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USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES FOR INFORMATION SERVICE DELIVERY AND LEARNING AMONG STUDENTS OF ASON BUR LEARNING RESOURCE CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF MKAR, BENUE STATE

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Abstract

The study examined the use of social networking sites for information service delivery and learning among students of the Asom Bur Learning Resource Centre, University of Mkar, Benue State. Descriptive survey design was adopted. The population comprised 990 registered undergraduate students who used the Learning Resource Centre, from whom 160 students were selected through proportionate random sampling. Data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire, which was face-validated by experts. A four-point rating scale was used to obtain responses. Data were analysed using percentages, mean and standard deviation, with a criterion mean of 2.50. The findings showed that Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram and Wikipedia were used for information service delivery, whereas Skype, LinkedIn, Myspace, Google Classroom and Zoom Meeting were not. For learning, students used Facebook, WhatsApp, Zoom Meeting and YouTube, while Twitter and Google Classroom were not identified as platforms used. The study concludes that social networking sites provide channels for library information services and students' learning, although the platforms used differ according to purpose. It recommends that the Learning Resource Centre strengthen information dissemination through platforms already used by students and provide guidance on the appropriate use of social networking sites for academic learning.

Keywords: Social networking sites, information service delivery, university students, learning, university library

Introduction

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Social networking sites offer interactive digital spaces through which information can be shared quickly and users can communicate with service providers and one another. Social networking sites are online platforms that enable users to create or access content, communicate, share resources and participate in online communities. Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Instagram may support library communication by allowing librarians to circulate announcements, direct users to resources and respond to enquiries. Adewoyin, Onuoha and Ikonne (2017) examined social media use for library service delivery and highlighted its relevance to librarians' provision of services. Their work points to the importance of considering social networking platforms as possible channels for communicating library information to users.

Social networking sites may also support learning by enabling students to share academic materials, discuss course content, participate in virtual meetings and access educational videos. Omekwu, Eke and Odoh (2014) observed that undergraduates used social networking sites for communication and for connecting with classmates for online study. Balamurugan and Thanuskodi (2019) also identified platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and YouTube among those used by college students. These uses suggest that social networking sites can serve both social and academic purposes, although the platforms selected may vary with students' preferences and learning needs.

The use of social networking sites for information service delivery is not necessarily the same as their use for learning. A platform that students use for academic discussions may not be one through which a library routinely disseminates information. Similarly, the library may use a platform that is not among students' preferred channels for learning.

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Understanding these differences can help a learning resource centre select suitable platforms for communicating with students and supporting their academic activities. The present study examines the social networking sites used for information service delivery to students of the Aston Bur Learning Resource Centre, University of Mkar, and the sites students use for learning. The study focuses on identifying the platforms used for each purpose rather than measuring the causal influence of social networking sites.

Statement of the Problem

Social networking sites have become increasingly relevant to information service delivery and students' learning in higher institutions. Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram and other social networking applications may provide libraries with opportunities to disseminate information, communicate with students, promote library resources and support access to learning materials beyond the traditional library environment. For students, these platforms may also provide avenues for sharing academic information, accessing educational content, discussing learning materials and interacting with colleagues and lecturers. Their effective use may therefore enhance the accessibility and timeliness of information services as well as support students' learning activities.

However, the use of social networking sites for information service delivery and learning appears to vary across university environments. In Nigeria, some university libraries may use social networking platforms to communicate with users and provide information services, while students may use different platforms for academic and non-academic purposes. The problem may arise where the social networking sites available or

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used for information service delivery are not clearly identified, or where the platforms commonly used by students for learning are not sufficiently known to the library. In such circumstances, information services may not always be provided through platforms that students frequently access for learning. At the University of Mkar, Mkar, there appears to be a need to ascertain the social networking sites used by the Ason Bur Learning Resource Centre for information service delivery and those used by students for learning.

Previous studies have examined the use of social networking sites in libraries and educational activities, particularly in relation to information dissemination, communication and learning.

