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Usefulness of Digital Library in the Acquisition of Communication Skills of Business Education Students for Coca Cola Products Dealership in South South Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the usefulness of digital library in the acquisition of communication skills by business education students for coca cola products dealership in South South Nigeria. The study was guided by one research question and a null hypothesis. The descriptive survey research design was adopted with a study population of 182 comprising 147 final year business education students and 35 Coca - Cola sales managers. This population also constituted the sample size. Instrument for data collection was the researchers' structured questionnaire that was validated by three experts. The reliability index of 0.79 was obtained using Pearsons Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Data were analysed using mean, improvement need index and the independent t-test statistic. Findings showed that digital library has greatly contributed to the acquisition of communication skills needed by business education students for Coca - Cola products dealership in South-South, Nigeria. Moreso, significant difference was found between the mean ratings of final year business education students and coca cola sales managers on the usefulness of digital library in the acquisition of communication skills for coca cola products dealership by the students. The study recommended based on the findings that more functional studios be put in place to accommodate diverse technological skills needed by graduates to efficiently and effectively function in the world of work.

Keywords: usefulness, digital libraries, communication skills, business education, coca cola

Introduction

It is generally acknowledged that knowledge is power. The acquisition of this power is made possible through access to right information mostly obtained in the library. The library is an organised entity, involving the collection of books and non-book materials used and maintained by a public body or a private individual and corporate bodies for human development. The library whether traditional or digital exhibits three roles in education namely,

rich information sharing, ideas maintenance and awareness creation to equip the individual. One distinctive feature of the library is to enhance the process of retrieving information of whatever type, form and size. Explaining the multifaceted nature of the library, Olori, Igbonekwu and Olori (2022) noted that it is not just a house or room where books are kept for use by those who wish to consult them, but could be accessed virtually. Library has assumed many forms such as traditional, automated, electronic, digital and virtual (Arms, 2000).

In traditional library, services are offered in the form of cataloguing, classifications, and referencing to users manually by librarians. In automated, services are almost same with the traditional but the introduction of automated and computational machines makes difference. In electronic, voluminous part of library services are done electronically, while digital attracts prompt response to users on several resources and services. In virtual, all resources, services and access to library are provided through web. This is also referred to as libraries without walls (Arms, 2000). The focus of the present study is on digital library considering the peculiarities associated with the geographical location of the study.

The use of digital library has given rise to new modes of organising the educational environment in societies. This library is the domain of research and practice with users belonging to diverse areas of works, mainly the computer, information and library science; publishing; the cultural heritage sector; and education (Calhoun, 2013). Beyond these areas of work, digital library has the potential to provide tremendous opportunities for developing nations, participating in worldwide affairs to enhance the living standard of the people (Owusu-Ansah, et al, 2019). Digital library therefore performs the role of a learning platform, learning space and a vital teaching resource. In addition to this role, the library blends the technology

alongside data sources for facilitating restricted access through the elimination of physical obstructions among resources.

As a strong part of encouraging the use of information, digital libraries sustain conservation in information recovery and deliverance for future comfort (Kanjilai, 2017). They are regarded as the most complex form of data systems that associate with the digital document preservation, distributed database management, hypertext, filtering, information retrieval, and selective dissemination of information (Khan, 2021). In meeting these highlighted areas, digital library is believed to serve various purposes. Deshpande (2018) identified some of the purposes as providing accuracy, flexible options, and trustworthiness within the library as well as information centres and making libraries for keeping rapidity with the current advancements. It is therefore not surprising that the orchestrated rise in unemployment among graduates in Nigeria may be attributed to inadequate access to contact valuable information for opportunities, hence, digital library for acquisition of effective communication skills becomes a proactive measure to address.

