet (Ayiah and Kumah, 2011). The use of online social networks by libraries and information organizations is also increasingly prevalent and a growing tool that is being used to communicate with more potential library users, as well as extending the services provided to individual libraries. Due to information explosion and advent of modern

ICT, library professionals need to focus on improving their services by switching over from traditional library services to digital environment service through innovation (Reddy, 2001).

It has observed that Social networks can be used for providing user centric service in social library environment because user attitude towards library is changing day by day. This means that, many libraries are using social networking platform to interact and reach out to their patrons or clients. Xie and Stevenson (2013), specifically analyzed how institutions were using social media applications in relation to their digital libraries i.e. providing information, marketing, promotion, peer-to-peer connections, and information sharing, are all different functions of social media related to digital libraries. It was discovered that social media applications can provide different functionalities that manage, promote and communicate with users.

The overriding purpose of this study is to find out how library and information science practitioners use social media, as well as exploring social media utilities used and the challenges they may have encountered.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to ascertain the use of social media amongst library and information science practitioners in tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. ascertain the extent of library and information science practitioners' awareness of existing social media that are applied to library and information services;
2. ascertain the social media being used by library and information science practitioners;
3. establish the extent of use of social media by library and information science practitioners in dissemination of information to library users;
4. investigate the factors limiting the effective use of social media among library and information science practitioners.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were posed in line with the objectives of the study in order to elicit data for the study. The questions are:

1. To what extent are library and information science practitioners in Imo state aware of social media that are applied to library and information services delivery?
2. What are the social media being utilized by library and information science practitioners in Imo State in the provision of library services?
3. To what extent do library and information science practitioners in Imo State make use of social media in the dissemination of information to library users?
4. What are the factors limiting effective utilization of social media amongst library and information science practitioners in Imo State?

2.1 Review of Related Literature

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the provision of library and information services is dramatically transforming the way library and information science practitioners are now offering information services to their users. As aptly captured by Ottong, Eyo and Ottong (2014:17):

Since the inception of the library profession, there has been this notion that librarians are traditional practitioners. The existence of librarians proved that of

analogue-minded set of individuals that dust books, shelves and serves library patron with materials they need for their researches, there were no traces of information technology in the library for operations but now, the 21st century has brought a lot of dynamism within the library and information science profession and this has come as a result of the present day library users.

Social media no doubt are transforming the ways people connect and share information. Social media is touching virtually all areas of the society and, as such is reshaping the way individuals, companies, government and other organizations interact with one another. It is undeniable that the digital life styles of people today are rapidly changing the way organizations conduct their business. Understandably, academic libraries are no exception. This means that if the libraries want to remain viable and be at the core of their institutions' mission, they have to evolve beyond tradition, place and where the patron has to come to the library.

Social media are being used by librarians as communication tools. The use of online social networks by libraries and information organizations is also increasingly prevalent and a growing tool that is being used to communicate with more potential library users as well as extending the services provided to individual libraries. Social networks have emerged as a unique means of communication and collaboration for all kinds of people and have provided people with an effective platform for making our voices heard, as well as keeping opinions voiced by other people.

Sahu (2013) citing Rogers' views social media is information content created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technology. Social media is a term describing user generated content that can be shared with others online. It can include blogs, Wikis, social networks and a variety of other platforms. In other words, it is an effective approach for people to use when communicating and interacting with each other. Akindi and Al-Suqri (2013) describe social media as an online communication and marketing tool in which individuals as well as organizations can build online profiles in order to share information, exchange messages with others, maintain relationships in social networks and communicate with the majority of SNS members. They see social media as instruments for online marketing and communication which individuals and organization can utilize to network and interact with members in the same social networks. In other words, it is a means of communication through the internet that enables social interaction. From another standpoint, Sahoo and Sharma (2015) view social networking as a composition of individuals or organization, which are attached with one or more individuals such as friend, neigbourhood, small communities etc. Therefore, a social media platform is an online portal, or web services which stimulate building social relations among group of individuals. It connects the feeling, emotions, sharing information and other activities of real life situation among people.

