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The Nexus of Social Media Use and Research Productivity of Lecturers in Private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study sought to investigate the relationship between social media use and research productivity of lecturers in private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. This study adopted the survey design. The population comprised of 1353 lecturers from seven private universities. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 621 respondents for the study. A pretested questionnaire was used for data collection, yielding the following Cronbach alpha value: Social media use – 0.86 and research productivity – 0.95. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistic. Findings revealed that social media use has a positive but very weak and significant relationship with the research productivity ($r = 0.173^{**}$, $P < 0.05$). Social media tools, namely: Social networks, Collaborative tools, Web video sites, Blogs & Microblogs were found to be used. Social bookmarking and citation tools were not used for research. However, research productivity was found to be low. The study concluded by noting that research productivity can be greatly improved by the use of social media. It, therefore, recommends that lecturers improve their knowledge of social bookmarking and citation tools as these will help them in organizing information from social media specifically and the web, in general, amongst others.

Keywords: Social media use, research productivity, lecturers, private universities

Introduction

Universities operate in contemporary times in what is termed ‘neoliberal’- a drive towards prestige and increased income through the competitive pursuit of efficiency and excellence (Batterbury & Byrne, 2017). The accomplishment of this pursuit by lecturers is directly associated with their research productivity. No wonder then that the quality of a university is often associated with research productivity (Chang, 2015). Academic institutions are rated and ranked by the research and publication productivity of their faculties. Consequently, academic institutions emphasize research and publishing as requirements for members of faculty.

Okonedo et al (2015) define research productivity as the whole of researches conducted by academics in universities in their vocation over a predetermined period. This period can be a period of 3 years which rest largely on the quality and quantity of scholarly publications such as documents published through a peer-review process and acknowledged as recorded sources such

as books, book chapters, journal articles, conference papers and proceedings, creative works and visual arts among others(Tsafe, Chiya & Aminu, 2016).

However, lecturers find it cumbersome completing a research article due to the rigorous, tedious, and sometimes complicated processes it demands such as questioning, planning, gathering, sorting and sifting, synthesizing, evaluating, and reporting. These processes had in the past involved much physical movement from one place to the other. However, with the advancement in technology, almost everything can now be done from the comfort of one's home or office using a web-based channel. Social media as a Web-based channel of information dissemination is rapidly becoming the most preferred means of establishing social/professional networks among lecturers, while it is also being used to communicate with students.

Social media can also be defined as online tools that permit users to communicate with one another in some way by sharing information, opinions, knowledge, and interests on the web(Ford & Ravansar, 2017). One of the essential benefits of social media for research is the rapidity with which information of interest can be spread to a larger audience when compared to traditional outlets like print media. On average, users spend more than 2 hours of their time on social media daily(Baccarella, Wagner & Kietzmann, 2018; Barcelos, Dantas & Sénécal, 2018). Social media users create, share as well as exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and they can connect with different individuals who share a common interest, dreams, and objectives (Sharma & Shukla, 2016).

However, despite the enormous advantages of social media in research-related activities like community outreach (Agyekum & Arthur, 2016), others have raised concerns. For instance, Okereke (2014) empirical study on awareness, competencies, and use of social media in teaching by lecturers in higher institutions in the south-east of Nigeria, showed that many lecturers do not use social media for private research but for social activities and disseminating information about daily life. Also, some lecturers for instance who maintain blog sites are often viewed with disdain by their colleagues for being self-aggrandizing or time wasters (Kirkup, 2010). Although the concepts of social media and research productivity have wider implications within the university, there is little evidence from previous research identifying the relationship among these variables in private universities in Ogun State. Therefore, this research aimed to investigate this gap by

exploring the relationship between social media use and research productivity of lecturers in private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the relationship between social media use and research productivity of lecturers in private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. identify the social media tools used by lecturers for research in private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria;
2. identify the extent of research productivity of lecturers in private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis:

The study tested the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between social media use and research productivity of lecturers in private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Social media as a Concept

Kapoor et al (2018) define social media as various user-driven platforms that encourage the diffusion of convincing content, dialogue creation, and communication to a more extensive crowd. Such platforms permit users to interact freely, share, and talk information using a multimedia blend of individual words, pictures, video, and sound. It provides dynamic features that enable users to have a two-way relationship, in terms of the exchange of text, images, audio, and videos. Similarly, Akakandelwa (2016) describes social media as the wide range of Internet-based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content, or join online communities.

Ngai et al (2015) classify social media into six broad types; sharing sites, blogs/microblogging, social bookmarking sites, virtual/online communities, social networking

sites(SNS), and virtual worlds. Recent studies have shown that WhatsApp is the most preferred social media platform. For example, a Ghanaian study found that WhatsApp is the most generally utilized social media platform followed by Facebook and Twitter (Mingle & Adams, 2015). Ogaji et al (2017), which focused on Kenya confirmed this finding.

According to Islam and Habiba (2015), social media is a powerful platform that can be extensively used for collaborative learning, online social and professional connections, which can enhance information dissemination and gathering. Furthermore, as observed by Ezeani and Ignesi (2012), online social media is an intriguing, predominant, and all-encompassing means of communication that is drastically influencing individuals' collaboration and conduct.

