

ASSESSMENT OF CHANNELS FOR DISSEMINATING ADMISSION INFORMATION TO STUDENT APPLICANTS IN AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA

By

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Abstract

This study assessed the channels for disseminating admission information to student applicants to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Three objectives of this study include: to identify the types of information are disseminated to Student Applicants to the Department of Library and Information Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. To identify the Channels are used by the Department of Library and Information Science in disseminating information to Student Applicants. To find out the challenges associated with information dissemination to Student Applicants to the Department of Library and Information Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Two hundred and twenty undergraduate students were sampled for the study, but only one hundred and ninety-four questionnaires were deemed fit and appropriate for analysis. The study discovered that Entry requirements and Undergraduate programmes available in the department were the types of information that is disseminated by the department. However, information about sales of forms and jamb subject combinations are disseminated by Jamb office. Similarly, the study revealed that the channel of information dissemination in the Department of Library and Information science is the departmental website. The study then recommended that the departments in the university should be put in charge of admission information dissemination for their respective departments. This is because they know best the requirements of their respective departments and the information that student applicants need. And that A multi-channel digital call centre should be provided for all departments that will house a digital help desk. This centre will incorporate telephone, email, social media (WhatsApp Group, Face book Fan page, Twitter Handle and Instagram pages) for the department. This is so that student applicants can contact the department without having to come to Zaria.

Introduction

Admission processes into universities all over the world is tedious and time consuming (Butt, Anjum &Rehman, 2016). This is because students have to travel long distances to purchase, fill out and submit forms to these universities. The information disseminated strategies used by these universities to provide admission information through their websites, newspapers and other social media networking sites (Apata and Ogunrewa, 2010; Butt, Anjum &Rehman, 2016) are not frequently not efficient. The information is not frequently updated, most times the information provided is incomplete and because of the limited access to Internet by these student applicants the information is insufficient.

One factor upon which the efficiency of any information dissemination strategy is dependent on is the information dissemination channel (Edwards,1991). It involves tailoring the message

content of the information to be disseminated to the targeted audience and through a channel that is going to be useful to the audience in terms of decision making (Canadian Health Services Foundation, 2003). Another factor that impacts on the appropriateness of any information dissemination strategy is the diversity of information channels through which individuals are conversant with and use. The channel that is appropriate for general information might not be appropriate for other forms of information (Edwards, 1991). Similarly, the information channel that works for a particular audience might not work for other audience. There is therefore the need to disseminate information in all the available channels of information that is at the disposal of universities.

Therefore, for universities to adequately disseminate admission information to their student applicants, there is the need to assess the information dissemination channels that is already in place for such purposes. Specifically, there is the need to investigate the type of information that the student applicants need, the channel of information dissemination used by the universities, and the challenges associated with information dissemination to student applicants.

Statement of the Problem

University admission is the process through which students enter tertiary education at universities and colleges. Systems vary widely from country to country, and sometimes from institution to institution. In many countries, prospective university students apply for admission during their last year of high school or community college. In some countries, there are independent organizations or government agencies to centralize the administration of standardized admission exams and the processing of applications.

In Nigeria however, Admissions into Universities are done by respective universities. They advertise their admissions to prospective student applicants and the students on the other hand apply to these universities. But this period and the process of admissions are expensive and harassing as applicants have to travel long distances to purchase, fill and submit forms along with relevant documents to different Universities. In terms of providing admission information, universities would engage in out of date procedures and the poor management of admission process by not updating information on their channels of information dissemination and most times the information disseminated are incomplete.

Despite the provision of admission information on the channels of information dissemination, student applicants find it very tedious accessing and using admissions information and they still have

to travel long distances in search of information. This opens them up to unscrupulous elements that end up duping and misinforming them.

In order to effectively disseminate admission information to student applicants, there is the need to investigate the channels of information dissemination put in place for such purpose. Specifically, this study will investigate the channels of information dissemination in Ahmadu Bello University.