Quadri and Idowu (2014) in their study acknowledged that librarians in Nigerian universities are aware of social media tools (SMT) that can be applied to library services. Also, Mansor and Idris (2010) surveyed the perceptions, awareness and acceptance of library 2.0 applications among librarians at the International Islamic University, Malaysia. Though the study only addressed a small sample of the Malaysian university librarian population, the findings are still useful in gauging their readiness in embracing library 2.0. The study shows that majority of the librarians are aware of web 2.0 tools. Okenodo, Azubike and Adeyoyin (2013) in their study of the awareness and use of web 2.0 technologies revealed that there was high level of awareness of the existence of

web 2.0 technologies among library and information professionals in South West Nigeria and thus concluded that the awareness and use of web 2.0 tools among library and information professional in South West has provided a platform for collaboration among librarians.

The study by Ekwelem, Okafor and Ukwuoma (2013) revealed that librarians are aware of different social networks sites (SNS) like Facebook, academic.edu., LinkedIn, amongst others. Similarly, Atulomah and Onuoha (2011) observed that majority of the librarians in university libraries in Ogun state, Nigeria, are mostly aware of Facebook, followed by Twitter and LinkedIn. The result of the study is not surprising as most people are aware of Facebook, unlike the other social networks, which shows that awareness leads to use. Anunobi and Ogbonna (2012) pointed out that there is a low level of awareness of web 2.0 tools among librarians in Anambra State. It was discovered that academic librarians are more aware of web 2.0 than the rest of the librarians working in the public, school and special libraries. However, there is little or no awareness by librarians working in the school and special libraries. It is therefore clear that there is low awareness and use of web 2.0 by librarians in Anambra State.

From the various literatures reviewed, it is observed that no study has been carried out specifically on use of social media amongst library and information science practitioners in tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria. In the same vein, research on use of social media in Nigerian libraries is rare in the literature. Though, there is evidence that these tools exist in tertiary institutions of learning in Nigeria, but the level at which they are utilized by library practitioners in discharging their duties is yet to be confirmed, it is therefore necessary to carry out a study on the level of use of social media in the delivery of library and information services. Therefore, there is a gap in our understanding of the level of use of social media among library and information science practitioners in Imo state. This is the gap this research filled at the end.

3.1 Research Methods

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. The area covered by this research is Imo State which was created on 3rd February, 1976. Imo state is located in the south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria. The population of the study was 154 library and information practitioners working in the academic libraries of the selected tertiary institution in Imo state, Nigeria.

4.1 Result and Analysis

Table 1 shows the population of library and information practitioners in Imo state, Nigeria

Table 1: Population of Library and Information Practitioners in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria

S/N	Name of Library	Librarians	Library Officers	Total
1.	Federal University of Technology Library, Owerri	32	45	77
2.	Imo State University Library, Owerri	15	3	18
3.	Alvan Ikoku College of Education Library, Owerri	15	9	24
4.	Federal Polytechnic Library, Nekede, Owerri	7	20	27
5.	Imo State Polytechnic Library, Umuagwo	6	2	8
6.	**Total**	**75**	**79**	**154**

Source: (Factbooks, Newsletters and administrative units of the selected libraries)

The sample of the study was 154 library and information professionals in the area of study. Census study was used for this study, since the number of library and information practitioners in Imo State is manageable. The mean rating scale is the instrument that was used for data collection. The instrument for this study is researcher-made. The instrument required information from the respondents on the "Awareness and Use of Social Media amongst Library and Information Science Practitioners in Tertiary Institutions in Imo State".

In order to ensure maximum return of

questionnaire, the researcher distributed the instrument personally to the staff of the libraries in the various tertiary institutions with the help of the heads of various departments of the libraries studied. Data collected for this study were analyzed using mean (x) statistics and standard deviation (SD). The researcher used mean rating on 4-point and 2-point scale.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent are library and information science practitioners in Imo State aware of social media that are applied to library and information services delivery?

