

Use of Mobile Phones for Research Among Undergraduates in Two Polytechnic Libraries in Imo State, Nigeria.
by

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Abstract

The study is titled 'Use of Mobile Phones for Research among Undergraduates in two Polytechnic Libraries in Nigeria. The study seeks to establish if students who make use of the polytechnic libraries studied do use their mobile phones for research purposes, their reasons for preferring to use their mobile phones to traditional/conventional information resources as well as the constraints they encountered when accessing information. The survey method was adopted in data collection. The validated questionnaire were administered to the respondents within a period of week. Findings show that undergraduate students who use the polytechnic libraries studied make use of their mobile phones for research occasionally. It was revealed that lack of current/ relevant resources in libraries, saving of time and cost of travelling to other libraries for research, low level of satisfaction derived from available resources as well as lack of internet facilities in libraries are reasons why they make use of mobile phones for research. Also, high cost of downloading online resources, incompatibility of software/format of online resources as well as insecurity of sites which causes damages to the phones were identified as constraints students encountered when using mobile phones. The following were recommended in line with the findings of the study: use of anti-virus software, installation of internet facility in libraries, use of compatible phones/ software, saving of downloaded resources as well as use of mobile phones that are user friendly. The bottom-line of the paper is that the use of mobile phones has helped to improve students' access to current and reliable information resources in tertiary institutions.

Introduction

Research is an integral component of higher education. Research from a broad perspective can be viewed as a process of finding out, searching for a solution to a problem (Mbakwem, 2005). It is an objective, systematic, controlled and critical activity, planned and directed towards discovery and development of dependable knowledge (Nenty, 1992). Research therefore, is a systematic way of identifying problematic situation followed by a careful collection of data in order to solve problems (Ebubechukwu, 2002). Students in polytechnics are expected to carry out research as part of the requirements for graduation. Conventionally, students visit libraries and information centres to source for materials relating to their area of interest, however with the advent of information and communication technology, it is not out of place to see students going to the library with mobile phones.

Mobile phones have become a necessity for undergraduates in Nigerian polytechnics as it not only to serve as communication aid but is now being utilized in carrying out research and students now used their mobile phones to download information resources relating to their area of study. The academic environment is going through unprecedented changes. The society is experiencing the inevitable wind of information technology (IT), the academic library has not been left out in this regard. As rightly pointed out by Machovec (2011), libraries are going through substantive changes with the advent of the internet, computer technology, social networking and changing publishing patterns. The historic library roles of acquiring, organizing preserving and distribution of printed materials is now changing in the digital world. The world, as noted by Onu (2004) occasionally experiences technological revolutions which

change the way people live, interact, communicate, seek operational information, and generally do business with each other. Today, student approach has change dramatically, everyone is looking for the fastest, cheapest possible means of accessing information; this apparently supports the views of Antherjanam & Sheeja (2008), who see information as dynamic and unending resources that affect all disciplines and walks of life.

There is an increasing interest in the use of mobile phones among students in tertiary institutions. Mobile phones have changed students approach to information. The use of mobile phones for educational purposes has increased over the years. Naturally, most students become so attached to their mobile phones that denying them access to it is like denying them of life itself. Mobile phones have become increasingly more powerful and is now adapted to multiple uses. Mobile phones or cell phones are wireless portable, short range electronic devices used for mobile voice and data communication. Mobile phones, according to Iwhiwu, Ruteyan & Eghwubare (2010) have revolutionized the daily lives of ordinary people. The use of mobile browsing is becoming very popular among our students in tertiary institutions. Today, most students connect to internet and use a mobile browser, however, the application of mobile browsing is dependent on the phone, connection and speed.

Today, mobile phones have features that go far beyond text messaging and voice calls. They include internet browsing, music (MP3) playback, memo-recording, personal organizer functions, e-mail, bulletin, cameras, infra red and Bluetooth connectivity. However, the ability of the mobile phones to offer a range of applications

depends on the capability of individual mobile phones and the services available.

Literature Review

Various literatures relevant to study were reviewed. In Nigeria, according to Ugboma (2008), the deregulation of the telecommunication sector and advent of Global system of mobile communication (GSM) created a friendlier and purposeful telecommunication environment. There is no doubt that the mobile phones have made the life more easy and comfortable (Bedo, 2005). McNeal and Hooft (2006) argues that despite the global proliferation of cell phones, they have not been widely used in education, as many adults are still reluctant to allow the widespread access to the devices in formal educational settings.

The GSM and computers as noted by Kareem, Olaewe and Odeniyi (2008) as agencies of ICT form the backbone of modern day telecommunication in Nigeria, and the entire world at large and Obaro (2006) pointed out that mobile phone are very expensive to maintain, it eats deep into one's feeding money, also high tariff and poor services affect students' use of mobile phones. University libraries all over the world as pointed out by Utulu, Alonge and Emmanuel (2010) have been faced with challenges of meeting the growing needs of their users, more so when they are involved in Project Based learning (PBL) which is knowledge and technology- use taking and the result of their study provides university libraries with basic knowledge of how student's mobile phones can serve as alternatives for renationalizing the technology divide which has rocked Nigerian universities.

Iwhiwhu, Ruteyan and Eghwubare (2010) in their study revealed that DELSU library does not use mobile phones for library services as a result of lack of telecommunication infrastructure, high costs, problems with the technology, and lack of staff training and awareness. They further argue that since a majority of library users own a mobile phone, and incorporating it into library services will promote a good relationship between library users and staff and enhance library services, which will attract and retain users.

Objective of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:-

- i. To find out if students who make use of the Polytechnic library do use their mobile phones for research purposes.
- ii. To establish how long the students have been using their mobile phones for research.
- iii. To establish the frequency at which users of Polytechnic libraries make use of their mobile phones for research purposes.