Social media similarly give the chance to take advantage of individual networks and present information in multiple formats, spaces, and sources, which assists with making messages more solid and viable. Moreover, numerous social media channels facilitate social engagement, viral sharing of information, and trust. It is obvious then that integrating social media into different communication campaigns and development activities will allow the government, civil society and other professionals to leverage social dynamics and networks to encourage participation, conversation and community all of which can help spread key messages and influence informed and positive decision-making(Dunu & Uzochukwu, 2015).

Determinant of Research Productivity

Research productivity of an individual can be described as the total output of his journal publications, his contributions in books, book chapters, reviews, conference proceedings, invited editorials, doctoral degrees produced under his supervision, patents produced by him, etc. Research tracking, benchmarking between and within the institutions is becoming a requisite for the progress of research, particularly in the event of granting funds and in distinguishing the luminaries. The sheer size of the research activity is measured in terms of research publications viz. articles, conference presentations, patents, reports, etc. while the quality can be determined by citations counts they receive over the years. Aside from research institutes, the university is the place where research is prioritized. In that, it a veritable instrument for exploring problems, experiences, actual situation of events and phenomena which provides outcomes or results that

reveal the forces, challenges, and reasons behind same and proffers solutions to the issues(Blewitt, 2014).

One of the strong determinants of productivity of researchers is research output (Chang, 2015). The researcher may disseminate his findings through various mediums. It can be disseminated through social media, oral presentation at a conference, workshop, and seminar or in the form of publications in journals and as theses and dissertations, reports, or books. The significance of research output in a research environment cannot be overstated. It is the product of research activity and it is seen as the major parameter of adjudging the productivity of researchers (Adjei & Owusu-Ansah, 2016). It has also become the foremost measures in promotion, merit, and tenure determinations(Holosko M.J. & Barner, 2016; Huggins-Hoyt et al, 2015). To neutralize economic mutability, lecturers have been urged to bolster their research productivity to enhance both institutional prestige and departmental recognition in such ways that bring in more private-public research and student enrollment dollars (Coggburn & Neely, 2016). Thus, the extent of a scholar's research productivity has considerable influence on their academic career trajectory by way of overall employability, compensation, promotion, and tenure within an institution, and their viability and marketability for better opportunities at other institutions(Eagan et al, 2015). Also, an empirical study by Okiki (2013), on the research productivity of teaching faculty members in Nigerian Federal Universities, showed that slow Internet connectivity and financial resources are the major challenges in carrying out research activities.

Lecturers' Social media use for Research

Many social media enable lecturers to create their content and effectively share information. Academia can write entries in blogs or wikis or record an audio file for a podcast lecture series (Hemmi et al, 2009). Using social media, lecturers are easily able to publish their work and ideas online for others to assess and download. For example, multimedia files can be shared on file-sharing websites such as YouTube or Slideshare, and social bookmarking sites allow users to bookmark certain websites or tag keywords for users with similar interests to peruse(Murray, 2006). The art of lecturers sharing content and information using social media can mean much more than distributing research on the web. It might include further improvement and to the content and information being shared. For example, a professional in an online community

might expand the contents by putting more facts or correcting erroneous data. Wikipedia is a genuine case of such social media.

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted. Descriptive survey design allows researchers to describe the characteristics of a population or the differences between two or more populations and researchers can make predictions based on the correlation survey data. This design was adequate for this study because of its dependability in terms of anonymity of respondents, which propels them to give accurate answers to questions. The survey was conducted in seven private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria using a structured questionnaire. The universities include Crawford University, McPherson University, Babcock University, Covenant University, South-Western University, Bells University of Technology, and Crescent University. The population comprised of 1353 lecturers from the stated seven universities. The purposive sampling technique was used to select two colleges/faculties (Management & Social Sciences as well as Natural & Applied Sciences) to avoid the selection of colleges/faculties that do not exist in all seven universities. This gives a sample size of 621. The questionnaire used in data collection was subjected to a pre-test among thirty (30) lecturers in Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State. Twenty-five (25) copies of a questionnaire distributed were retrieved and subjected to the Cronbach’s alpha reliability test. A section by section reliability test yielded the following alpha value: Social media use – 0.86 and research productivity – 0.95. Data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation while the hypothesis was analyzed using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation, tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1: **Lecturers**

Private University	N	%
Babcock University	124	28.4
Covenant University	109	25.0
Bells University of Technology	73	16.8
Crawford University	41	9.4
South-Western University	18	4.1
McPherson University	36	8.3
Crescent University	35	8.0
Total	436	100

Findings of the Study

The questionnaire was circulated among 1353 respondents. A total of 436 filled-in questionnaires was collected showing a response rate of 70.30%. Therefore, the completely 436 copies of questionnaire retrieved were used in the analysis of this study

Table 2. Demographic information of respondents

Demographic information	Frequency	Percent
Academic qualification		
Bachelor's Degree	32	7.3
Masters	139	31.9
MPhil	88	20.2
PhD	177	40.6
Total	436	100
Academic rank		
Graduate Assistant	30	6.9
Assistant Lecturer	99	22.7
Lecturer 1	74	17.0
Lecturer 11	115	26.4
Senior Lecturer	66	15.1
Associate Professor	35	8.0
Professor	17	3.9
Total	436	100
Gender		
Female	133	30.5
Male	303	69.5
Total	436	100
Marital status		
Single	57	13.1
Divorced	7	1.6
Married	372	85.3
Total	436	100

Findings in Table 2 show that majority of the respondents were married (85.3). Most are Ph.D. degree holders (40.6%) within the rank of Lecturer 11 (26.4%).