Objectives of the study

This study is premised on the following objectives which are to:

1. Identify the types of information disseminated to Student Applicants in the Department of Library and Information Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
2. Identify the Channels used by the Department of Library and Information Science in disseminating admission information to Student Applicants.
3. Determine the challenges associated with information dissemination to Student Applicants to the Department of Library and Information Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Literature Review

A study conducted in five Universities in Lahore, Pakistan by Butt, Anjum and Rehman (2016) titled “Development of Information dissemination platform by integrating Web and Android technologies” examined the process of accessing admission information from different universities. A multi-method technique was employed by combining surveys with experiment. A pre-experiment survey was conducted with the university students for need analysis and also to generate themes for the designed application. The post-experiment survey was employed to evaluate the usability of the developed application. By using both technologies, the proposed platform complements the limitation of individual technology and help users having access to these technologies. The problems highlighted by respondents regarding admission system in pre-experiment survey included; 1) the information about admission process provided on university websites or by the administration office was incomplete or unclear that caused prospective students to make mistakes in their admission forms. 2) Due to incomplete information of admission process prospective students had to travel back and forth between cities to have their documents completed and submitted. 3) Had to wait in long queues in universities days leading to the admission deadline. This caused prospective students to stay away from home town for days and to pay additional expenses for accommodation. The key

findings of this study highlighted two major issues 1) Delayed information about opening and closing dates of admission in different universities made students either to enroll in an institution which was not their first preference or failed to secure admission at all. 2) The admission process varied in different universities and it was hard to acquire details about the whole procedure. Since the applicants belonged to various regions in Pakistan therefore, they were not well aware of the location of the university and the city itself. They found it difficult to locate universities which were spread across the city including transportation system. Further, these visits to universities caused additional financial load which included not only traveling but also staying in the city until the procedure was completed. Therefore, in this research, an integrated admission news system using Android and Web technologies was proposed and tested. The post-experiment survey responses showed that more than 80% users found system effective, efficient, easy to use and memorize.

Similarly, in a study of Poultry farmers' in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Umuahia, Nigeria, Oyeneke, Solomon-Uwakwe and Azubogu (2016) discussed how the dissemination of information through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can enhance access to agricultural information needed for promoting poultry farming in Nigeria. Primary data was collected through interviews and questionnaire. Interviews were used to collect data from the farmer. A total of twenty-six (26) randomly selected poultry farmers were sampled and interviews conducted on them. Questionnaire was used to collect data from twenty (20) University library staff. Observation technique was used to collect data at the tele-centre. Documentary review of some previous studies on ICTs and agricultural information in Nigeria was done for secondary data collection. For the data analysis, simple descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentage were used. Findings of the study show that computers/internet, radio, television, and mobile phones have potentials of meeting the information needs of poultry farmers in Nigeria if they are used effectively. Findings show further that radio and television adverts and jingles are most suitable for all categories of poultry farmers in their information sourcing. Mobile phones and television are the most preferred and used communication channels amongst the farmers while the educated amongst them prefer using computers and internet. Moreover, some of the ICT applications such as short messaging services and calls were also used by the farmers. Based on these findings, the researcher recommends that Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, Umuahia, Nigeria should: (i) provide adequate ICT facilities to create more avenues and platforms for poultry farmers to source and satisfy their agricultural information needs; (ii) the tele-centre at the

University should be expanded and more facilities provided to accommodate more farmers; (iii) the University should increase their internet bandwidth for better and improved internet connectivity.

In order for information to be disseminated effectively, channels of information must be chosen carefully. One major component of every communication system is the channel through which information in form of messages and signals pass from the sender to the receiver. In every information dissemination strategy, the channel is the most important element after the audience and the information.

In a study that examined the channels of information dissemination among rural dwellers in Nigeria by Omogor (2013), the channels for information acquisition and dissemination and the constraints associated with these activities were investigated. Data were collected from documents to include books, journals, magazines, newspapers and internet. The study found from the contributions of various authors that there are different methods of information acquisition and dissemination for rural dwellers. The evidence of various developmental programmes is not shown in the lives of rural people despite many programmes. There is lack of successful transfer of developmental information to rural areas. The channels of information communication that are currently used by various agents to disseminate information to rural dwellers are elitist and urban-centred therefore tend to further widen the information gap between the agents and the users. There is need for proper classification of information and assessment of information acquisition and dissemination channels to bridge the gap between information providers and information agents and rural dwellers.