Table 1: Extent of awareness of social media

S/N	Item Statement	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Total	Mean	Stand. Dev.	Decision	Rank
1	Facebook	79	41	5	6	131	3.47	0.78	VHE	1st
2	Twitter	53	48	21	9	131	3.11	0.91	HE	5th
3	Blog	57	42	24	8	131	3.13	0.92	HE	4th
4	MySpace	18	39	49	25	131	2.38	0.95	LE	6th
5	Wikis	20	19	45	47	131	2.09	1.06	LE	9th
6	RSS feeds	27	24	45	35	131	2.33	1.08	LE	7th
7	Flicker	08	34	52	37	131	2.10	0.90	LE	8th
8	Whatsapp	63	39	16	13	131	3.16	0.99	HE	3rd
9	Youtube	59	47	18	7	131	3.21	0.87	HE	2nd
10	Podcast	10	25	65	31	131	2.11	0.85	LE	10th
						Grand Mean	**2.71**	**0.86**	**HE**	

Table 1 presents the respondents' opinion on the extent at which library and information science practitioners in Imo State are aware of social media that are applied to library and information services delivery. The result has shown that the majority of the respondents reported that **the** extent at which library and information science practitioners in Imo State are aware of social media that are applied to

library and information services delivery is to a high extent as the result reports a grand mean of 2.71. The analysis of data in table 1 has ranked the awareness of social media that are applied to library and information services delivery by the library and information science practioners in Imo State. The ranking shows that facebook is ranked 1st (3.47), followed by youtube (3.21), then whatsapp

(3.16), blog (3.13), twitter, myspace, RSS feeds, flicker and wikis accounting a mean of 3.11, 2.38, 2.33, 2.10 and 2.09 respectively. The least social media applied to library and information services delivery by the library and information science practioners in Imo State is wikis accounting a mean of 2.09.

Research Question 2: What are the social media being utilized by library and information science practitioners in Imo State in the provision of library services?

Table 2: Types of s ocial media utilized in the provision of library services

S/N	Item Statement	Utilized (2)	Not Utilized (1)	Total	Mean	Stand. Dev.	Decision	Rank
1	Facebook	113	18	131	1.86	0.35	Utilized	1st
2	Twitter	104	27	131	1.79	0.41	Utilized	2nd
3	Blog	97	34	131	1.74	0.44	Utilized	4th
4	MySpace	11	119	130	1.15	0.29	Not Utilized	10th
5	Wikis	36	95	131	1.27	0.45	Not Utilized	8th
6	RSS feeds	51	80	131	1.39	0.49	Not Utilized	6th
7	Flicker	40	91	131	1.31	0.46	Not Utilized	7th
8	Whatsapp	98	33	131	1.75	0.44	Utilized	3rd
9	Youtube	65	66	131	1.50	0.50	Not Utilized	5th
10	Podcast	29	102	131	1.22	0.42	Not Utilized	9th
				Grand Mean	1.49	0.32	Not Utilized	

Table 2 reports on the types of social media utilized by library and information science practitioners in Imo State in the provision of library services. The result shows that the majority of the respondents reported that most of the listed social media are not utilized by library and information science practitioners in Imo State in the provision of library services as the result account a mean of 1. 49. The result has further revealed that the social media utilized in the provision of library services are facebook, twitter, whatsapp, and blog . Social media tools such as youtube, RSS feeds, flicker, wikis, podcast and myspace were reported as not utilized in the provision of library services.

Research Question 3: To what extent do library and information science practitioners in Imo State make use of social media in the dissemination of information to library users?

Table 3: Extent of use of social media in dissemination of information

S/N	Item Statement	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Total	Mean	Stand. Dev.	Decision	Rank
1	Facebook	65	42	13	11	131	3.23	0.94	HE	1st
2	Twitter	42	52	16	21	131	2.88	1.04	HE	3rd
3	Blog	33	51	19	28	131	2.68	1.08	HE	4th
4	MySpace	14	33	36	48	131	2.10	1.02	LE	7th
5	Wikis	20	21	65	25	131	2.27	0.94	LE	6th
6	RSS feeds	03	26	41	61	131	1.83	0.82	LE	9th
7	Flicker	03	18	47	63	131	1.70	0.79	LE	10th
8	Whatsapp	63	35	21	12	131	3.14	0.99	HE	2nd
9	Youtube	19	48	25	39	131	2.36	1.07	LE	5th
10	Podcast	08	20	71	32	131	2.03	0.80	LE	8th
						Grand Mean	**2.42**	**0.88**	**LE**	

