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Using Social Media Platforms to enhance Marketing of Library Services by staff at Hamu Mukasa Library, Uganda Christian University, Mukono.

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on use of social media platforms by library staff to market library services at Uganda Christian University, Mukono. The study objectives included; to identify the types of library services offered by the library, social media used in marketing library services and challenges faced by library staff. The study adopted a case study research design. The study population consisted of 12 library staff who were selected purposively. Data was collected using in-depth interviews and observation methods and was analyzed qualitatively using content and thematic analysis. The study findings revealed that both traditional and online library services were provided to patrons in the library. Various social media platforms were used for marketing library services. Library staff faced various challenges in marketing library services using social media; patrons had limited awareness of existing social media platforms for the library, there was no policy to guide staff on how to use social media platforms. The library had limited computers and related computer accessories to support provision of library services. Some library staff also lacked the knowledge and skills to provide library services using social media. The library Wifi was unstable and costly to be consistently used by reference library staff to support their work. The study recommended that trainings should be organized for both library staff and users on how to access, and retrieve information resources from the library social media platforms. Library patrons should be informed about the library official social media platforms. Also library management should develop a clear policy to guide staff on the use of social media platforms in marketing library services, acquire modern computers, relevant computer accessories and provide stable internet to support reference librarians and IT staff to market library services and information resources in the library.

Keywords: Marketing, Library services and resources, Social Media, Social Networking, Academic Libraries, Library staff, Mukono, Christian University, Uganda

1. Introduction

Academic libraries are libraries which serve universities, colleges and their affiliated organizations to provide services to their students, faculty, staff members and always serve complementary purposes of supporting the curriculum (Muhammad & Zhiwei, 2021). These libraries are important in the education sector since they act as a hub of research and information, provide leadership and expertise by using information technology to prepare individuals in information-based economies and productive employment (Hussain, 2018).

Information services are services given to users of information, in the library, or in any other information center to enable them utilize information resources effectively (Whong & Mohammed, 2021). Information services in traditional libraries are provided to users by organizing their collection to ease access and retrieval. These services include; reference services where a reference librarian uses reference sources such as dictionaries, abstracts, indexes, catalogues, encyclopedias, bibliographies to provide answers to specific user queries, such as brief facts, statistics, technical instructions and background information on any topic (Thorpe, 2017).

According to Muhammad and Zhiwei (2021), ICT in recent times has greatly influenced how information services are provided in academic libraries and social media has become a central tool for librarians to expand service points and outreach opportunities to patrons. Academic libraries are using ICT for managing their day to day activities and using it as an effective tool in marketing library services to the users (Coward et. al., 2017).

In recent years, library electronic collections have gradually increased and changed the nature of information service offered and delivered by the academic libraries all over the world (Garate, 2017). ICT based services include email alerts, use of social media, various internet based services, Short Message Services (SMS) alerts, and electronic document delivery. As librarians and users are adopting modern technologies to support their work and academics, these ICT based library services are playing a vital role in their academic success (Suha & Sultan, 2018).

These new modern technologies brought by ICT have allowed libraries to adopt online marketing strategies in order to promote their information services and many users access information services as quickly as possible through social media platforms (Suha & Sultan, 2018; Mwantimwa, 2022). Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Myspace, YouTube, Vine, Pinterest, We Chat, QQ, Instagram and LinkedIn are being used by librarians world over to market their services such as reference services, current awareness services and also interact with remote library users (Abok & Kwanya, 2016; Mwantimwa & Nkhoma-Wamunza, 2016; Muhammad & Zhiwei, 2021; King, 2015; Kirita & Mwantimwa, 2022).

Social media has been embraced by academic libraries because of its many benefits such as, easily connecting library users with the library and facilitating information sharing by advertising library resources and services, building brand loyalty, saves time, quick two-way communication, saves costs and rises revenue and also increases the numbers of library users (Mwantimwa & Nkhoma-Wamunza, 2016; Kong, 2016; Stanley, 2020).

