

## Analysis of Library Patrons' Usage of Social Media in a Nigerian University Library

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**Abstract**

The changing nature of library services and the advent of social media network technology have created emphasis on its usage in academic institutions. Librarians are using the latest social media technology in marketing their information products and services to the library patrons. The aim of this study is investigating the library patrons' usage of social media in a Nigerian University Library; and the instrument for data collection was a questionnaire of Two hundred and thirty-eight copies and the usable rate of returned responses was 87% of the anticipated responses. The findings revealed that Whatsapp and facebook were greatly used as it creates current awareness on the happening in the institution; it also established that social media enabled students to access local and web contents of information needs globally. The findings revealed that critical social media literacy is needed to help students to critically deal with the large amounts of information they interact with by sharing its content on social media. Furthermore, the research provides information on how this technology can be fully exploited for the benefits of the students and community at large.

**Keywords:** academic library, library patrons, social media, use

**Introduction**

There are emphasis on the growing phenomenon of social media and its importance to learning, particularly in university context, because of its characteristics that are in line with the expectations in education. Librarians are using the latest social media technologies to meet with library trends in marketing their information products and services to their patron since the traditional concept of a library is changing to social cyberspace where library patrons retrieve, disseminate and contribute to knowledge (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012). With the advent of social network services libraries can improve on their services as librarians need to seize the opportunity of social media technology to impact positively on library services in other to remain relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Social media is web- based and mobile based technologies which are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue among individuals, organizations and communities. Social media platforms include Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter, and other Internet- based applications build on the existing ideology and technology of Web 2.0 which is user friendly. Since the advent of the Internet, and in particular the development of the interactive version of the web, Web 2.0, use of social media has developed into a major strategy for individual

and organizations for the purposes of creating, organising, preserving and disseminating information. Going into the history of the early Internet „Web 1.0 were used but it was a largely static environment, which did not allow interaction between library and information organizations and their patrons/clientele as such and was mainly used as an information repository rather than a dynamic environment for the exchange of ideas and active information marketing. With the development of Web 2.0, there is a massive increase in web based traffic which could be loosely called social networking which initially was mainly networking between individuals but more recently has developed into a major marketing resource allowing networking between organizations and individuals on the web. Shembilu (2013) opined that web 2.0 technology and its associated social networks have brought tremendous effects to the global world, and the effect has reached the educational settings due to online increasing activities. He viewed the new ways of learning to have started to attract the ongoing debate for inclusion of web 2.0 technologies into pedagogy.

The effects of these social media tools such as Blogs, Wikis, Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, Moodle, RSS feeds and other related social networking tools as tools for formal and informal education, is vividly seen, the educators all over the World are keen to implement them into educational practices. Social media and its technological development with the accessibility to information resources online, learning and research changed its direction positively as new challenges and innovation

comes, as academic libraries strove hard for survival and seeking to use the social media potentials to the fullest. Buzzetto-More(2012) observed that the use of social networks to supplement teaching and learning in both online and traditional classroom learning environments is effective, generation of students in higher education are digital natives who have been raised in a techno-centric world where omnipresent technologies play an integral role in human life as new innovations are quickly assimilated and absorbed.

Haipinge (2013) opine social media as the technologies that are mostly relevant to students' usage with its potential role of supporting learning in academic contexts; and there are increasing numbers of new social media tools entering the information market. Facebook and twitter are among the most

popular use social media tools that connect people of common interest or idea; and Ofili and Emwanta (2014) viewed „the most popular social media services are facebook, twitter and other private owned social networking services. Facebook and twitter are social media that are free cloudbased technology service software and hardware that help the reference librarian in discharging their reference service work electronically as library patron apply computers or other social media technology service to transact with staff and students without being present (Macloughlin and Benn, 2014).

Facebook is the most popularly used social networking website among the social networking services in the universe and the second most acceptable site on the web (Alexa, 2013).

It expand and dominate the social networking environment and intended to make the world more opened and connected, Also it enable the users to create profiles that allows the user-operated profiles to communicate with one another by allowing the expression of interests and build connections by inviting others to join the community (Ofili and Uzoputa, 2014).

Facebook is one of the alternative means for shy students to be able to voice their thoughts in and outside of the classroom. It allows students to collect their thoughts and articulate them in writing before committing to their expression. Also, the level of informality typical to Facebook can also aid students in self-expression and encourage more frequent student-and-instructor and student interaction within the same time, Towner and Munoz noted that this informality may actually drive many educators and students away from using Facebook for educational purposes.