Agreeably, it is assumed that with proper information through digital library for effective communication skills over job opportunities for teeming graduates in search of white collar jobs in Nigeria and South-South zone in particular, the unemployment rate will be cushioned. Statistics showed that about 80% of the graduates find it difficult to get employment every year (Adejimola & Olufunilayo, (2009). Sad enough, the government can no longer provide these employment opportunities for these teeming youths (Elebe,2011). This invariably suggests that the higher the unemployment rate, the higher would be the poverty level and associated welfare challenges. Although, poverty is a multi-dimensional concept characterised by deprivation of needs and entitlement through lack of access to economic resources, social resources and

political participation, it is the deprivation in wellbeing which includes low income and inability to acquire the basic needs for survival with dignity (World Bank, 2011). Combating poverty therefore involves the creation, exposure and delivery of business ideas to individuals. The acquisition of business ideas is an educational process and training that helps individuals to be empowered while escaping poverty through the provision of skills and knowledge to raise their output, income and wealth.

Providing these skills and knowledge is the idea surrounding the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills for job creation and wealth. Job creation is the process of providing new jobs, especially for people who are unemployed, the process of providing own job or the process of making jobs available for others (Umar, 2011). From this author, it could be deduced that job creation is the practice of making ideal job opportunities open and available to every desiring member of the society. Similarly, entrepreneurship is the process where individuals become aware of business ownership as an option or viable alternative, develop ideas for business, learn the process of becoming an entrepreneur and undertake the initiation and development of business for gainful living. It is the willingness and ability of individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment, and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully (Nwafor, 2007).

To seek business opportunities, entrepreneurial skills are required by individuals for proficiency. These skills enable the individual to start, develop, finance and succeed in business enterprises (Adeyemo, 2009). While becoming self-reliance through a successful business enterprise, the individual acquires entrepreneurial skills to be creative, and innovative among others. These attributes further explain the presence of various entrepreneurial skills required for the intensification of business enterprise. One of such skills is communication. Communication

skill is an entrepreneurial skill concerned with the decoding and encoding of information. It is the ability to express oneself and understand others for ideas to be shared. This skill has the ability to transfer ones thoughts, ideas and information from the sender to the receiver to be understood effectively and efficiently (Rao,2007). This skill demands that the entrepreneurs in the present study are business education students are able to explain, discuss, sale and market their goods or services.

Communication is a process whereby information is enclosed in a package and channeled to a receiver via some media. The receiver then decodes the message and gives the sender feedback. Communication skills include being able to explain to others what their jobs involve; understand the needs of customers; actively listen to people and identify barriers to listening; communicate orally with various groups; conduct oral quality presentations; read and comprehend wide range of publications; effectively communicate with others using electronic communication and acknowledging difference of opinion (Yusuf & Adeoye, 2012). The authors added that communication skills include being open minded, projecting oneself into the audience point of view, explaining objectively without evaluation, providing specific details supporting by concrete examples, encouraging the speaker to speak more, sharing ones feeling and thoughts, interpreting electrical diagram verbally, conveying to others a message without commanding, interacting and communicating with various depth of knowledge capabilities, communicating orally with group of various sizes and accepting feedback. These skills clearly reveal the diverse areas the students are meant to be proficient especially in the dealership of coca cola products in South South Nigeria.

Coca-Cola is a beverage industry founded in 1886 by Pharmacist John Stitt Pemberton in Columbus Georgia. Although, was incorporated in 1892 by Asa Griggs Candler, it secured the

formula and brand in 1889. Some of its products include sparkling beverage such as coke, coke-zero, fanta, sprite, Schweppes, limca, variant minute maid, monster (still beverage) comprised five variants of five alive juice, coconut five alive, pineapple five alive, apple five alive, raspberry, pulpy orange fruit drinks, citrus, mixed fruits, eva table water, among others. These Cola-Cola products are usually at the custody of the sales managers for distributions to end users. Cola-Cola sales managers are therefore conceived as employees of the company who through several trainings are equipped with requisite entrepreneurial skills for the effective distribution of Cola-Cola products.