Despite the benefits realized as library staff use social media to market library services to users in academic libraries globally, librarians still encounter several challenges that hinder them from using social media to market the libraries and their services (Stanley, 2020). These include; the rising number of social media platforms and time to learn each media's functionality, complexity of social media sites, difficult to understand and use social media platforms, unauthentic information as presented on the social media platforms, lack of librarians' interest in learning and using social media, no training opportunities, limited internet connectivity, power surges, overwhelming increase of social media sites, and no guarantee to individual and data security and privacy (Islam & Habiba 2015; Stanley, 2020).

Background of Uganda Christian University (UCU) Hamu Mukasa library

On 12th February, 2010 the ground breaking ceremony of the new library was held which was to be constructed in the honor of Mr. Hamu Mukasa who donated land on which Uganda Christian University(UCU) stands today. The new library was to cost about 4,000,000 Dollars and it was to provide a sitting capacity of 1200 students, Court yard with 200 seats, computer labs for 200 computers, wireless internet access, a space for over 250,000 volumes of books, staff work room offices, multimedia room, and conference room and bindery (Uganda Christian University, 2022).

On 28th October, 2011 Hamu Mukasa Library was officially opened by Ambassador Jerry Plainer US Ambassador in Uganda. The library has several sections, such as; reference section, work room, bindery, reservation section, law and science section, e-resource section and the learning commons which is the library ICT laboratory headed by the learning commons coordinator. The laboratory has 200 computers, wireless Internet access and a quiet zone for personal research, this learning commons attends to over 500 and above patrons both staff and students and it offers a number of services such as current awareness services, printing services scanning services, research and marketing services among others (Uganda Christian University, 2022). UCU Hamu Mukasa library staff are embracing the digital revolution of the 21st century and have adopted the use digital technology in providing library services to their patrons.

2. Problem Statement

The digital revolution driven by technological innovation has transformed academic libraries fundamentally causing an impact on the activities of academic libraries by introducing new communication platforms such as social media for delivering library services and transforming traditional library services (Kapondera, 2016; Mwantimwa et al., 2021). Some earlier studies have confirmed that social media has been embraced by many academic libraries as an avenue for communicating to diverse user communities in libraries, facilitating information sharing by advertising library resources and services, building brand loyalty, quick two-way communication and increasing the numbers of library users (Burkhardt, 2010; Fiander, 2012; Garofalo, 2013; Mwantimwa & Nkhoma-Wamunza, 2016; Kong, 2016; Stanley, 2020). However, there are still limited studies that have been conducted in Uganda on the extent of use of social media in marketing library services in academic libraries. With limited studies on whether or not social media has been embraced in academic libraries to provide library services. There was need to investigate this issue at Hamu Mukasa library so as not to lose on the positive contributions of social media in modern academic libraries and to highlight limitations that may affect its usage at the library. Therefore, this study explored use of social media by library staff at Hamu Mukasa library for marketing library services.

Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to enhance adoption of social media platforms in provision of library services by library staff at UCU Hamu Mukasa library.

The objectives of the study were;

- i** To identify the types of library services offered by library staff at UCU Hamu Mukasa library.
- ii** To explore how social media is used in marketing library services by library staff at UCU Hamu Mukasa library.
- iii** To analyze the challenges faced by library staff in marketing library services using social media platforms at UCU Hamu Mukasa library.

3. Research Methodology

In order to investigate the study objectives, this study was guided by the following methodology;

Research design

A qualitative case study research design was used to explore in depth information on social media usage for marketing library services at UCU library and the challenges faced by library staff while using social media.

Study Area and Study Population

The study was conducted at Uganda Christian University Hamu Mukasa library located in Mukono district, Uganda. The study population comprised of twelve participants including; ten reference librarians and two IT staff.

Sample size and Sampling technique

The sample size of the study was determined by the principle of saturation (Mpofa, 2020) where only 12 participants were interviewed. Reference staff and IT support library staff were selected purposively because they attend to patrons queries on a regular basis and the IT staff offer support to both staff and library patrons. This was the exclusion and inclusion criteria that was used to recruit participants in this study. The interview stopped on the 12th participant after receiving the same responses from the 9th, 10th and 11th participant. This explains the sample size of 12 participants that participated in this study.

