

Social Media as Information Sharing Tool in Libraries: A Comparative Study of Public and Academic Libraries in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Information sharing is an important service among librarians and library users. This study examined social media as tools for information sharing among Librarians in public and academic libraries in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the Akwa Ibom State Public Libraries (PL) and Academic Libraries (AL) in Akwa Ibom State were used for the study.

Purpose of the study: To examine the use of social media as tools for information sharing among Librarians in public and academic libraries in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Methodology: A descriptive survey research design method was employed for the study. A sample of 50 Librarians was drawn from two branches of the Akwa Ibom state public library and two public academic libraries in Akwa Ibom State. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The data were analysed using percentage, mean and interpreted with charts and tables

Findings: The study revealed that social media tools are effectively used by librarians in information sharing in the public as well as academic libraries. It indicated that Facebook and Facebook Messenger are the most frequently used social media tools by librarians in Akwa Ibom State. Also revealed is increased technological acceptance, as the Fear of technology (Technophobia) is very low. Some challenges the librarians encounter in the use of social media included low internet subscriptions in libraries.

Conclusion: This study concluded that Social media usage is common among libraries of both public and academic libraries in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It has revealed that Social media platform is an ideal tool for information sharing among librarians irrespective of the library type.

Recommendations: The study recommended increase in subscription to internet by the government and management of both public and academic libraries.

Keywords: Librarians; Public Libraries; Academic Libraries Social media; Information Sharing.

INTRODUCTION

Information sharing is a major service in all libraries among librarians and to the library users. Hitherto, this service has been offered to users and among the librarians traditionally. The 21st century library has revolutionized it to enhance global connectivity and security. Modern technologies including the Social Media have brought new roles for library professionals. The media is a technology that shares information to the members of the society in print, audio and visual formats (Usman, 2015). Logan (2010) opines that New media refers to “those digital media that are interactive, incorporate two-way communication that involve some forms of computing.” New media is “very easily processed,

stored, transformed, retrieved, hyperlinked and, perhaps most radical of all, easily searched for and accessed. Manovich (2003) describes new media as being native to computers or relying on computers for distribution: websites, human-computer interface, virtual worlds, virtual reality, multimedia, computer games, computer animation, digital video, special effects in cinema and interactive computer installations.

A distinction between new media and old media is that old media is for the most part mass media. In addition, each form of new media is highly interactive, while mass media is not. Users of new media are active producers of content and information, whether sending an email or using Internet collaboration tools. The

application of modern ICT to media gives the current trend of new media. There exist various forms of new media among which are the Social media.

The advancement of Information and communication Technology (ICT) as a facet to social media supports Hasan, as cited in Usman, (2015) view of social media as “the form of media technology brought about as a result of the information super highway that delivers all kinds of electronic services: sound and video, text, and data to household and organizations”. According to Neese, (2016), social media centers on creating, sharing and exchanging information, ideas and contents in online networks and communities. It is an extensive interactive form of communication which relies greatly on users’ participation to provide value. Highly interactive, social media is a form of new media that relies heavily on the participation of users to provide value. As opposed to forms of new media like virtual reality, social media is commonplace. The average online information user spends quality time on daily basis for information search. In line with the current trend in information needs and sharing the librarians and information professionals are not left out from the creating, sharing and exchanging information, which social media promotes.

This technological tool is distinctive in its arrangements. The Internet as described by Akinfeleye in Usman, (2015) is a global connectivity of Information Technology facilities to a network. This connectivity enhances all round ease of use availability and approachability by remote users. These networking toolenables users to connect, share, re-create and change user generated content either in the public or personal domain. Operators of the networking tools also negotiate through their connections and those made by others within the system. It is also free of conservative switch.

TYPES OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

Users of the social media technology universally have wider variety of choices. The popular networking tools according to Chiat to (2018) include:

Facebook

This is a social media tool which permits users to generate profiles, upload pictures and video tapes and also interact globally. It is widely used

in Nigeria by families and individual members of the society.

Twitter

This is another social media tool that is used for micro -blogging service and sending of short messages called “Tweets”.

Whats App Messenger

This is an application that permits sharing of short messages through the network. It is available in any mobile device.

