Extent of Utilization of Social Media in Rendering Library and Information Services by Librarians in University Libraries in South-South Nigeria

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Abstract

A potent means to which librarians and libraries can optimize for their work and services as well as maintain their relevance is through a medium like social media. Social media is a shift on how people discover, read and share news, information and content. This study is to determine the extent of utilization of social media in rendering library and information services by university librarians in south–south Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted and the population for the study was five hundred and sixty-three (563) librarians in south–south Nigeria. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the states to be studied based on specific characteristics or qualities which produced a sample size of 323 librarians. The proportionate sampling technique was used to ensure that every member of the population was represented. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire of 27 questions titled "Extent of utilization of social media in rendering library and information services by librarians in university libraries in south–south Nigeria". The data collected was analyzed using arithmetic mean and standard deviation on statistical package on social science (SPSS) to answer research questions. The findings of the study revealed that the use of Facebook and twitter in rendering library and information services by librarians in university libraries is high. The researcher concluded from the findings of the study that the extent of use of Facebook and twitter in rendering library services by librarians in university libraries in south- south Nigeria is high. It was recommended among other things that libraries need to be consistent in the use of social media platforms in rendering library services as this will help the library to be easily accessible by patrons thereby maintaining its relevance in this 21st century.
Keywords: Social media, Facebook, Twitter, Library Services, Library users

1.1 Introduction

Social media is an evolutionary development of online participation where people of common interest communicate, share and contribute content on the cyber space (Ezeani and Igwesi, 2012). Also, Reilly (2013) saw social media as the future of communication, a countless array of internet based tools and

platforms that increase and enhance the sharing of information. Examples of social media are Twitter, Facebook, Linkedin, 2go, Whatsapp, Blogs, Youtube, Wikis, RSS feeds, Flicker, Podcast, Myspace, Plurk, Picasa among others. Libraries have now imbibed this means to allow library users to participate in building the content by asking questions, giving their opinion on issues of interest and generally sharing information. Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) also pointed out that it principally emerged in Nigeria for the purpose of socializing; because the media makes the transfer of text, photos, audio, video and information in general increasingly fluid among internet users.

Though, this has changed over time as most professions make use of this media to promote and render their services, just like the academic/university libraries. Librarians in university libraries now professionally indulge in using social media to let users know what resources and services they offer and what they can offer to the users. Ezeani (2011) opined that social networking sites on the internet should be widely made known to patrons, and library patrons should be encouraged to use them so as to fill the information bridge. This is very important as the performance of the library can be measured in terms of the extent to which its users derive satisfaction from its accessibility and the quality of services rendered to its clients.

Library services are known for adequacy and appropriateness of library resources, and user satisfaction derived from the use of the available resources. There are different types of libraries; as such different types of materials are selected with the aim of meeting the needs of the user community. Library services provided in libraries differ from one library to another. Some common library services are lending services, interlibrary loan service and document delivery, reservation service, reference

service, user education, exhibition and display, information literacy programme and current awareness services. Social media has made accessibility of library materials easier as many universities now have their pages on Facebook, for example Delta State University, Abraka and Kenneth Dike Library, Ibadan. Other platforms like Myspace and Micro blogging sites like Twitter, blog, Facebook, Instagram among others is useful in facilitating librarians services in university libraries. It helps university libraries to create services that are more responsive and is tuned to the changing needs of the users.

The university library is the only centralized location where new and emerging information technologies can be combined with knowledge resources, in a user-focused, service-rich environment that supports today's social and educational patterns of learning, teaching and research (Uzuegbu, 2012). The university library is usually attached to a higher institution; it is established to serve the university community by meeting their information needs. It is geared towards achieving the mission, vision and objectives of their parent institutions.

