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The Impact of Social Media in Research Publicity and Visibility

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INTRODUCTION

Social media has exploded as a category of online discourse where people create content, share, bookmark and network at a prodigious rate. Because of its ease of use, speed and reach, social media is fast changing the public discourse in society and setting trends and agenda in topics that range from the environment and politics to technology and the entertainment industry (Asur and Huberman, 2010). In the last ten years, the online world has changed dramatically, thanks to the invention of social media, young men and women now exchange ideas, feelings, personal information, pictures and videos at a truly astonishing rate. Social media is the use of Facebook, Blogs, Twitter, My Space and LinkedIn for the purpose of communication, sharing photos as well as videos Martn, (2008) & Lusk, (2010). Social media are web-based services that gives individual the opportunity to create a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, add a list of others to what they share, a connection and view and transverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010 p.61). Successful social media platforms today are structured to incorporate a fast and cost-effective message delivery system that is globally accessible. Popular social media websites can be characterized by an ever-growing network of participants that interact through highly engaging content.

Academic contributions start from concepts and ideas. When the content is of a high quality and is relevant to other scholars, they could be published in renowned, peer-reviewed journals. Many researchers are resorting to online full text databases, institutional repositories or online open access journals in order to disseminate their findings. The internet has brought an increased engagement among peers, over email or video communications, Facebook, Twitter, Blogging, e.t.c. In addition, the web and online academic networks have surely helped to enhance the fruitful and collaborative relationships among researchers. Notwithstanding, researchers are increasingly sharing their knowledge with colleagues as they present their papers in seminars and conferences. After publication, their contributions may then be cited by other scholars, including students. The researchers visibility does not solely rely on the number of publications they produce. Both academic researchers as well as their institutions are continuously being under scrutiny as they are rated and classified by independent reviewers.

Social Media

Social media has grown beyond its original purpose of connecting people all over the globe. Today, the ease of interacting with millions of social media users in a cost effective and real-time manner has given rise to the creation of highly engaging online content by users from diverse professional and personal backgrounds (Graham & Hale, 2013). In the past, knowledge constructs consulted by scholars were mostly in the form of printed or hard copies (books, newspapers, journals, etc), and although this format was instrumental in the development of knowledge generation and distribution since the advent of writing, it had some limitations. Compared to the Internet, print physically limits access to information; that is a book has to be identified then actually obtained before intellectual access can take place. But through the Internet, and from social media platforms like Facebook, Blog, Twitter, Google+, Linkedin, Whatsapp, Youtube e.t.c. information can be searched anywhere in the world, and typically hundreds or thousands of pages can be found with some relation to the topic within seconds.

He admits that the term was mainly created for identifying the need of new economic strategies of Internet companies after the 'dot -com' crisis, in which the
bursting of financial bubbles caused the collapse of many Internet companies.
So he states in a paper published five years after the creation of the invention of the term 'Web 2.0' that this category was "a statement about the second coming of the Web after the dotcom bust" at a conference that was "designed to restore confidence in an industry that had lost its way after the dotcom bust". The primary importance of Internet tools and services for the university faculty lies not in machines that will think for scholars but in scholars using such tools to amplify collective intelligence, bringing many minds together for more effective collaborative research and teaching. The adoption of the Internet has significantly influenced the research productivity of academics in many progressive ways and this paper outlines the prevailing situation among scholars in Universities. Thus, the advent of the Internet has heralded the emergence of a new form of knowledge production and distribution – the soft form. This new form of information resources has, as its greatest advantage, a virtually unlimited wealth of information resources which is widely and readily available and accessible to hundreds of millions of people simultaneously in many parts of the world. The Internet liberates scholarship from the social, legal, political, economic and geographical constraints associated with traditional print media. This liberation has had a major effect on scholar's research capacity and productivity and scholars, who wants to stay at the forefront of research and keep up to date with developments in research fields have to utilize the Internet. This reality applies to the renowned academics as well as graduate students. But younger faculty is more likely to find in the Internet the quickest route to fame, recognition and promotion.

Research Visibility and Publicity

While there are many definitions of the concept or term "research", we define it to be a way of finding answers to unknown problems emerging from natural and artificial phenomenon within our sociosphere, naturesphere, psychosphere, technosphere and politocosphere, through a systematic, logical and verifiable process (Sitienei, 2010). What motivates individuals and organizations to conduct research across the board is not uniform. The ideal and perhaps main reasons are to find solutions to challenges or problems affecting humanity that stem from natural and artificial phenomena, confirm or contest or refute theories or hypotheses, develop scientific

and professional practices, and to develop creative, analytical and rational thinking for informed decision making. On a more practical basis, research is done to fulfill learning, domestic and career needs; to satisfy curiosity; for egoistic reasons, such as recognition and visibility; for career related rewards, such as promotion, securing tenure or permanent appointment; and for self-development or growth, among others. Goddard and Melville (2001) metaphorically recognize that without research, we would be nude, homeless and penniless because everything we now know had to be discovered by someone at some time. Aceto (2005) suggests that the career benefits of research are countless; they range from an increased ability to attract highly qualified and motivated members of staff (both nationally and internationally), to having a greater advantage over competitors in gaining and maintaining research funds, better chances of "rubbing shoulders" with the very best, and the opportunity to create a more stimulating working environment for all involved. It is important to note that there is no substitute for quality work. Please do carry out path-breaking research and produce outstanding results by demonstrating their usefulness both theoretically and experimentally. It is equally important to enhance its impact by making the outcomes of your research work easily accessible to your peers and the larger community.

Social Media a Paradigm for Research Visibility and Publicity

The advanced and improved usage of social media platforms such as Facebook has become a worldwide phenomenon for quite some time. Facebook users often experience poor academic performance. Also Karpinski (2009) stated that social media has a negative association with peoples' academic performance which is much greater than the advantages derived through the use of social media platforms. People around the globe have been addicted to the internet which has given rise to more researchers using social media more often than before. Nalwa & Anand (2003) advised and recommended that those who are addicted users love to use the internet to set back their personal and professional responsibilities in which the final outcome is poor academic performance. Social media is a phenomenon that has become an important aspect in marketing mix and revolutionizing the way companies interact with customers. It is a new research field and a quick literature scan reveals that not many studies exist. Nevertheless, these few existing studies without scientific evidence with industry data, have rushed to conclude that the emergence of social media has led to the demise of the traditional advertising mainstream media. social media is more effective than some of the traditional advertising channels, it cannot be implemented in isolation without augmenting it with other forms of traditional advertising channels. The implications are that social media alone can single handedly create brand awareness or even develop business.

Recommendation

Lecturers with phones having internet facility should be encouraged to use it to supplement their research in the library rather than the usual chatting with friends all the time. Academic staff were advised to limit the time they spend on social media sites per day and encourage but rather substitute those hours to advertise their works and articles and relevant academic books to improve their visibility. Since the study confirmed that the use of social media sites can improves

and enhance research visibility and publicity, there is the urgent need for the use of social media platforms to create visibility and publicity of academic works in the universities. It is further recommended that students be notified during orientation of the proper social networking sites where they can get relevant works from lecturers for their academic benefits and pursuit.

Conclusion

This study on impact of social media in research visibility and publicity
is considered timely and relevant to the prevailing need to ensure that lecturers' disposition and their intellectual outputs are being used by researchers, students and other intended users in the university. Therefore, continuing professional development is required to build up the technological competence of lecturers and to ensure that their seasoned research, present findings and collaborate with colleagues in other nations or continents are made accessible and visible in social media platforms for people to read and acknowledge them.

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