Blog or Web Blog

This is a web based interactive site where current posts are found.

Instagram

It is one of the popular graphical sites that present formalized descriptions.

Snap Chat

Is a multimedia messaging app used globally. One of the principal features of Snap chat is that pictures and messages are usually only available for a short time before they become inaccessible to users.

We Chat

Is a Chinese multi-purpose messaging, social media and mobile payment application developed by Tencent. It was first released in 2011.

These and other types of social media tools are used by librarians in their daily provision of excellent information services to library users on different subject areas of needs.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Information sharing is an important service among librarians and library users. Libraries as growing organisms are developing on daily basis beyond the use of traditional tools for information sharing to the use of electronic such as social media tools. Social media is now a global technological medium for sharing information. To this end, most users are systematically adjusted to the use of electronic information resources. Librarians can create digital information resources and share to the different group of users without having physical contact with the users. This prompted the researchers to examine social media as tools for information sharing among librarians in public and academic libraries in AkwaIbom State.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to examine the use of social media as tools for information sharing among Librarians in public and academic libraries in Akwa Ibom State. While the specific objectives of the study are:

- To ascertain the types of social media used for information sharing among librarians in public and academic libraries in AkwaIbom State.
- To identify the type of information shared among librarians in public and academic libraries in AkwaIbom State.
- To examine the challenges of using social media for information sharing among the librarians in public and academic libraries in AkwaIbom State.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- **RQ. 1:** What types of Social Media are used for information sharing among Librarians in public and academic libraries in AkwaIbom State?
- **RQ. 2:** What are the types of information shared among librarians in public and academic libraries in Akwa Ibom State?
- **RQ. 3:** What are the challenges of using social media for information sharing among the librarians in public and academic libraries in Akwa Ibom State?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The use of social media is a fast growing media presence in most libraries of the world and Nigeria is not left out. Nielsen (2010) observed that twenty- two per cent of all time spent online is spent on social media sites, or one in every four and a half minutes and three- quarters of global consumers who go online visit social media sites. Social media breaks the traditional barriers between the public and the private sphere of communication, by putting power in the hands of the user (Curran, Fenton & Freedman 2016). Social media is now a priority for many organisations and the usage is rapidly increasing globally. This is supported by Neese (2016), who noted that the average online user, spends 1.72 hours per day on social platforms. There have been paradigm shifts with the advent of the internet information sharing. More importantly, the World Wide Web innovation has increased the speed and spread of information. Moreover, researchers are no longer dependent on

formal media outlets; the power to disseminate information is in their hands (Ferguson, et al, 2014). Akporhonor, and Olise (2015), noted the advent of other sources of information like the internet, World Wide Web and, even social media that has led to a new challenge for librarians to meet the rapidly changing information needs and expectations of the 21st century users. The ability of librarians to adopt and use social media within their various libraries and among colleagues is part of the challenges encountered by librarians in information sharing.

Nwosu, Debattista, Rooney and Mason as cited in Okohand Akpojotor (2015), revealed that Nigeria has a similar social media pattern usage in the United States, as social media are platforms of chatting, dating, e-mailing, photo/video sharing, connecting with friends, as well as to search for information. Hu, Wang, and Yu, (2015), in their study of related information sharing activities on social networking to information needs of users.

Osatuyias cited in Ghaisani, Handayani and Munajat (2017) categorizes information into four types namely personal, sensational, political, and casual. Personal information is strictly about an individual information need which may be related to his/her educational, health or family needs. Sensational information is information that is trending in the media which may be shared by any member of the society. On the other hand, casual information is information that is shared within the group of friends and colleagues which can enhance a discussion.

According to Sonnenwald as cited in Savolainen (2017), information sharing can be understood as ‘a set of activities by which information is provided to others, either proactively or upon request. Thus, the process of information sharing incorporates two major aspects: giving information to others and receiving information that has been provided by the information giver. Ghaisani, Handayani and Munaj at (2017) in support of Ruggles, opined that information sharing activities have a strong connection with knowledge-sharing activities. Stating that information sharing is an important element to support knowledge management in the organization, the library most inclusive. This makes information sharing activity necessarily similar to knowledge-sharing activities. Therefore, information sharing among librarians on social media is also a medium of sharing knowledge among information professionals.