Consequently, coca cola, having passed through various stages of repackaging and rebranding since its existence to maintain its market place and attract more patronage in the midst of similar products in South South Nigeria, exposing business education students to effective communication skills for coca cola products dealership becomes a concern to the researchers. The exposure of students to this skill is even more worrisome considering this era of digitalisation where information is accessed online. Moreso, while it is believed that the existence of digital library has enormous contributions to upgrading knowledge in various areas such as education, politics, products creation, products awareness as well as online sales, sufficient literature appears lacking especially with regard to the acquisition of communication skills by business education students for coca cola products dealership in South South Nigeria. The present study tends to contribute in the provision of empirical evidences on the usefulness of digital library to the acquisition of communication skills. To this end, the study attempts to examine the usefulness of digital library in the acquisition of communication skills of business education students for coca cola products dealership in South South Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the usefulness of digital library in the acquisition of communication skills by business education students for coca cola products dealership in South South Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the usefulness of digital library in the acquisition of:

1. Communication skills by business education students for coca-cola products dealership in South- South Nigeria.

Research Question

The study was guided by the question:

1. What are the usefulness of digital library in the acquisition of communication skills by business education students for coca-cola products dealership in South- South, Nigeria?

Null Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study was stated in a null form and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of final year students of business education and coca- cola sales managers on the usefulness of digital library in the acquisition of communication skills for coca-cola products dealership in South- South, Nigeria

Empirical Studies

Studies have been conducted by some scholars on communication skills required for improving business activities in Nigeria. For instance, Mason, Williams, Crammer and Guile (2006) found that developing graduates' communication and oral presentation skills during their

undergraduate studies have positive effects on their later work performance. Agbogidi (2007) revealed that 12 communication skills were required of auto mechanics technology students for establishing small and medium scale enterprise in Delta State. Abanyam (2014) also indicated that business education students of College of Education in Cross River State slightly possessed communication skills for self-employment and sustainable development among others. In a similar study, Agada (2014) showed that 21 communication skills were needed by radio and television students for establishing small and medium scale enterprise.

The above studies clearly demonstrated the importance of communication skills in equipping youths through setting up of business outfits and the improvement of existing ones. Empowering these youths invariably is considered as one way of reducing unemployment as they become self reliant. However, in spite of these contributions, empirical evidence on the usefulness of digital libraries in disseminating these communication skills is limited. This study therefore attempts to add, to perhaps existing literature on the usefulness of digital libraries in the acquisition of communication skills by business education students for coca cola products dealership in South South Nigeria.

Research Method

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. This design attempts to use data obtained from a sample in an investigation to document, describe and explain what is in existence or non existence, or the present state of a phenomenon being investigated (Ali, 2006). This study has also been adopted in similar studies (Ugwuanyi, et al, 2020 and Olori, et al, 2022).

The area of the study was South- South Zone of Nigeria with three federal universities namely: University of Benin, University of Calabar and University of Uyo as the only federal

universities offering Business Education in the zone and few State universities offering the programme. The zone is made up of six States namely Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers. The zone is strategically located at the point where the Y tail of the River Niger joins the Atlantic Ocean through the gulf of Guinea. This zone provides the economy mainstream of the country. In addition to oil and gas, it contributes to other key resources with potential huge investment opportunities in Tourism and Agriculture. The zone though very small, yet accommodates significant number of people in Nigerian population. The choice of this zone stems from the fact that there are several beverage companies with similar competitive products in the area with high unemployment rate among graduates.

The population for the study was 182 made up of 147 final year Business Education students in the three federal universities in South South, Nigeria for 2017/2018 academic session. This comprised 35 final year students in the University of Benin, 88 in the University of Calabar, 24 from the University of Uyo, and 35 Coca-Cola Sales Managers from six depots in four States of South-South Nigeria. The breakdown of the sales managers shows that there are six in Akwa Ibom State from one depot (Uyo), five in Delta State from two depots (Ughelle and Warri), 11 from Edo State from one depot (Benin), and 13 from Rivers State from two depots (Ahoada and Port Harcourt). The source of information for students was from the examination and record units of the universities, while that of Coca-Cola was from the planning and statistics unit of the Coca -Cola Company, 2017. There was no sample for this study as the entire population of 182 respondents was studied because of its small size and manageability.