Facebook represents a potentially useful tool in educational contexts, as Alhabash and Park (2010) cited Facebook as a technological phenomenon of interest for academics to explore the processes and effective information communication technological networking.

Social networking refers to the process of building relationship within a group of common interest, and its important aspect that improved the services of library profession in Nigeria (Surawara et al,

2011). Capron and Johnson (2004) views social media as an aspect of internet that consists of millions of smaller domestic, and academic interconnected networks that can carry out different information services, such as electronic mail, online chatting, file transferring and other documents. Social networking product and services today has revolutionized how people interact and disseminate

relevant information. Watts (2001) supported social networking to have the capacity of serving individual who find it difficult to visit information centre or attend classes due to their geographical remote areas, home or occupation.

Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) observed the benefits of social networking to have boosted librarianship with the use of Facebook groups as Library forum and its purpose of gathering, exchanging and sharing ideas among members. With the growth and use of social media tools like Whatsapp, Facebook and Twitter, Libraries commonly use them to interact and disseminate the information needs of Library patron by linking other information resources. Social media is a group of internet- based applications that build on the ideology of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and dissemination of information, ideas and pictures in paperless society, Selwyn also cited (Ulbrich et al.2011,and Eysenbach, 2009) to assert how speedily these Net generation are in networking, as members work collaboratively to execute several tasks on how to use the web to acquire knowledge. Students of this Net generation take advantage of web differently as they think differently, learn differently and network differently. When they start at university, traditional values on how to develop knowledge collide with their values. The greater changes in the communication landscape are brought about by participative Internet use and social media, it is important to develop a better understanding of these technologies and their impact on librarianship. These could be done by identifying the characteristics of current social media users and up-to-date report of current social media use will help to monitor the growth of social media.

In order to develop learning communities with increased student engagement, librarians are increasingly adopting social media tools to disseminate information to their end users. Zaidieh.(2012) opined Social Networking to have become very popular trend during the past few years, and it plays an important role in our academic communities.

Bridgland and Blanchard (2001) view ICTs and its communication gadgets to have come faster and easily accessible on campus, homes and any learning centre. They facilitate effective information transfer and are accessible through various devices. Eskay and Chima (2013) supported this by asserting the advancement of information communication technologies, information is now available in various formats that can be accessible through different media.

The advancement in technology brings major impacts on education (Underwood 2003). Also Adetoro (2010) asserts the changing nature of internet usage to have doubled in the recent years, as the internet is widely accessible network of interconnected computer networks that transmit data using the standard internet protocol. Instructors are being requested to make their teaching materials and other supporting resources accessible through the internet (Lee, 2001 and Topper, 2002). Students are engaged to communicate with instructors, or with one another, via social media. However, the social media through the use of internet facilities has become a major academic instrument for individuals and services. Wahid, Furuholt and Kristiansen (2006) affirmed internet users with good computer skills and experience tend to utilize social media tools for work than those that are not. Ajuwon (2003) reported positive increase in the use of social media especially among African students. As universities education promotes internet use, they need to understand their students' attitudes towards using its facilities.

The use of social media has made interconnection of millions of people to interact together with its web-based technologies through which individual create a platform which people can share and modify user-generated information. Fors and Moreno (2002) asserted that information communication technologies enable information to circulate and store at a greater speed with a lower cost. Social media technologies are of different forms including, internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, wikis, social networks, podcasts, photographs and social bookmarking to mention but few. Social network aggregation can integrate many of the platforms in use, by connecting students through networking to become imperative education sector because it will not only boost their academic productivity, but also connect them to both local and global communities who could partner and share with their information. Many social media sites provide the functions that help users to reshare information contents, example includes Twitter's retweet button, pinterest pin or Tumblrs' reblog function to mention but a few Librarians may have a particular interest in viral marketing. Internet usages have positively influenced the use of social media website by students and enhance effective communication with lecturers and students by increasing accessibility to information materials (Jones and Madden, 2002)

Social networking could be the pivotal factor for promoting the participation and empowerment of poor and marginalized groups, as they can be used for communication and information sharing by such groups to access information resources and services (Zawada et al.,2007). Social Media Technology has provided a virtual landscape element of a community as we understood and experienced it prior to the existence of such technologies.