Table 3 presents the respondents' opinion on the extent to which library and information science practitioners in Imo State make use of social media in the dissemination of information to library users. The result shows that majority of the respondents indicate that the extent library and information science practitioners in Imo State make use of social media in the dissemination of information to library users is to a low extent, accounting for a grand mean of 2.42. The result has further revealed that the library and information science practitioners in Imo State make use of social media such as facebook (accounting a mean of 3.23), whatsapp (mean of 3.14), twitter and blog accounting a mean of 2.88 and 2.68 in the dissemination of information to library users. The result also shows that even though youtube, wikis, myspace, podcast RSS feeds and flicker are used as social media in the dissemination of information to library users, they are used minimally.

Research Question 4: What are the factors limiting effective utilization of social media amongst library and information science practitioners in Imo State?

Table 4: Factors limiting effective utilization of social media

Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Stand. Dev.	Decision	Rank
Low bandith / slow internet connectivity	91	38	2	0	131	3.68	0.50	SA	1st
Time constraint affect use of social media tools	62	49	4	16	131	3.20	0.98	A	6th
Low level of ICT literacy skills	74	48	6	3	131	3.47	0.69	A	3rd
Unwillingness of heads of libraries to adopt use of social media tools	78	46	1	6	131	3.50	0.74	A	2nd
Lack of knowledge about social	21	4	5	52	131	1.95	1.04	D	9th

6	Conservative culture/ natural lag in adopting new technology	70	57	3	1	131	3.50	0.59	A	2nd
7	Low interest of librarians in learning and utilizing social media	56	59	7	9	131	3.24	0.84	A	5th
8	Lack of fund to undergo training on ICT literacy	66	54	8	3	131	3.40	0.71	A	4th
9	The presence of too many social media to learn	29	58	21	23	131	2.71	1.00	A	8th
10	Non existence of social media policy	46	45	31	9	131	2.98	0.93	A	7th
						Grand Mean	**3.16**	**0.72**	**A**	

The table 4 above presents the respondents opinions on the factors limiting effective utilization of social media amongst library and information science practitioners in Imo State. The result reports that majority of the respondents agreed that there are **factors limiting effective utilization of social media amongst library and information science practitioners in Imo State accounting for a grand mean of 3.16**. The result further reported that the respondents agreed to the statement that low bandwith/slow internet connectivity (3.68); unwillingness of heads of libraries to adopt use of social media tools (3.50); conservative culture/ natural lag in adopting new technology (3.50); low level of ICT literacy skills (3.47); lack of fund to undergo training on ICT literacy (3.40); low interest of librarians in learning and utilizing social media (3.24); time constraint (3.20); non existence of social media policy (2.98); the presence of too many social media to learn (2.71) affect use of social media tools. They disagreed to the statement that lack of knowledge about social media platforms limits effective utilization of social media to library service delivery accounting for a mean of 1.95.

5.1 Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings is guided by the seven purposes posed for this study and the seven formulated hypotheses.

5.2 Extent of Awareness of Social Media

It was found in this study that library and information science practitioners are aware of social media that are applied to library and information service delivery to a high extent. This result is in line with the findings of Ekwelem, Okafor and Ukwuoma (2013) and Quadri and Idowu (2014), when they revealed that most librarians are aware of social media. This however, is contrary to the submissions of Anunobi and Ogbonna (2012) that there is a low level of awareness. The reason for differences is that the latter is more recent than Anunobi and Ogbonna findings. It is a well known fact that the awareness of social media have been evolving over the years and many people within the library and information science profession are aware of their uses now.

Collins and Quan-Haase (2012) noted that the manner of use and levels of application for specific social media formats differed greatly throughout the Province of Ontario in Canada. Their findings revealed that the interests, demands, needs and practices of a respective institution largely

dictate the adoption and subsequent role of social media within that setting.