- iv. To identify the reasons why students who make use of the polytechnic libraries prefer using their mobile phones to traditional print information sources.
- v. To determine if information resources accessed via mobile phone by students do meet their information needs as it relates to their academic pursuit.
- vi. To identify the constraints to effective use of mobile phone in research processes.

Research Methodology

The descriptive survey design was used in the study. The population of study comprised of National Diploma (NDII) and Higher National Diploma (II) students of 2011/2012 session were purposively selected within a period of one week. For each library studied. A total of two hundred (200) students were selected as sample size. Questionnaire was the instrument used of generating data for the study. The questionnaires were distributed and made handy to the students selected purposively in the libraries under study. Eighty-seven was retrieved from Federal Polytechnic Nekede. While seventy four (74) was retrieved from Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo, a total of 161 was retrieved from both institutions and used for the study. The generated data were analysed using frequency counts and percentages.

Data Analysis

The researcher sought to find out from the respondents if they make use of mobile phones for research. Their response are shown in table 1:

Table 1: Use of mobile phones for research

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	154	95.7
No	7	4.3
Total	161	100

From table 1, 154 (95.7%) of the participants make use of their mobile phones for research while 7(4.3%) do not use their mobile for research.

The frequency of use of mobile phone by the respondents was also sought for by the researcher and the responses of the respondents are shown in table 2.

Table 2: Frequency of use

Frequency of Use	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	25	16.2
Forth mighty	8	5.2
Occasionally	101	65.6
Rarely	20	13
Total	154	100

From table II, 25(16.2%) of the participant use their mobile phones for research on daily basis, 8(5.2%) use it fortnightly, with 101(65.6%) using their mobile phone occasionally while 20(13%) uses their mobile phones

rarely. Therefore, findings show that students in Polytechnic use their mobile phones for research occasionally.

Respondents were asked to indicate as many reasons is applicable that account for the respondents use of mobile phones for research is shown in table 3

Table 3: Reasons for using mobiles for research

Reasons for Use	Freq.	%
Lack of current/relevant resources in libraries	124	80.5
Non-challant attitude of library staff	93	60.4
Saves time/cost of travelling to libraries for research	102	66.2
Low level of satisfaction derived from available resources	18	11.7
Mobile phones gives access to current and up-to-date materials	150	97.4
Inaccessibility to available resources	83	54
Lack of Internet facility	154	100

N = 154

Table 3 above display reasons for students use of mobile phones for research in Polytechnic libraries, 124(80.5%) indicate that lack of current/relevant resources in libraries prompts them to use their mobile phones for research, 93(60.4%) sees non-challant attitude of library staff as a reason, 102(66.2%) affirmed use of mobile save time and cost of travelling to libraries for research, 18(11.7%) pointed low level of satisfaction derived from available resources as reason, 150(97.4%) indicates that use of mobile phone gives them access to current and up-to-date materials while 83(54%) see inaccessibility to available resources as reasons. 154(100%) confirmed lack of internet facility as reason for using mobile phones.

The researcher sought to find out if the information resources accessed via mobile phone for research meet the information needs of the respondents as it relates to their academic pursuit.

Table 4 : Information Needs of Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	139	95.7
No	15	9.3
Total	154	100

From table 4, 139(90.7%) affirmed that information resources accessed via mobile phone for research do meet their information needs as it relates to their academic pursuit, while 15(9.7%) stated otherwise. Therefore, findings clearly shows that use of mobile phones for research has enable students to satisfy their information needs.

Constraints encountered when using mobile phones for research by the respondents are indicated in table 5

Table 5: Constraints encountered when using mobile phones

Constraints Encountered	Freq.	%
High cost of downloading online resources	146	94.8
Incompatibility of software/format of online resources	129	83.8
Information resources are not easily spread like conventional books/text	135	87.7
Availability and disappearance of some sites	16	10.4
Inability to print directly from mobile phones	58	37.7
Insecurity of sites which causes damages to phones	150	97.4

From table 5 above, 146(94.8%) of the particulars sees high cost of downloading online resources as challenges, with 129(83.8%) opined that information resources are not easily spread like conventional books/text. 16(10.4%) see availability and disappearance of some sites as challenge, also 58(37.7%) of the participant are of the view that inability to print directly from mobile phones is a constraints, while 150(97.4%) contends that insecurity of site which causes damages to phones.

Findings therefore reveal that insecurity of sites, high cost of downloading online resources, incompatibility of software/format of online resources and inability to spread online resources like convectional books are the constraints encountered.

Conclusion

Use of mobile phones in research by students obviously produced significant benefits in their academic pursuits. The use of mobile phone enables students to have access to reliable and current information resources that are relevant to their academic pursuit. The use of mobile phones in research helps the students to bridge the gap that exist between the students and their course content. It is disheartening to note that Polytechnic libraries still exist without internet facility in their dispensation of ICT waves. The bottom line is that the use of mobile phone has helped to improved students access to current and reliable information resources in tertiary institution. However, inspite of the numerous benefits associated with use of mobile phones for research, certain factor also militates against students effective use of mobile phones research.

Recommendation

In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendations were put forwarded:

1. Installation of internet facility in libraries: managers of polytechnic libraries should ensure that internet facilities are available in their institutions libraries as this will help to ameliorate the problem of high cost of downloading experienced by libraries.
2. Use of compatible phones/software: Students should endeavour to make use mobile phones that are compatible software that can help them have a broad view of online resources.
3. Saving of downloaded resources: student should endeavour to save online resources downloaded in special folders as this will solve the problems of site disappearances.
5. Use of mobile phones that are user friendly: students should endeavour to make use of mobile phones that are user friendly as this will enable them to print online resources directly from their phones.

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