The instrument for data collection was the researchers' structured questionnaire titled, 'Usefulness of Digital Library and Acquisition of Communication Skills (UDLACS). The UDLACS had two sections. Section A provided the demographic information of the respondents,

while Section B consisted of 15 items eliciting information on communication skills need of business education students for coca- cola products dealership. The items are designed on a 4 point rating scale of very highly needed (4-points), highly needed (3-points), needed (2-points) and not needed (1-point) for coca-cola sales managers, but very highly possessed (4-points), highly possessed (3-points), possessed (2-points) and not possessed (1-point) for students.

The UDLACS instrument was further subjected to face validity by three experts. Two of the experts were from Vocational Education Department, and one from Curriculum Studies Department all from the University of Uyo. The reliability coefficient value of 0.79 was obtained in a trial testing on 20 respondents comprising 15 business education students and five coca cola sales managers who were not used for the study using Pearsons Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). Acceptable values of alpha range from .70 - .95 are considered reliable (Devellis, 2003).

The weighted mean and Improvement Need Index were used to answer the research question. The choice of these tools is based on the fact that they are most suitable when gap between the needed level and performance level is to be established (Madu & Iyiola, 2013). The independent t-test statistic was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Decision on the research question was based on the following steps developed by Olaitan and Ndomi (2001):

- a. the weighted mean of each item under the needed category was calculated (\bar{x}_n)
- b. the weighted mean of each item under possessed category was calculated (\bar{x}_p)
- c. the difference between the two means for each item ($\bar{x}_n - \bar{x}_p$) was determined for decision making on improvement needed, thus:

- d. where the difference was zero, ($\bar{x}_n - \bar{x}_p = 0$), there was no need for improvement because the level at which the item was needed was equal to the item possessed by students.
- e. where the difference was positive ($\bar{x}_n - \bar{x}_p = +$), there was need for improvement because the level at which the item was needed was higher than the level at which the item was possessed by students.
- f. where the difference was negative ($\bar{x}_n - \bar{x}_p = -$), there was no need for improvement because the level of possessed was higher than the level of need, implying that the students possessed the skill on the item above the level needed.

The decision for accepting a null hypothesis was that where $p > 0.05$, significant difference was not found, implying that the hypothesis is not rejected, but where $p \leq 0.05$, significant difference was found, implying the rejection of the hypothesis.

Result

Table 1

Performance Gap Analysis of Mean Responses of Respondents on Usefulness of Digital Library in Acquisition of Communication Skills by Business Education Students for Coca cola Products Dealership

S/N	Skills Need	\bar{x}_n	\bar{x}_p	$\bar{x}_n - \bar{x}_p$	Remarks
1.	Ability to detect difference in opinion	3.66	2.80	0.86	Needed
2.	Ability to understand the need of customers	3.69	2.98	0.71	Needed
3.	Being able to explain the nature of product to customers	3.53	3.30	0.23	Needed
4.	Communicate orally with various groups	3.41	2.96	0.45	Needed
5.	Identification of barriers to listen	3.66	2.78	0.88	Needed
6.	Explain objectively without evaluation	3.44	2.43	1.01	Needed
7.	Provide specific detail while supporting with concrete examples	3.19	2.68	0.51	Needed
8.	Conveying a message without command	3.16	2.71	0.45	Needed
9.	Communicating with various depth of knowledge capabilities	3.31	2.61	0.70	Needed
10.	Accepting feedback without grudge	3.44	2.95	0.48	Needed
11.	Use of relevant information to convince customers	3.44	3.17	0.27	Needed
12.	Disseminating information for optimal business performance	3.72	3.01	0.71	Needed
13.	Communication with relevant language to customers	3.38	3.13	0.25	Needed
14.	Interpreting information for optimal business performance	3.69	3.06	0.63	Needed
15.	Listening to customers complaints and suggestions	3.53	3.19	0.34	Needed
	Cluster Mean	3.48	2.92	0.56	Needed