Data Collection methods and instruments

The researchers used in-depth interviews and observation method to collect thick data regarding the types of information services offered by the library, social media used to market library services and resources and challenges associated with marketing library information resources using social media.

We also employed the observation method to record behavioral patterns of reference librarians in the library while offering information services and studied the social media platforms they used. The same methods were also used to investigate challenges experienced by library staff when using social media for provision of library services.

An unstructured interview guide with questions on participants' perceptions on how they used social media to offer library services and challenges affecting use of social media was used. In addition, an observation checklist was used to observe the different types of social media platforms used by library staff in marketing library services.

Data quality control

The researchers enhanced the quality of data collected through Pre-testing the questions to test whether they were clear, covered the themes of study, were easily understood by participants and corrected errors in the interview guide. The researchers ensured reliability and trustworthiness of the data collected by capturing verbatim quotes of participants to represent their views. The principle of reflectivity was observed while interacting with participants and during note taking to minimize biased and to strengthen the credibility, dependability and conformability of research findings.

Ethical issues in Research

The researchers ensured that ethics was enforced in the entire research process. Research participants were informed about the purpose and objectives of the study. Only those participants who consented participated in the study. The participants were protected from both physical and psychological harm. All sources used were acknowledged. Also, an ethical clearance letter from Uganda Christian University Research and Ethics Committee (UCU-REC) was got accepting the researchers to conduct the study at the university.

Data analysis and Presentation

Data was analyzed using content and thematic analysis. Coding was done in three phases starting with descriptive coding to make meaning of the data, this was followed by concept coding and pattern coding where major themes and sub themes were developed. Data was presented in themes and illustrative quotes.

Study Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was it was hard to schedule interviews for the participants due to their busy work schedules at the library. The researchers were flexible and interviewed the participants at their time of convenience. Therefore, the study took more time than what had been planned earlier.

5. Findings of the study

The findings of the study are presented following the study objectives namely; types of library services offered at UCU Hamu Mukasa library, social media used in marketing library services and, challenges faced by library staff in marketing library services.

Response rate

The researcher intended to interview a total number of ten 20 respondents but only twelve participants participated in this study.

Demographic characteristics of participants

The demographic characteristics of study participants studied includes; age, gender, job categories and responsibilities as presented in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4

Table 1: Gender of participants

Gender of Participants	Frequency
Female	5
Male	7
Total	12

Table 1 shows that 12 participants participated in this study. Majority of the participants were males (7) while only five (5) females participated.

Table 2: Age of participants

Age of respondents	Frequency
30 – 34	6
35 – 39	3
40 – 44	3
Total	12

Majority of the participants interviewed were aged 30-34. This was followed by three participants who were aged 35-39 and three aged 40-44.

Table 3: Library staff Job Categories

Position of Library staff	Frequency
Senior Assistant Librarians	6
Assistant Conservator	1
Assistant Librarians	3
Library IT Assistant	2

Six of the participants interviewed were senior assistant librarians, this was followed by three assistant librarians. The staff job category with the least numbers of participants were IT assistants and an assistant conservator.

5.1 Types of library services offered by library staff at UCU Hamu Mukasa library

This section presents results from the first objective on the types of library services offered by library staff at UCU Hamu Mukasa library. The library services provided by the staff are as follows;

Reference services

The reference librarians indicated that they offer reference services to assist library users on how to use the library and to find various information resources. However, one of the participants emphasized that reference services are decentralized. They are also offered by all library staff in their different sections to help library users to access required information at a shorter period of time.

Current Awareness Services

The participants also indicated that they provide current awareness services to library users by availing them with newspapers from different publishers to equip them with latest national and global news and information around the university community.

Circulation services

Circulation services are provided both physically and using online avenues. Reference librarians indicated that online circulation was conducted using Koha Integrated library system where information resources were charged and discharged electronically. They also emphasized that Koha is an open source software that is freely available in the market for use in libraries.

User orientation

The reference librarians also agreed that they provide user orientation to new university library users especially students when they join the university. They emphasized that they provide information about the library rules and regulations and conduct guided library tours to enable

students to easily locate where library resources are found and the different sections within the library.