5.3 Types of Social Media Utilized By Library and Information Science Practitioners

It was also revealed that the social media utilized in the provision of library services are facebook, twitter, whatsapp and blog. Social media tools such as Youtube, RSS feeds, and flickers, wikis, podcast and MySpace were revealed not to be utilized in providing library services by library and information science practitioners in Imo state. This does not corroborate with a previous study that blogs, micro blogging and social bookmarking are types of social media deployed in libraries. Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Flicker are social media tools used by librarians.

As social media are gaining popularity, it is important to understand what kinds of social media are used for what purpose, and if they are used as information sources. That different types of social media were used for different purposes may have account for the differences in social media because the libraries may be using the social media based on their institutions objective and nature of ICT-related facilities or software available. Collins and Quan-Haase (2012), sees interests, demands, needs and practices of respective institution as largely dictating the adoption and subsequent role of social media within the setting.

5.4 Extent of Use of Social Media in the Dissemination of Information to Library Users

It was found in this study that the extent to which library and information science practitioners in Imo State make use of social media in dissemination of information to library users is to a low extent. No wonder, Quadri and Idowu (2014) recognize social

media applications as means of creating more interactive, user-centered library and information services.

5.6 Factors Limiting Effective Utilization of Social Media in Library Services Delivery

The outcome of the last research question indicated that there are factors limiting effective utilization of social media. The results shows that majority of the respondents agreed that there are factors limiting effective utilization of social media amongst library and information science practitioners in Imo state. The result of this finding agrees with previous studies that problem of bandwidth, slow internet connectivity, electricity breakdown and others are problems militating against effective utilization of social media in the provision of library services. The findings further corroborates other findings revealed by Okenedo, Azubuike and Adeyoyin (2013), who in their separate studies identified low bandwidth, lack of funding to undergoing, poor power supply as major challenges faced by library and information science professionals.

Conclusion

The study investigated awareness and use of social media amongst library and information science practitioners in tertiary institution. The area of study is Imo state while institutions covered were government owned tertiary institutions. The general purpose of the study was to ascertain the use of social media amongst library and information science practitioners. The level of awareness on social media applied to library services delivery is to a high extent. Library and information science practitioners are aware of social media that are applied to library and information service delivery to a high extent. The social media being utilizied include

facebook, twitter and whatsapp. The extent at which library and information science practitioners in Imo State make use of social media in the dissemination of information to library users is to a low extent. There are factors limiting effective utilization of social media amongst library and information science practitioners in Imo state.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

Efforts should be made to ensure that the heads of libraries come to understand the necessity of adopting new technology in line with contemporary trends. Heads of libraries should be innovative and creative. There is need for head of libraries to understand that we are in a dynamic society and a good leader should not use a conservative and analogue mindset to manage libraries of the digital age as this will have an adverse effect on the full integration of ICTs, social media platforms inclusive. Also, it is imperative that library and information professionals upgrade their ICT literacy skills. No doubt, ICT competency is the backbone for successful integration of social media to library services delivery. This means that library and information practitioners should update their ICT literacy skills. Therefore, training and retraining of library staff on the use of social media for effective service delivery in the library should be seen as a necessity rather than luxury. Therefore, librarians ought to acquire the necessary skills in ICT literacy to meet the challenging demands of social media.

Heads of libraries should endeavour to provide an ICT-compliant environment that can help to motivate the staff to learn and utilize social media in the provision of library services. There is need to formulate and institutionalized social media policy. It should be developed to guide information practitioners for successful integration and operations of social media to library services delivery. There is need to have a corporate document showing the guidelines for staff of the library on what disseminate and what not to disseminate in the social cyber space. There is need for framework on the type of information contents to share with the public of the library community; there is need for a well defined policy that would enhance use of social media to provide library services.

Libraries should organize in-house training and adoption of train-the-trainer approach to ICT skills acquisition. This approach should be given a trial considering that there are limited funds to support the training of library staff on ICT literacy skills which is the driving force for sustainable integration of social media. It is suggested that heads of libraries should adopt the train-the-trainer approach as well as organization of in-house-trainings as this will go a long way in enabling the staff acquire ICT related skills in a cost effective manner. To curb the challenge of too many social media to learn, it is important that library and information practitioners must be educated and trained in the social media tools for promoting library services.

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