Therefore, librarians use every possible means such as social media in rendering services such as lending services, referral services, reference, technical services, indexing, abstracting, users education among others to achieve the institutional goal. Library resources such as books, CD, VCD, journals, newspapers, yearbooks, maps, dictionaries, inter-based resources, are made available to users through the internet in a digital form on social media. The university library offers most of these library and information services as the literate community need a steady and balanced supply of reading materials in accordance with their diverse requirements because the accessibility to literature is the principal goal of library services. Most university libraries rendering

services with social media use it basically to improve library and information services. The question now is, to what extent does librarians in university libraries in south-south Nigeria use social media in rendering library and information services?

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Librarians could be said to be aware of the existence of social media and the huge benefits of using it in rendering library services due to its ease of use, and a means of reaching the library patrons in their comfort zone. However, library patrons no longer show any interest in the use of library online services because of the uncertainty of getting the information they are seeking from the library. It has also been observed that some university libraries seem to have social media presence especially Facebook, twitter, blogs among others, but it appears that they are not maximizing the use of these social media platforms for regular promotion of library resources or to render library services.

The extent of use of social media in this concept is referring to the frequency of use of social media in rendering library and information services, which is seen as a problem because the extent to which the library responds to library users online request builds their confidence for a timely response to their needs by librarians thereby attracting more online library users. The researcher had an experience with a particular university library in the south-south, Nigeria where she sent in a request for information on the library's social media page but got a reply long after the information was no longer needed. This is very worrisome to researchers and library users who would be in need of information from the library through their social media page as they may end up not getting the information at all or get it very late when the information is no longer needed. The question now is 'what is the extent of use of

these social media platforms to render library and information services to the 21st century library users'?

In spite of this submission, and the effort libraries are making to be more visible on social media by creating online presence there appears to still be a gap existing as little or no empirical study have been conducted on the extent of utilization of social media in rendering library and information services in university libraries to ascertain if the use of social media in rendering services by librarians in university libraries in south-south Nigeria is active or a mirage. It therefore becomes imperative for the study to empirically investigate the extent of utilization of social media in rendering library and information services by librarians in university libraries in south-south Nigeria.

2.1 Literature Review

Social media is the life blood of the modern day communication; it has been seen and interpreted in different ways by different scholars. . It has transcended from not just a social networking site to being a resource centre where members can get instant data/information on an assignment, project and research. Adewojo and Adebara (2016) opined that social media is a communication forum that allows users to electronically share information and knowledge with each other. To Cindori (2012) social media was referred to as a platform to build social relations or networks among people who share interest, activities, background, or real – life connections. Social media is seen as the democratization of content.

It is the understanding of the role people play in the process of not only reading and disseminating information, but also how they share and create content for others to participate as it allows people to contribute, share or edit on an author's post. Hicks (2012) added that social media forms part of the rich environment of scholars within which

researchers work. This is possible because textbooks, journals, editorials, magazines amongst others are uploaded online for researchers to edit and develop on rather than repeating an existing project. This feature of the social media attracted the library to the use of this medium to reach its patrons because it is observed that most Nigerians with smart phones belong to a social media platform. One would wonder what the academic library would be doing with a social platform?

The academic/university library is a knowledge house that seeks to equip its patrons with current information but cannot achieve it without extending it services in a more flexible and relaxed environment where library users can have more liberty to air their views as well as make enquiries. Okoro and Nwafor (2013) added that social media are interactive Web-based platforms that offer users opportunity and place to connect, share opinions, experiences, views, contacts, knowledge and expertise. The possibility of sharing images on the web has often led to users' satisfaction and gratification as it leads to a clearer understanding of the interaction (Mikal, Rice, Kent & Uchino, 2014). It is often said that people believe what they see more than what was told. Therefore, the library takes advantage of been able to share images and videos on social media to render services such as users orientation, display pictures of current available materials, give library tour among other library services.

2.2 Extent of Social Media Utilization by Librarians in University Libraries

Library and information services are key actors in providing unhindered access to essential resources for economic and cultural advance. Library services contribute effectively to the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom, safe guarding democratic values and universal civil rights (IFLA, 2003), all these are obtainable when the right information is gotten at the right time.