Chowdhury and Halder (2016) carried out another study that stressed the place of channels in information dissemination. The study investigated educational information dissemination through newspaper daily and its role in educational guidance. 28 days of circulations of the newspaper The Telegraph (Calcutta Edition), including the routine publication and all the supplements (Metro, T2, Sunday, Graphiti, Telekids and Career Graph) published during the month of February, 2013, constituted the sample for the present investigation. To collect the data content analysis method was used and a General Information Schedule (GIS) was developed for the research purpose. The data were analyzed using both Chi-Square and Percentage technique. Data analysis showed that the amount of both Non-Educational News and Non-Educational Ads were higher in percentage than Educational News and Educational Ads respectively. The amount of coverage of Educational News and Educational Ads also significantly differed and the latter was much higher in amount than the

former. Further, the coverage given to different categories of educational news items also not equal or near to equal. The research concluded that The Telegraph (Calcutta Edition) is providing only a partial and unstructured educational guidance to the students which are neither comprehensive, nor regular.

In another study of rural dwellers in Nigeria, conducted by Daudu and Mohammed (2013), the channels available and used for information dissemination to rural people was examined. Descriptive research method was used and questionnaire was used to collect data. The study revealed that the channels used for information dissemination to rural dwellers was inadequate and the study suggested the establishment of a community information Centre and the public library should use these information centers to disseminate information to the rural communities in Kaduna State.

The study by Uzezi (2015) that examined challenges facing rural dwellers in Niger Delta associated with information dissemination. Information users in rural communities comprise of farmers, literate, young school leavers, school dropout, etc. Nwafor (1986) in Ogunrombi and Amadasun (2009) stated that rural are mostly illiterates and they constitute about 70% of the Nigerian people and also form the economy mainstay of the country. Apart from the problems of little or no education, no good access roads, no electricity, no pipe borne water, industries and other social amenities common in the rural communities, the rural communities are faced with a lot of challenges that hindered information dissemination. The economic commission of African as Zijp (1994) showed that lack of data was a significant constraint in the planning and management of rural development. The following challenges were identified:

- a. Rural population have differences in getting important information in a timely and an appropriate format such as current market price, news on modern methods of pests control.
- b. Most information dissemination to rural communities is in written form, which makes it difficult to access by those with low or no literacy skills.
- c. Rural communities and organizations have difficulties sharing information and experience among themselves beyond face to face contact.
- d. Extension agents have little access to information about the population they are to serve and like or no access to current information from research findings, while researchers have poor access to up-to date information from the extension agents.

- e. Government officials make plan and decision on the basis of inadequate information and have inadequate financial control and monitoring capabilities.
- f. Rural dwellers are also faced with inadequate provision of quality communication services which is a major barrier to rural development.
- g. Lack of public libraries in rural communities.

While all the studies reviewed in this section centred on the themes of this study, only one study directly related to this study. However, this study was conducted in Pakistan. This study is unique in the sense that it was conducted in the context of Admission information in the Department of Library and Information Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Research Methodology

Quantitative Research Methodology was adopted. Quantitative Research Methodology involves the collection of numeric data to answer the research questions raised for a study. The Longitudinal Survey Research design was adopted for this study. In longitudinal survey, data collection is over time in order to observe changes at different times (Kumar, 2005). This design is deemed appropriate for this study because it will observe channels of information dissemination used in the Department of Library and Information Science over the admission period in the university. The Population of this study is the Undergraduate students of the Department of Library and Information Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The number stands at 1098 (MIS, 2019). A sample of 220 new students were randomly selected for this study. This is because they just got admitted and their experiences are still fresh. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection.

Data Analysis

This section analyses and discusses data collected for this study in line with the objectives of this study.