The continued changes in social networking platforms and differences in users' preferences may suggest that existing findings cannot adequately explain the situation in every university environment. There is therefore a need for context-specific evidence on the social networking sites used for information service delivery and those used by students for learning at the University of Mkar. This study consequently seeks to identify the social networking sites used for information service delivery to students and ascertain the social networking sites used by students for learning, with a view to providing evidence that may assist the Ason Bur Learning Resource Centre in aligning its information services with students' learning and communication practices.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Which social networking sites are used for information service delivery to students of Asom Bur Learning Resource Centre, University of Mkar?

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2. Which social networking sites are used by students of Asom Bur Learning Resource Centre, University of Mkar?

Literature Review

Social networking sites have become part of the communication environment in which students and academic institutions share information. Ledbetter (2021) explains social networking in terms of networked communication platforms through which users can create and interact with content and connections. Das and Sarkar (2021) describe social networking sites as communication platforms that enable users to interact and work with one another through features such as text, image, audio and video messaging. These perspectives suggest that social networking sites are not limited to maintaining personal relationships; they can also support the sharing of academic information and communication between students and institutional service providers. Examples include Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and other platforms through which students can receive announcements, access learning materials, ask questions and exchange information relevant to their studies.

The importance of networking in education and library services lies in its capacity to create additional channels for communication, information access, collaboration and learning. Okeji and Alex-Nmecha (2021) observe that social media platforms can support online teaching and learning by enabling the sharing of learning materials, collaborative activities, access to recorded lectures and communication between lecturers and students. Ilo, Izuagbe and Iroaganachi (2021) explain that social networking applications provide university libraries with opportunities to reach users through digital channels, although

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effective service delivery depends on whether users are willing to engage with the platforms. The perspectives indicate that networking can help libraries publicise available resources, circulate notices, respond to users' enquiries and direct students to relevant information. For students, these platforms can provide additional opportunities to exchange ideas, clarify academic issues and obtain learning materials without being physically present in the library. However, the benefits depend on the relevance of the information shared, the accessibility of the platforms, users' digital skills and the consistency with which libraries and students engage with them.

Students may also use social networking sites to support academic communication and learning. Omekwu et al. (2014) examined social networking site use among undergraduates at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and described their use for interacting with friends and connecting with classmates for online study. Balamurugan and Thanuskodi (2019) identified Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, WhatsApp and YouTube among the social networking sites used by college students in Tamil Nadu. Although the platforms and institutional contexts may differ, these studies indicate that social networking sites can support a range of student communication and learning activities.

Tezer and Yıldız (2017) examined internet, social network and mobile-device use among prospective teachers and reported frequent use of internet-connected devices and social networks. This supports the relevance of understanding students' use of digital platforms, while also showing why local evidence is important: general patterns of use do not establish which specific sites students at a particular university use for learning or which sites its library uses to deliver information services.

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The literature reviewed addresses social networking sites in relation to both library service delivery and student learning. Nevertheless, the platforms used for these two purposes may not be identical. The present study addresses this institutional question by identifying the sites used for information service delivery at the Aston Bur Learning Resource Centre and the sites students use for learning.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design and was conducted at the University of Mkar, Mkar, Benue State, Nigeria. The population comprised 990 registered undergraduate students who were users of the Aston Bur Learning Resource Centre. A sample of 160 students was selected using proportionate random sampling to represent students from the various departments and academic levels in proportion to their representation in the population.

Data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire titled Social Networking Sites for Information Service Delivery and Learning Questionnaire. The questionnaire covered social networking sites used for information service delivery and those used by students for learning. Experts examined the instrument for face validity, and their comments were used to revise it before administration. Responses were recorded on a four-point rating scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The researcher administered the questionnaires to the sampled students and collected the completed copies. Data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation. A criterion mean of 2.50 was used for decision-making: mean scores of

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2.50 and above were accepted, while scores below 2.50 were rejected. The tables report the response counts and mean scores supplied for the study.

Results and Discussion

Research Question One: What are the various social networking sites used for information service delivery?