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As succinctly formulated by Wu, Che, Abdullah and Rahman (2015), knowledge sharing activities in social media generally applies to information-sharing activities which involves information seekers identifying information needs; sending questions related to these needs in the form of messages on social media; comparing available answers to needs, thus, presenting an effective way in which librarians as share knowledge professionally among colleagues for professional development.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive research which adopted a survey design. A sample of 50 Librarians was drawn from two Public Libraries (Akwa Ibom State Public Libraries in Uyo and Eket) and two Academic Libraries (University of Uyo and Akwa Ibom State University libraries). Questionnaire was the instrument of data collection. The data were analysed using percentages, mean and interpreted with charts and tables.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Demographic Data

Gender

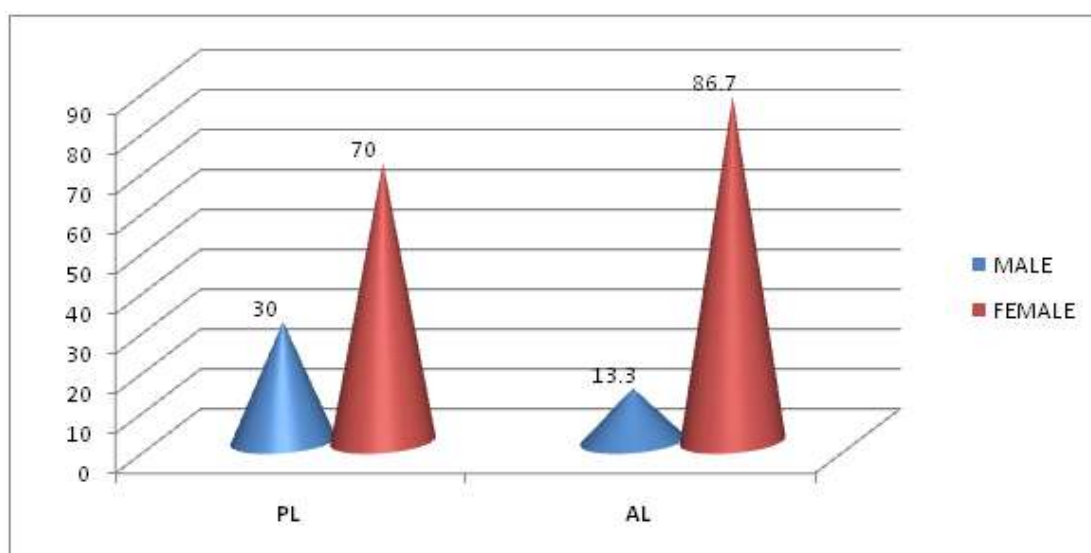
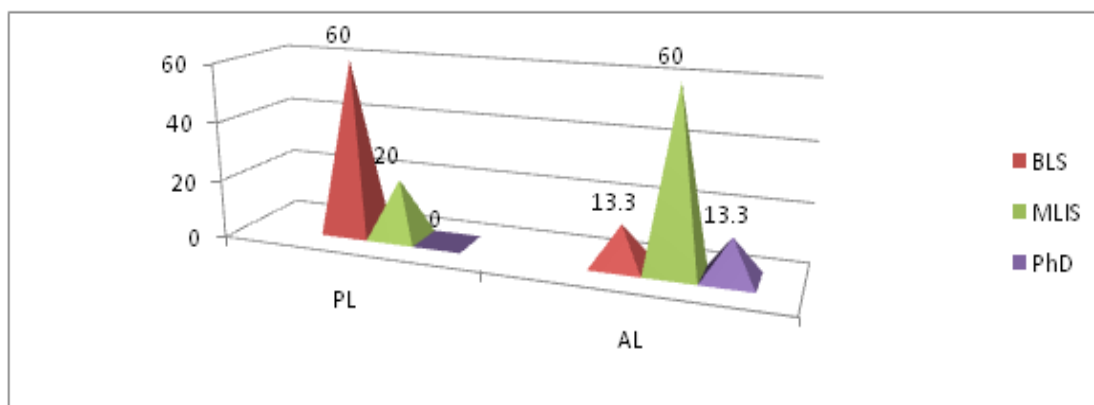


Chart 1, above shows, that Akwa Ibom State Public Libraries (PL) respondents are 30% male and 70% female, while Academic Libraries (AL) respon-

dents are 13.3 % male and 86.7% female. In the total population, the male are the minority with 20% to the female majority population of 80%.