Library and information services includes: current awareness services, reference services, selective dissemination of information (SDI), charging and discharging of books, bibliography compilations, exhibitions and display, inter-library loan and notifications. Other services are; referral services, technical services, indexes and abstracting, user education and library updates. These services can be carried out in most social media platforms but the focus of the study is on Facebook as the most popular social media network and twitter as the most used by students and scholars (Varrella, 2021).

One of the primary uses of Facebook by university libraries is to market their services with their page; it also serves as the library portal because it can be linked to the library website. Coklar (2012) stated that Facebook can be used in rendering library services like video sharing, photo sharing, text sharing, commenting, activity announcement, distant messaging and group creation. Through options available on the platform, each member can share information, and this information can be quoted from a common page that friends can see. Additionally, academic libraries are now embedding library services within the Facebook page for a true outreach program. Using Facebook applications, library catalog can be embedded to allow students have direct access to the library holdings without actually visiting the library's website. Some libraries also create the "ask a librarian" feature in their page to enable them provide reference services, chat and message functions.

Furthermore, Taylor and Francis (2014) stated that collection management tool is increasingly an important use of social media because it offers a flexible way to present resources and categorize them. For

example, Facebook can be used to discuss new collections through its book review platform; this encourages library patrons to read more books. Finally, Facebook, twitter, blogs and other online chats helps university libraries to collaborate with other libraries (Mabweazu, 2014). This is possible because libraries now embed their services including library catalog into social media, so that connected libraries can access the resources available. These resources in the online catalog can be loaned, shared, and downloaded by other libraries for their patrons through their social media pages especially Facebook.

Twitter on the other hand allows one to send and receive short messages called tweets through the web. Messages to twitter are limited to a maximum of 140 characters, including spaces, and they are generally public. For the fact that each message is short and maybe a sentence or two, it requires a carefully crafted post that can convey a good deal of information without taking a lot of time to read. It has no specialized tools required for its use and with more than 140 million active users, there is a good chance that at least some people in your community are using twitter, hence, information can be spread easily within a given community like the university. In twitter, to automatically see what someone else is saying, especially somebody that interests you, you 'follow' them.

University libraries could share all kinds of news that can be of interest to patrons. Short messages can tell people about events such as lectures; examination updates, deadlines, book sales, newly available resources or changes in the library hours. Twitter can serve as a tool for book selection process as student and staff can have the opportunity of being part of the process by giving the bibliographic information of a material that will be relevant to their department or courses which are available in the library's collection.

Twitter allows librarians post information into the libraries account and users who are following the account can comment on the post. Meredith (2006) opined that librarians and libraries use twitter for updates on library activities. Libraries post hour changes events, search tips, response to student comment, questions and answers, and basic issues affecting students on their twitter handle. Al-Daihani and AlAwadhi (2015) asserted that twitter in academic library is a multifaceted tool; they observed that the information posted on library's twitter page is mostly news and announcement followed by library collections and services. Answering users question and referrals as well as library marketing are also pointed out as the uses of twitter in the library.

Waddle, Barnes and Khan-Kernahan (2012) noted that twitter is one of the most current trends, and equally a direct way of getting access to the most current trends in what library users are thinking. This will help librarians to know their users' very well as what they think is important and relevant for a better service, possible suggestions on ways of improving library services in order to serve them better are also harvested through their comments. Carscaddon and Chapman (2013) added that libraries use twitter to build conversation with library users, to know what they are thinking, address customers concern and to advocate for programs and services.

1.3 Objectives of the Study
This study specifically wants to determine the;
1. Extent of utilization of Facebook in rendering library and information services by librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria.
2. Extent of utilization of twitter in rendering library and information services by librarians in university

libraries in South-South Nigeria.

3.1 Research Method

The research design adopted was descriptive survey, the population of the study consists of five hundred and sixty-three (563) librarians in South-South, Nigeria which was derived from six different states in the region. The purposive sampling technique was used for the selection of the states to be studied base on specific characteristics or qualities. The proportionate stratified random sampling technique was adopted to ensure that each librarian on the population participated in the study in the same proportion as they existed in the population. The sample size will be determined using 57% to ensure equal selection of librarians from each university libraries.