Binding services

The participants emphasized that Hamu Mukasa library has a bindery section with a well-trained conservator who binds and conserves all the print information materials that need conservation. This section, they added is also popular for binding students' dissertation and repairing torn books in the library.

IT support service

IT support services are offered by library staff in the learning commons a section within the library that has computers where library users go and get assistance with any IT issues such as, software installation. This service is provided by the IT librarian.

Research assistance and e- resources

Library staff also offer research assistance and e-resource services to library users. This includes; informing patrons about the existing databases subscribed to by the university, systematic searching of literature as well as training on use of referencing managers and coaching in academic writing.

The next section presents results from the second objective which investigated social media used by library staff in marketing library services at UCU Hamu Mukasa library.

5.2 Social media used for marketing library services by library staff at UCU Hamu Mukasa library

The librarians revealed that they use different social media platforms to market information resources in the library such as; Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Telegram, WhatsApp and Instagram. The social media platforms used have been explained in the subsequent paragraphs.

Facebook

UCU Hamu Mukasa library has an official Facebook page which is UCU Library accessed via <https://www.facebook.com/UCULibrary> and used to post information about library events and promoting library interaction between library users' and librarians through sharing information about library services.

Twitter

The official twitter handle of UCU Hamu Mukasa library is @UcuLibrary and it is used by library staff to share information about new databases, books and some library events with library users. The URL address for the official twitter hand of UCU Hamu Mukasa library is <https://twitter.com/UcuLibrary>

You tube

Uganda Christian University Library is the UCU Hamu Mukasa library's official youtube channel used by library staff when marketing library electronic resources and databases through uploading videos on how to access electronic resources and the library databases and its URL address is <https://youtube.com/channel/UC AeGP3EEqLIs5Wo9IGIA3yg>.

Telegram

The official telegram group of UCU Hamu Mukasa library is UCU Library Services used by library staff to share information of different formats with the library users. This telegram group can be joined using a URL address which is <https://t.me/uculib>.

WhatsApp

Library staff unanimously revealed that UCU Hamu Mukasa library does not have an official WhatsApp where users interact with library staff. However, one of the library staff said that in his section he created a whatsapp group which he uses to interact with students, share text, recorded audios, videos about library services and also provide them with scanned information materials.

Instagram

Library staff at UCU Hamu Mukasa library use uculibrary has the official instagram account to share pictures and short videos about UCU library databases and electronic resources in order to make library users aware of the databases and electronic resources subscribed by the library. This official instagram account can be accessed through using a URL address which is https://instagram.com/ucu_library?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y.

This next section presents results on the challenges faced by library staff in marketing library services using social media platforms at UCU Hamu Mukasa library. The responses received from the library staff interviewed are as follows;

5.4 Challenges faced by library staff in marketing library services using social media platforms at UCU Hamu Mukasa library

Lack of awareness by library users on the presence of the library official social media platforms

The library staff revealed that most of the library users were not aware of the presence of the library official social media platforms. They also emphasized that library staff posted and uploaded information about library services on the official library platforms but few library users view the platforms. Hence, they argued that it is a challenge that needs to be addressed to support effective use of library services.

Lack of library policy on use social media platforms to provide library services

The reference librarians argued that there was no clear policy to guide them on how to use social media in provision of library services. Another participant an IT library staff added that absence of this policy hindered their ability to know what to post on social media platforms at a particular time and how to effectively use social media to promote library services.

Limited skills by library staff and users on how to use social media platforms

Some library staff interviewed revealed that they lacked knowledge and skills of using social media to market library services and needed to be supported to perform their duties. Other staff added that the users were also ignorant on how to effectively use social media platforms to access library resources. They added that due to this knowledge gap they are unable to know which platforms are useful to the users and areas of weakness so that service delivery is improved.

Library staff lack data bundles to market library services using social media

The reference library staff further revealed that they lacked data bundles to provide library services when off campus where there is no university Wi-Fi. They emphasized that online users send them requests for library services past their working hours or shifts but they fail to respond because they cannot afford data bundles while off campus. As a result there is delayed feedback to online library users.