Table1 shows that items 1-15 with varying positive gaps ranging from 0.23 -1.01 were communication skills needed to be possessed by final year students of Business Education for Coca-Cola products dealership in South - South Nigeria. The Table further shows that item 6 on explaining objectively without evaluation has the highest performance gap of 1.01, followed by the identification of barriers to listen in item 5 with 0.88; while being able to explain the nature of products to customers had the least performance gap of 0.23 in item 3. The cluster mean with

positive performance gap of 0.56 implied that digital library has greatly contributed in the acquisition of all the 15 skills by final year students for Coca- cola products dealership in South-
South Nigeria

Table 2

t-test Analysis of Difference Between the Mean Ratings of Respondents on Usefulness of Digital Library in Acquisition of Communication Skill by Business Education Students for Coca- cola Products Dealership

Final Year Students= 123, Coca Cola Managers= 32							
S/N	Items	Final Year \bar{x}_1	SD ₁	Coca Cola \bar{x}_2	SD ₂	p-value	Decision
1.	Ability to dictate and acknowledge difference in opinion	2.80	1.17	3.66	0.60	0.00	S
2.	Ability to understand the need of customers	2.98	1.02	3.69	0.47	0.00	S
3.	Being able to explain the nature of product to customers	3.30	0.86	3.53	0.67	0.08	NS
4.	Communicate orally with various groups	2.96	1.06	3.41	0.56	0.00	S
5.	Identification of barriers to listen	2.78	1.02	3.66	0.48	0.00	S
6.	Explain objectively without evaluation	2.43	1.07	3.44	0.56	0.00	S
7.	Provide specific detail while supporting with concrete examples	2.68	1.13	3.19	0.65	0.00	S
8.	Conveying a message without command	2.71	1.10	3.16	0.68	0.00	S
9.	Communicating with various depth of knowledge capabilities	2.61	1.15	3.31	0.54	0.00	S
10.	Accepting feedback without grudge	2.95	1.08	3.44	0.56	0.00	S
11.	Use of relevant information to convince customers	3.17	1.05	3.44	0.56	0.00	S
12.	Disseminating information for optimal business performance	3.01	1.07	3.72	0.46	0.00	S
13.	Communication with relevant language to customers	3.13	0.99	3.38	0.83	0.07	NS
14.	Interpreting information for optimal business performance	3.06	0.97	3.69	0.47	0.00	S
15.	Listening to customers complaints and suggestions	3.19	1.01	3.53	0.57	0.00	S

*** 0.05 level of significance

Table 2 shows that significant difference was found for items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 and 15 since the probability values are less than 0.05 level of significance. On the other hand, significant difference was not found for items 3 and 13 with probability values of 0.08 and 0.07 greater than 0.05 level of significance.

Discussion of Results

The study revealed that digital library has contributed in the acquisition of all the identified 15 communication skills by business education students needed for coca- cola products dealership in South - South, Nigeria. Although, significant difference was found in the hypothesis, the usefulness of digital library in the acquisition of communication skills by business education students was found to occupy a strategic place in the effective dealership of coca cola products. The recognition of importance of this library may not have been surprising considering the fact that an understanding of products or services is centered on effective communication skills where information relating to a given product or service is disseminated to enhance participation, patronage and delivery for improved standard of living. Hence, digital library has the potential to provide tremendous opportunities to enhance the living standard of the people (Owusu-Ansah, et al, 2019).

Acknowledging the relevance of communication skills to the promotion of business activities, findings show that efforts to develop graduates communication and oral presentation during undergraduate studies were found to have positive effect on their later work performance (Mason, Williams, Crammer & Guile, 2006). Other findings showed that 12 communication skills were needed by auto mechanics technology students for establishing small and medium scale enterprise in Delta State (Agbogidi, 2007)). By identifying barriers to listen and using

relevant language to customers, the student is believed to develop strategies for winning the interest of the customers in distributing coca cola products in South South, Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study concluded that digital library has significantly aided in the acquisition of communication skills by business education students in coca cola products dealership in South-South, Nigeria. The acquisition of these skills is also said to ameliorate the unemployment rate that is evident in the region.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

1. Students of business education programme should be exposed to internship workshops where their application of communication skills will be closely monitored by supervisors.
2. More functional business education studios should be put in place by educational administrators to accommodate diverse technological skills needed by graduates to efficiently and effectively function in the world of work.

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