According to Nworgu (2015), sample fraction is given as;

sample $= \underline{323/563}$ $= 0.57 = 57\%$

Table 1: Mean ratings on the extent of Facebook Utilization in Rendering Library and Information Services by Librarians (n=303)

	Mean	SD	Remark
1. For communication	2.33	1.07	Low extent
2. Online lending services	2.78	1.08	High extent
3. Book reviews	2.86	1.03	High extent
4. Current awareness services	2.39	.94	Low extent
5. Library exhibitions	2.46	1.06	Low extent
6. Answers users' questions	2.62	1.12	High extent
7. Interlibrary loan	2.69	1.06	High extent
8. Information dissemination	2.54	1.09	High extent
9. Library orientation	2.68	1.03	High extent
10. Open access to knowledge	2.68	1.12	High extent
11. Book talks	2.81	1.09	High extent
12. News and announcements	2.78	1.06	High extent
13. Reference services	2.73	1.07	High extent
14. Posts academic resources, conferences, articles and voluntary programmes	2.81	1.03	High extent
15. Supports community programmes e.g. festivals, elections, etc.	2.87	1.09	High extent
Grand Mean	**2.67**	**1.06**	**High extent**

The result in Table 1 shows the grand mean and standard deviation scores of 2.67 and 1.06 indicating that the extent of utilization of Facebook in rendering library and information services by librarians in universities in South-South Nigeria is high. The item by item analysis shows that librarians rated the extent of utilization of Facebook in rendering 12 of the 15 listed library and information services to be high. The 12 services rated as highly utilized ranges from 2.54-2.87 respectively. The findings of this study gave credence to the findings of Coklar (2012) and Golwal, Kalbande and Sonwane (2013) who opined that Facebook is an effective means for real time information. The librarians on the other hand rated the extent of utilization of Facebook in rendering the three remaining services to be low. They include: communication, current awareness services and library exhibitions.

Research Question 2: What is the extent of utilization of twitter in rendering library and information services by librarians in the universities in South-South Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean ratings on the extent of twitter utilization in rendering library and information services by librarians n=303

		Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Easy flow of firsthand information	2.59	1.06	High extent
2.	Link other websites for in-depth information	2.68	1.15	High extent
3.	Answering users' question	2.59	1.13	High extent
4.	Communication tool	2.61	1.10	High extent
5.	To encourage research and updates in knowledge	2.54	1.09	High extent
6.	Post library events	2.71	1.09	High extent
7.	Render reference services	2.65	1.01	High extent
8.	Current awareness services	2.63	1.07	High extent
9.	To market library services and resources	2.72	1.10	High extent
10.	Book reviews and book talks	2.93	.96	High extent
11.	For library collaborations	2.86	.98	High extent
12.	Access to students' comment, suggestion and thought	2.67	1.13	High extent
	Grand Mean	**2.68**	**1.07**	**High extent**

Table 3 shows the grand mean and standard deviation scores of 2.68 and 1.07 indicating that the utilization of twitter in rendering library and information services by librarians in the universities in South-South Nigeria is high. **The item by item analysis shows that librarians rated the extent of utilization of twitter in rendering all the 12 listed library and information services to be high. The mean for the 12 services ranged from 2.54 to 2.93.**

The findings of this study affirms that twitter is a good communication means with a high number of users and a multifaceted tool which provides a platform for information to be posted on library's twitter page Smith & Brenner (2012) and AI-Daihani and ALAwadhi (2015).

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it has shown that librarians use Facebook and twitter in rendering library and information services to a high extent. This should be encouraged as meeting the need of the library users is the library's priority.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. The library services rendered on Facebook should be holistic so librarians should incorporate them into their social media activities.

2. The use of twitter by librarians to render services should be further encouraged by consistently providing social amenities that will promote ease of use.

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