Table 1: The Various Social Networking Sites used for Information Service Delivery

S/N	SITES	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	DECISION
1	Facebook	147	13	-	-	3.91	Accepted
2	Skype	-	33	123	4	2.18	Rejected
3	Youtube	48	96	16	-	3.2	Accepted
4	Twitter	18	83	31	28	2.56	Accepted
5	LinkedIn	-	24	136	-	2.15	Rejected
6	Myspace	-	41	109	10	2.19	Rejected
7	WhatsApp	141	19	-	-	3.88	Accepted
8	Google class room	-	17	138	5	2.07	Rejected
9	Zoom meeting	-	54	28	78	1.85	Rejected
10	Instagram	51	73	36	-	3.09	Accepted
11	Wikipedia	29	64	53	14	2.67	Accepted

Sources: *Field work, (2021)*

Table 1 indicates that Facebook (M = 3.91), WhatsApp (M = 3.88), YouTube (M = 3.20), Instagram (M = 3.09), Wikipedia (M = 2.67) and Twitter (M = 2.56) met the criterion mean of 2.50 and were identified as platforms used for information service delivery. Skype (M = 2.18), LinkedIn (M = 2.15), Myspace (M = 2.19), Google Classroom (M = 2.07) and Zoom Meeting (M = 1.85) fell below the criterion and were not identified as platforms used for this purpose. The result suggests that the Centre's information service delivery was associated with a set of platforms that included Facebook and WhatsApp, alongside YouTube, Instagram, Wikipedia and Twitter. The finding is relevant to Adewoyin et al. (2017), who

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examined social media use for library service delivery and noted the need to promote awareness of social media for effective services. The difference in the platforms identified across studies may reflect differences in institutional practices and users' communication preferences. The results describe reported use and do not establish that any platform caused an improvement in service delivery.

Research Question Two: What are various social networking sites used by students of UMM for learning?

Table 2. Various Social Networking Sites Used by Students of UMM for Learning

S/N	SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	DECISION
12	Facebook	151	9	-	-	3.94	Accepted
13	WhatsApp	143	14	3	-	3.87	Accepted
14	Zoom meeting	37	79	21	23	2.81	Accepted
15	Twitter	11	74	51	24	2.45	Rejected
16	YouTube	31	79	50	-	2.88	Accepted
17	Google class room	6	39	93	22	2.18	Rejected

Sources: *Field work, (2021)*

Table 2 shows that Facebook (M = 3.94), WhatsApp (M = 3.87), YouTube (M = 2.88) and Zoom Meeting (M = 2.81) met the criterion mean and were identified as platforms used by students for learning. Twitter (M = 2.45) and Google Classroom (M = 2.18) fell below the criterion and were not identified as platforms used for learning in this study. This finding is consistent with Omekwu et al. (2014), who described students' use of social networking sites to connect with classmates for online study, and with Balamurugan and Thanuskodi (2019), who identified Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube among platforms used by students. However, Twitter's mean score in the present study was below the decision criterion, illustrating that students' platform preferences can differ by institutional context and

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purpose. The results indicate reported patterns of use; they do not measure the effect of these platforms on learning outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, it was recommended that:

1. Asom Bur Learning Resource Centre should strengthen the use of Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Wikipedia and Twitter for information service delivery by sharing accurate library announcements, resource links, service updates and user-support information.
2. The Centre should regularly review students' preferred communication platforms through feedback or brief user surveys so that its information services remain aligned with students' actual platform use.
3. The university library should encourage appropriate academic use of Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Zoom Meeting by guiding students on how to share learning materials, discuss course content and participate responsibly in online learning activities.
4. The Centre and relevant university departments should provide students with brief guidance on digital literacy, online safety, responsible communication, source evaluation and academic integrity when using social networking sites for learning.
5. The Centre should assess the feasibility of introducing or promoting additional learning platforms, including Google Classroom, only after identifying students' needs, access conditions and readiness to use them.

Conclusion

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Based on the findings, it was concluded that social networking sites are used for information service delivery to students of the University of Mkar, with Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram and Wikipedia being the identified platforms. However, some platforms such as Skype, LinkedIn, Myspace, Google Classroom and Zoom Meeting are not used for information service delivery. It was also concluded that students of the University of Mkar use Facebook, WhatsApp, Zoom Meeting and YouTube for learning, while Twitter and Google Classroom are not used for learning.

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