Academic Qualifications



The chart above showed that majority of Librarians in PL (60%) hold Bachelor of Library Science (BLS) while holders of Master Degree in Library and Information Science (MLIS) are 20%. In AL, the chart shows MLIS is the

highest with 60%, while PhD shares the same percentage with BLS at 13.3%. This showed that librarians in the Academic Libraries acquire higher educational qualifications than public library librarians. in Akwa Ibom State.

Years of Working Experience

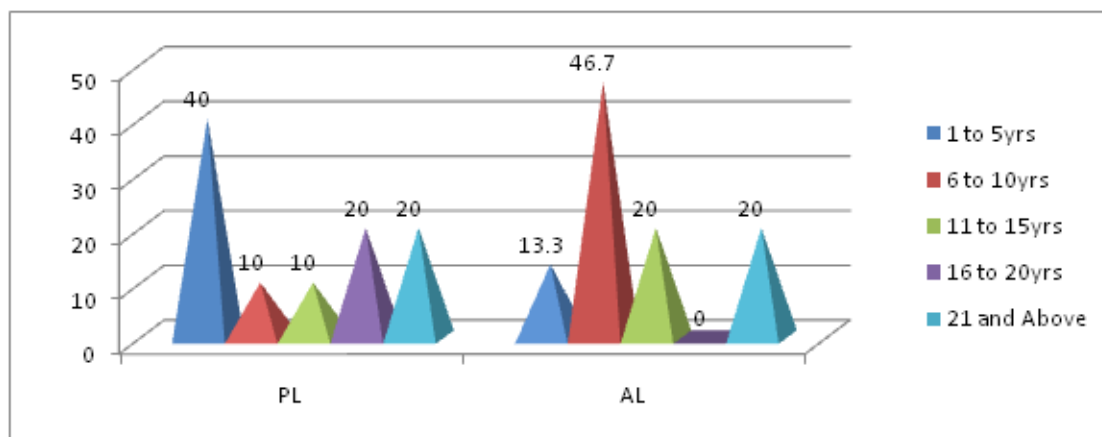


Chart 3 above shows PL 1 to 5 years of experience is the highest with 40%, 16 to 20years and 21years and above has 20% respectively; while 6 to10 years and 11 to 15years of experience are the least with 10% each. AL showed 6 to 10yearshas the highest with 46.7%, followed by 11 to15 years and 21years and above with 20% each and the least is 1 to 5 years with 13.3 %. This shows that both libraries have librarians whose years of experience fall within the era of social media rapid usage, as revealed by Nielsen (2010) that, twenty two per cent of all time spent online is spent on social media sites, or one in every four and a half minutes and three quarters of global consumers who go online visit social media sites

Research Questions

Research Question 1:

What type of Social Media tools are used by Librarians in knowledge sharing in your library?

Table1. *Types of Social Media tools Used*

S/N	TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE	PL MEAN	AL MEAN
1.	Whats App	2.9	3.8
2.	Imo	1	1.7
3.	Facebook	3.4	3.9
4.	Messenger	3.3	3.6
5.	Institutional/Library Blog	0.4	1.9
6.	Personal Blog	1.7	2.7
7.	Twitter	1.7	3.2
8.	Instagram	1.7	2.9
9.	We chat	1.4	2.5
10.	Snap chat	1.4	2.3

Table 1, shows an evidence of use of all the social media tools listed. But of note, Facebook (3.4) and Whats App (3.8) are the most used social media of librarians in PL and AL respectively. The above indicated a confirmation of Neese (2016), who viewed social media as common place in present time. Facebook and Messenger have the highest

use by libraries of both libraries. This affirms Usman (2015) view that Facebook is the leading form of social media tool used in Nigeria enjoyed by even the least literate individuals, and evidently among librarians in AkwaIbom State. Institutional/ Library Blog is not recognised as a social media tool in these libraries.