Social media technologies connect people together in ways that resemble traditional feelings of connection, belonging, intellectual ideas, exchange of feelings, and the reporting of experiences and actions. Shirky (2010) viewed Social Media Technology to have suddenly lowered the costs of collaborating, sharing and making available new forms of interaction and problem-solving. Social media technology refers to web-based applications which enable individuals or organizations to create, connect and share user-generated information resources in digital forms through multi-way communication that enable social interaction (Deil-Amen, et..al, 2012). Social Media are technology which has a platform of design elements that create virtual social features which encourage interconnectivity with the appeal of the technology that promote transitions of information. Ellison and Boyd (2007) opined that social network sites are web-based services that enable individuals or organization to construct profiles, display user connections, search and traverse within the list of connections. The overall range of social media network acknowledged above share the innate ability to allow social networking through dialogue and provide the chance of discovering and sharing new information (Solis, 2008). Odell and Schumacher, (2001) observed social media to have positively improved studying periods as researchers needs to have personal contact with the library before accessing the necessary information through internet.

### **Use of Social Media in Academic Library**

The emergence of social media technology has provided significant opportunities for academic libraries to expand their product and services, as technologies are now embedded with library services and almost all academic libraries across the globe provide digital enquiry services (Macloughlin and Benn, 2014). The worldwide service provided by the internet with over five million websites allow students from all disciplines to source for relevant information; as Wagner (1998) opined social media as a forum that promote group discussion which is time and distance independent. Busari (2001) sees the internet as a medium through which lecturers and students can meet without seeing each other. Students can also learn through teleconferencing whereby the use of small video camera and microphone members of the group can actually see and hear each other.

Instructors have long since considered the introduction of novel technologies into the classroom in order to stimulate student interest, focusing attention and fostering learning (Palloff & Pratt, 1999). Indeed, the advent of the internet in recent years has brought with it new possibilities for instructors to creatively deliver effective course instructions to students (Carswell, et.al, 2000). Martins and Tailor (1997) regarded a virtual classroom as the next step in the development of educational technology. Educational networks are networks that are popularly accessed by students for academic collaboration, and student interaction with each other through blogs and classroom forums.

Research has shown that students seem positive about the Internet and its impact on their educational experience. The study revealed that majority of university students have a positive attitude toward the Internet and its communication tools such as social media. They are comfortable with Internet communication. The report finding indicated student enjoyment while using it for academic and personal reasons. Their Internet habits are split between academic and social uses, and they find it functional for both purposes. An overwhelming number of students feel that Internet communication has positively enhanced their college academic experience. Social media tools are veritable for Librarian as Tella (2007) explained the correlation between the students' perception that their effort that leads to good grades and their perception that Internet helps with academic work is weak but statistically significant.

Furthermore, social media allows students to seek for questions that they might not have the opportunity to visit the lecturer in person during office hours to ask. Graham, Faix and Hartman (2009) viewed facebook as a communication tools that publicise academic information services. O'Dell (2010) opined facebook as a social networking sites that provide an innovative and effective way of connecting library patron based on the network ideology. It has dominated the social networking site arena to function as marketing tools for information product and services. Twitter also promotes social connections among students. It can be used to enhance communication building and critical thinking. Domizi (2013) utilized Twitter in a graduate seminar requiring students to post weekly tweets to extend classroom discussions. Students reportedly used Twitter to connect with content and other students. Additionally, students found it "to be useful professionally and personally" Junco, Heibergert, and Loken (2011) completed a study of 132 students to examine the link between social media and student engagement and social media and grades. They divided the students into two groups, one used Twitter and the other did not. Twitter was used to discuss material, organize study groups, post class announcements, and connect with classmates. Junco and his colleagues (2011) found that the students in the Twitter group had higher GPAs and greater engagement scores than the control group. Gao, Luo, and Zhang (2012) reviewed literature about Twitter published between 2008 and 2011. They concluded that Twitter allowed students to participate with each other in class, and extend discussion outside the class.

### **Problem of the study**

The study examines Library Patrons' usage of social media in a Nigerian University library, Nigeria. Even though many University students pride themselves as being computer literate, the fact remains that some are yet to know how to explore the internet maximally. Irrespective of their status, the need for them to exploit the social media for one purpose or the other cannot be overemphasized. Against this backdrop, the researcher wishes to establish that meeting the information needs of library patron through face to face contact, is cumbersome for both parties (librarian and students) because library patrons' may not be able to physical

visit the library, considering time, distance and financial cost that is spent in meeting up with the appointment. Hence there is need to reduce the stress created by both parties

### **Significance of the Study**

The present era of information explosion, library services are becoming more Web-centred many libraries have changed their outlook towards the use of information communication technology tools and services as the world is rapidly changing to an electronic one. The researcher decided to investigate the Library Patrons' Usage of Social media in a academic institution.