Table 1: Types of Admission Information that is disseminated to student Applicants

S/N	Types of Admission Information	Disseminated	Not disseminated
1	Entry requirements	180(92.78%)	14(7.22%)
2	Undergraduate programmes available in the department	102(52.58%)	92(47.42%)
3	Information about sales of forms	34(17.53%)	160(82.47%)
4	Jamb subject combinations	20(10.31%)	174(89.69%)

From the table it could be seen that all the types of admission information are relevant for the admission process. It is not surprising that information on the sales of forms and Jamb subject combinations were indicated as not disseminated. This is because those types of information are disseminated by the Jamb office. Also because of the complexity of the admission process, coupled with the different types of information require for the task, it becomes imperative that many channels of dissemination and sources of information should be provided. This is in line with the tenants of the information activities in work tasks theory that was developed by Bystrom (Bystrom and Jarvelin, 1995, Bystrom and Hansen, 2002). The theory stipulates that task complexity determines the types of information needed and the sources/channels to be used in completing the task. The more information is needed the more the channels to consults.

Table 2: Channels used in disseminating Admission information

S/No	Channels	Used	Not Used
1	Departmental website	174 (89.69%)	20 (10.31%)
2	University Website	187 (96.40%)	7 (3.60%)
3	Newspapers	12 (6.19%)	182 (93.81%)
4	E-mails	94 (48.45%)	100 (51.55%)
5	Radio and Television	4 (2.06)	190 (97.94)
6	Social Media	2 (1.03%)	192 (98.97%)
7	SMS	4 (2.06)	190 (97.94)
8	Notice board	12 (6.19%)	182 (93.81%)
9	Electronic Billboard	10 (5.15%)	184 (94.85%)

Table 2 shows the channels used for admission information dissemination in the department of library and information science. Surprisingly, the table shows the department does not use social media to disseminate admission information. They equally do not use Short message services. This explains why students suffer looking for admission information. The importance of social media in the dissemination of information has been widely reported. Similarly, the attachment of the 21st century information seeker on social media are pointers to the state of affair in the department. For users to be aware of information, the right channel must be provided. This is in line with the submissions by Bank (2015) and Dwivedi and Pandey (2013) about the importance of social media as a channel of communication in tourism business and in public awareness.

Table 3: Challenges of information dissemination by the department of library and information science.

S/No	Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
1	Lack of feedback mechanism	45	23.20
2	Lack of technical knowhow of Channels	25	12.88
3	Preference of face-to-face	100	51.55
4	Lack of staff to manage the channel	24	12.37
	Total	194	100

From the table, it can be seen that challenges that bedevil information dissemination are basically the preference of face-to-face communication. This is closely followed by lack of feedback mechanism, lack of staff to manage channels and lack of knowhow of channels. All these points to the fact that multiple channels should be used in disseminating admission information.

Summary of the Major Findings

The following are the findings of this study:

1. The study revealed that Entry requirements and Undergraduate programmes available in the department were the types of information that is disseminated by the department. However, information about sales of forms and jamb subject combinations are disseminated by Jamb office.
2. The study also discovered that the channel of information dissemination in the Department of Library and Information science is the departmental website.
3. The study also discovered that the challenges associated with admission information dissemination include: preference of face-to-face communication. This is closely followed by lack of feedback mechanism, lack of staff to manage channels and lack of knowhow of channels.

Conclusion

Based the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Entry requirements and Undergraduate programmes available in the department were the types of information that is

disseminated to student applicants by the department. Also the departmental website is the only channel used by the department in disseminating admission information. Similarly, information disseminated by the department satisfies some of the admission information needs of student applicants. Finally, it can be concluded that preference of face-to-face communication, lack of feedback mechanism, lack of staff to manage channels and lack of knowhow of channels are the challenges associated with information dissemination to student applicants in the department of library and information science.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were proffered based on the findings of this study:

1. The departments in the university should be put in charge of admission information dissemination for their respective departments. This is because they know best the requirements of their respective departments and the information that student applicants need.
2. A multi-channel digital call centre should be provided for all departments that will house a digital help desk. This centre will incorporate telephone, email, social media (WhatsApp Group, Face book Fan page, Twitter Handle and Instagram pages) for the department. This is so that student applicants can contact the department without having to come to Zaria.
3. Departments in the university should employ or dedicate a member of staff to take charge of this centre.

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