Research Question 2:

What are the types of information shared on Social Media among Librarians in PLs and ALs?

Table2. *Types of Information Shared On Social Media*

S/N	TYPES OF INFORMATIONSHARED	PL	%	AL	%
11.	Reference Query	0	0	13	43
12.	User education	2	10	9	30
13.	Conference notification	2	10	15	50
14.	Notice of Meeting	6	30	14	46
15.	Information Update	7	35	15	50
16.	Personal Issues	5	25	12	40
17.	Resource Development	3	15	13	43
18.	Document Transfer	3	15	14	46

As indicated in Table 2, PL respondents revealed the type of information shared among librarians using the social media tools as follows: for Information Update 35%, Notice of meetings 30%, Personal Issues 25%, Resource Development and Document Transfer 15% each, while User education and Conference notification is 10% each. Reference Query had no indication. AL respondents revealed that social media tools are used in libraries to share information on: Conference notification and Information Update 50%, Notice of meetings and Document Transfer 46%; Resource Development and Reference Query (43%) each and for Personal Issues (40%), while the least is 30% for User Education. This showed that, among librarians of both libraries, social media serves as ideal tool and platform for sharing of information for professional development.

Research Question 3

What are the challenges of using Social Media tools for Information Sharing?.

Table3. Challenges of Social Media Use for Information Sharing

S/N	CHALLENGES	PL MEAN	AL MEAN
1.	Lack of support by the library Management on the use of Social media for information sharing	1.4	2.7
2.	Poor Time management	1.6	3.0
3.	Poor Technological Skills	1.7	3.0
4.	Lack of Internet Facilities in the Library	2.1	3.3
5.	Poor Data Subscription	1.9	3.4
6.	Poor Power Supply	1.9	3.4
7.	Poor Internet Network	2.2	3.3
8.	Lack of Feedback from other Librarians	1.7	2.9
9.	Fear of Technology (Technophobia)	0.9	2.5

Table 3, shows the various challenges of the public and academic libraries on the use of social media tools. The greatest challenge of PL is the Poor internet network with the mean of 2.2 while the greatest challenge in the AL is poor power supply and poor data subscription with the mean of 3.4 respectively. This is followed by lack of internet facilities in PL (2.1) against 3.3 in AL; difficulties in the library at a mean of 2.1 while AL indicates fear of Technology with the mean of 2.5 as the greatest challenge. While AL has an equal indication of the challenges of; difficulties of mobile data subscription and poor power supply at a mean of 3.4. Of great interest is the level of Fear of technology (Technophobia). The Table indicates that the Fear of technology (Technophobia) is the lowest of the challenges experienced by librarians of both libraries at 0.9 and 2.5 means respectively. This, in line with the years of experience indicator showed that the majority of the present librarians in this information and communication Technology (ICT) and Social media era have increase in their technological acceptance. This agrees with Chhia to (2018) who identified lack of privacy, time management, lack of technical knowledge and poor Internet facility as the challenges of using social media tools for information dissemination.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Social media is the current technological trend for information sharing. Findings from this study show that it is also common among libraries of both public and academic libraries in

AkwaIbom State, Nigeria. It has revealed that Social media platform is an ideal tool for information sharing among librarians irrespective of the library type. Also of great improvement is the decrease in technophobia among librarians in the public and academic libraries in AkwaIbom State. Pertaining to the challenges experienced at the state public library, the state government should help ensure that Internet facilities as well as internet service are provided for the public libraries. This will go a long way in enabling the librarians to not only use social media among themselves and subsequently with the library user. The Academic libraries still has same challenges as the public library. The University management should make more effort to ensure that the internet facilities are available in the various campuses and internet services provided. Lasting alternate sources of power, such as inverters should be invested in to cub the poor power supply challenge in both libraries. Librarians in both the public and academic libraries in AkwaIbom State have shown great usage of social media as tools for information sharing, but more still has to be done by librarians to improve on the challenges of management use, time required to monitor, poor technological skills, and lack of feedback from other librarians.

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