### **Objective of the Study**

1. To examine what extent does Library Patrons' usage of social media vary on account  
of academic and social purposes
2. To examine the frequency of Library Patrons' usage of social media?
3. To examine what are the benefits in Library Patrons' usage of social media?

### **Research Question**

1. To what extent does Library Patrons use social media vary on account of academic and social purposes
2. To what extent are the frequency in use of social media by Library Patrons?
3. What are the benefits of using social media by Library Patrons?

## **METHODOLOGY**

Purposive sampling technique was used to select FUTA which is the oldest University in the State. While the simple random sampling technique was used to select three faculties in the University and the availability sampling technique was used to select 238 student

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study is an analysis of library Patrons' usage of social media in a Nigerian University library. The findings of the study were discussed under the following

subheadings : questionnaire administration and return rate, demographic variables of the respondents, research questions and discussion of findings.

A total of two hundred and thirty-eight (238) copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents in three selected schools in the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria. Two hundred and seven (207) copies were duly filled and returned giving a response rate of 87.0%.

**Table 1: Questionnaire Administration and Return Rate**

	<b>Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ondo State</b>			
	<b>Questionnaire Administered</b>		<b>Questionnaire Returned</b>	
School of Sciences	73	30.7	63	26.5
School of Engineering	80	33.6	70	29.4
School of Agricultural Sc.	85	35.7	74	31.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>87.0</b>

### Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The findings revealed the demographic characteristics of the respondents which comprise their schools (faculties), level, gender, and age. Table 2 also revealed that the largest number of respondents was 74 (35.9%) which were from the School of Agricultural Science, followed by the school of engineering with 70 (33.7%) and the least 63(30.7%) were from School of Sciences.

On the gender side, Table 2 revealed that the largest number of the respondents (59.9%) were female while the rest (40.1%) were male.

The age distributions of the respondent shows that, the largest number of respondents (59) were between the ages of 16-20 years category while the least were students between the ages of 21-25 (21.3%). also the highest percentage of 69.9 of respondents were single while the least 30.4 were married.



**Table 2: Demographic Data of Respondents**

Variables	No	%
School of Sciences	63	30.4
School of Engineering	70	33.7
Gender Male	83	40.1
Female	124	59.9
Marital Status Single	144	69.9
Married	63	30.4
Age (years) 16 - 20	109	52.7
21 – 25	44	21.3
<b>N = 207</b>		

**Research Question One: What are the types of social media that are available for use by the students**

The scales used in measuring the availability of social media in use were; Very Readily Available, Readily Available, Not Readily Available and Not Available, but for the purpose of writing the result, Very Readily Available and Readily Available were merged to become Readily Available so the scales used were Readily Available, Not Readily Available and Not Available. Table 3 revealed that the largest number of respondents indicated internet 36 (17.4%) as the Whatsapp resources that was readily available to the respondents while Blogs 8(3.9%) was the least (not readily available) social media resources.

**Table 3: Availability of Social Media**

Social	Schools(Faculties)	VRA		RA		NRA		NA	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Blogs	School of Sciences	17	8.2	21	10.1	11	5.3	8	3.9
	School of Engineering	19	9.2	25	12.1	13	6.3	11	5.3

You tube	School of sciences	17	8.2	21	10.1	8	3.8	8	3.9
	School of Engineering	20	9.7	25	12.1	12	5.8	11	5.3
Wiki	School of sciences	16	10.2	20	9.6	11	5.3	12	5.7
	School of Engineering	18	8.7	23	11.1	12	5.9	15	7.3
Twitter	School of Sciences	20	9.6	20	9.7	11	5.3	8	3.8
	School of Engineering	23	11.1	21	10.1	12	5.9	12	5.8

Facebook	School of Sciences	20	9.7	19	9.2	10	4.8	11	5.3
	School of Engineering	21	10.1	22	10.6	11	5.3	14	6.8
WhatsApp	School of sciences	30	14.5	11	5.3	10	4.8	9	4.4
	Schl.of Engineering	33	15.9	14	6.8	11	5.3	10	4.8

**Research Question Two:** To what extent does Library Patrons' usage of social media vary on account of academic and social purposes?