6.0 Discussion and implications of Findings

In this section the main results and implication of the findings are discussed.

Finding 1: Staff at Hamu Mukasa library provide different library services such as; reference services, circulation services, binding services, IT support service, research assistance and e-resources training.

Studies on online library information services (Mammadova, 2018) reveal that academic libraries provide services such as, access to digitized collections of books and periodicals, virtual reference services, on-site access to open subscribed electronic databases, online user orientation and access to digital institutional repository is now possible online.

Implication 1: Library staff at Hamu Mukasa library provide dynamic library services to their users in a university library. However, online reference services using social media platforms were not highlighted as a special service provided in this library. The realistic reason could be that provision of reference services using social media may not be so pronounced in this library.

Finding 2: Hamu Mukasa library employs various social media platforms to provide information services. This includes; Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Telegram and they are used to post information about library events, promote library users' interaction with the librarians, share pictures and videos about new databases, books and electronic resources. However, library staff indicated that much as they have official social media platforms for the library, some of the reference staff do not know how to use them to provide online reference services and to market the library. The library staff also observed that most of their patrons are not aware of the social media platforms in existence and lack knowledge and skills to access the information provided.

This finding is in line with studies (Mollel & Mwantimwa, 2019; Manda, 2005; Kirita & Mwantimwa, 2021) that emphasized that low usage of library resources in academic libraries and online resources is associated with lack of awareness of users about subscribed online resources

and services. An earlier study by Nduka (2015) also revealed that much as social media is employed by academic libraries to market library services, university students rarely use it for educational purposes.

Implication 2: Given the limited awareness by the users and limited knowledge by library staff on how to use social media to market library services, social media platforms cannot be effectively used to market library services at the library. Thus, awareness by users and library staff on existing social media and how they can be accessed and used is critical for marketing these services.

Finding 3: Hamu Mukasa library staff are affected by many challenges when using social media to market library services including; lack of awareness by library users on the presence of the library official social media platforms, lack of proper policy on how to use social media platforms, limited computers and accompanying accessories to support use of social media, limited knowledge and skills on how to market library services and resources and limited internet. The findings are in agreement with Bashorum (2018) who indicated that lack of awareness, lack of proper internet and inadequate training on how to use the platforms derailed provision of library services(Omosor, 2014).

The finding also relates to studies that revealed that while libraries have adopted social media in their work, they lack proper culture and guidelines on how to effectively implement the new innovation in libraries (Crawford, 2014; Johnson & Burclaff, 2013; Solomon, 2013).

Implication 3

Without proper policy to guide library staff on the content to be posted on social media and official social media platforms to be adopted, implementation of marketing library services through social media may be problematic.

7. Conclusion

The researchers conclude that Hamu Mukasa library staff offer a variety of information services including both traditional and online library services. Though, online library services are not well publicized to library patrons. Library staff use various social media platforms such as; Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp for posting library events and sharing information. The researchers also concluded that library staff are facing numerous challenges in marketing library services and resources using social media platforms. The key challenges include; limited knowledge and skills among library staff on how to effectively market library services and resources, limited awareness by library patrons on the presence of official university library social media platforms, lack of proper policy to guide staff on how to use social media platforms, limited computers and accompanying accessories to support use of social media and limited internet connectivity.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions presented, the following recommendations are suggested;

Given that some library staff lack the knowledge and skills to market library services and information resources using social media platforms, training for staff be organized by library management to empower them to cope with dynamic library services brought by advancement in technology.

While various social media platforms are being used in marketing library services by library staff at UCU Hamu Mukasa library, few patrons are aware of the existing services. The patrons need support in terms of training in order to access and utilize online library services and information resources.

Library staff are affected by many challenges in marketing UCU Hamu Mukasa library services using social media platforms. The researchers recommend that the university should purchase more computers and supporting computer accessories, ensure reliable power and internet to support constant provision of library services in the digital environment. Library management should develop a proper policy to guide their staff on how to use social media in marketing library services.

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