Table 4 revealed different purpose(s) of using social media tools by respondents. The largest number of respondents indicated that Whatsapp which is an instant messaging platform 61(29.5%) was the main social media used by the respondents, followed by Electronic mail with 53(25.6%) and others who use the said social media site for academic purposes. YouTube with 13(6.3%) was the least use social media tools by the respondents..

**Table 4: Purpose for use of social media**

Purpose	SCHOOLS						Total	
	Sciences		Engineering		Agric-Sc.		No.	
Instant messaging	17	8.2	20	9.7	24	11.6	61	29.5
Electronic mail (eg.	14	6.8	18	8.7	21	10.1	53	25.6

Collaborative projects(eg	8	3.9	11	5.3	14	6.7	33	15.9
Micro-blogging	6	2.9	9	4.3	12	5.8	27	13.0
Social networking sites (eg.	4	1.9	7	3.4	9	4.4	20	9.7
Content communities(eg	2	1.0	4	1.9	7	3.4	13	6.3
							<b>207</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Research Question Three: What is the level and frequency of use of Social media tools?**

**Table 5: Frequency use of social media**

Social			Twice a	Once a	Twice a	Once a	Occasional	Never		
tools		No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	%	%	
Blogs	Sciences	9	9	6	5	4	10	4.8	6	2.9
	Engineering	4.3	4.3	2.9	2.5	1.9	12	5.9	8	3.9
		12	12	9	9	7	15	7.2	11	5.3
	Agric-Sc,	5.9	5.8	4.3	4.3	3.4				
Twitter	Sciences	14	7	6	5	5	10	4.8	4	1.9
	Engineering	6.8	3.4	2.9	2.4	2.4	13	6.3	6	2.9
		17	10	9	8	7	15	7.2	9	4.3
	Agric-Sc,	8.2	4.8	4.4	3.9	3.4				

Wiki	Sciences	9	8	6	6	4	10	4.8	7	3.4
	Engineering	4.3	3.9	2.9	2.9	1.9	12	5.9	10	4.8
		12	10	9	8	8	15	7.2	13	6.3
	Agric-Sc,	5.9	4.8	4.3	3.9	3.9				
You tube	Sciences	12	7	8	10	4	10	4.8	5	2.4
	Engineering	5.8	3.4	3.9	4.8	2.0	13	6.3	8	3.9
		15	9	10	8	6	16	7.7	10	4.8
	Agric-Science	7.2	4.3	4.8	3.9	2.9				
Facebook	Sciences	16	6	6	4	4	8	3.9	8	3.9
	Engineering	7.8	2.9	2.9	1.9	2.0	11	5.3	11	5.3
		19	8	8	6	6	13	6.3	14	6.6
	Agric-Sc	9.2	3.9	3.9	2.9	2.9				
Whatsapp	Sciences	23	6	8	3	0	8	3.9	3	1.4
	Engineering	11.1	2.9	3.9	1.5	0	11	5.3	4	1.9
		27	8	11	7	0	14	6.6	7	3.4
	Agric-Sc	13.1	3.9	5.3	3.4	0				
		31	11	13	10	0				

Table 5 gives the summary of frequency of Social media usage by students. The parameter used was Daily, Twice a week, Once a week, Twice Monthly, Once a month, Occasionally and Never. The table revealed that the largest number of respondents indicated 31(15.9%) used social media daily while never was the least with 3(1.4%).

### Discussion of the Findings

The research was carried out in three selected faculties mostly called schools in the Federal University of Technology, Akure. The study revealed that majority of the respondent used whatsapp and facebook greatly among others, it was agreed that whatsapp create current

awareness on the happening in a countries, state and local areas. Umuntu Media (2013) cited the southern African experiences on local news web portal, it is a web company whose goal is to promote the creation of local web content and to enhance access to such content across Africa. This shows how social media has enable students not only access current web content globally but also access local information that is likely to be useful to their academic context.

## Conclusion

The research was set to answer three research questions, and the findings show that all the questions were answered. The research results indicate that students" primarily use social media as a platform for social interaction and communication, and the findings also indicated that students predominantly use social networking sites for social purposes, particularly Whatsapp and Facebook. The respondent conceptions are closely related to the way they use social media. Graham, Faix and Hartman (2009) viewed facebook as a communication tools that publicize academic information services.

The findings revealed that critical social media literacy is needed to help students to critically deal with the large amounts of information they interact with by sharing its content on social media. The insights provided by the research findings will be useful in informing discussions on the appropriation of social media in education in Nigeria.

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