Table 3. Social media tools for research

S/N	Social Media use	Yes (%)	No (%)
1.	Social networks	322 (73.9)	114 (26.1)
2.	Collaborative tools	316 (72.5)	120 (27.5)
3.	Web video sites	295 (67.7)	141(32.3)

4.	Blogs and Microblogs	236 (54.1)	200 (45.9)
5.	Social citation-sharing tools	127 (29.1)	309 (70.9)
6.	Social bookmarking tools	108 (24.8)	328 (75.2)

Findings from Table 3 indicate that majority of the respondents 322 (73.9%) use social networks (e.g. Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn) followed closely by Collaborative tools (e.g. ResearchGate, Academia.edu, Slideshare) 316 (72.5%), Web video sites (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo, Vines) 295 (67.7%), Blogs & Microblogs 236 (54.1%) and Social citation-sharing tools (e.g. CiteULike, Mendeley, Zotero) 127 (29.1%). Social bookmarking tools (e.g. Delicious, Diigo, BibSonomy) 108 (24.8) were the least used for research.

Table 4. Extent of research productivity

S/N	Publications	12 & above (%)	8-11(%)	4-7(%)	1-3(%)	0 (%)	Mean	SD
1	Journal articles	78(17.9)	81(18.6)	124(28.4)	103(23.6)	50(11.5)	2.08	1.262
2.	Chapters in edited books	57(13.1)	79(18.1)	81(18.6)	108(24.8)	111(25.4)	1.69	1.370
3.	Textbooks	56(12.8)	63(14.4)	55(12.6)	98(22.4)	164(37.6)	1.42	1.436
4.	Workshop and seminar papers	37(8.5)	30(6.9)	86(19.7)	183(42.0)	100(22.9)	1.36	1.157
5.	Co-authored textbooks	49(11.2)	62(14.2)	55(12.6)	81(18.6)	189(43.4)	1.31	1.430

Table 4 reveals the extent of research productivity of lecturers within the period of three years. Although respondents had low research productivity (mean =1.57). Journal articles were the most published with a mean score of 2.08. This goes to show the value placed on journal articles by lecturers as it is associated with their promotion. While journal articles were found to be the most published, other publication such as chapters in edited books did not fare badly as it occupied 2nd positions with a mean score of 1.69. Textbooks, workshops and seminar papers and coauthored textbooks recorded the least published rating with mean scores of 1.42, 1.36, and 1.31 respectively.

Table 5. Relationship between social media use and research productivity

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	R	Sig.	Remark
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Social Media Use	436	2.8055	0.66171	0.173**	0.000	Sig
Research productivity	436	1.6000	0.70597			

A summary of data analysis on the test of the significance of the relationship between social media use and research productivity is presented in table 4. As shown in the table, social media use has a positive, very weak, and significant relationship with the research productivity ($r = 0.173^{**}$, $N = 436$, $P < 0.05$). Therefore, the alternate hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that the use of social media by lecturers in private universities will associate with the increase in their research productivity in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Findings showed that the majority of the lecturers use social networks (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn), Collaborative tools (e.g. ResearchGate, Academia.edu, SlideShare), Web video sites (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo, Vines), and Blogs & Microblogs. Moreover, social media tools like Social citation-sharing tools (e.g. CiteULike, Mendeley, Zotero) and Social bookmarking tools (e.g. Delicious, Diigo, BibSonomy) were least used by lecturers for research. The findings corroborate those of Cruz and Jamias (Cruz & Jamias, 2013), which revealed that social networks, collaborative authoring, web video sites, and Blogs & Microblogs among others were used for research by researchers at the University of Philippines Los Banos. The outcome of these findings could be as a result of the popularity of social networks, collaborative tools and Blogs & Microblogs among young lecturers, which constitute the majority of the respondents. These tools are often used for other purposes apart from research, which could be the reason for their use by lecturers, since they are familiar with the resourcefulness of the tools.

Findings show that research productivity of lecturers in private universities in Ogun State was low with journal publications being the most published and chapters in edited books, textbooks, workshop & seminar papers, and co-authored textbooks being the least published. The reason for low research productivity could be the dual nature of lecturer's work, which involves both teaching and research. The result of this study is in line with the findings of Okiki (2013), which asserts that journal articles are the most published in Nigerian universities

followed closely by conference papers, then book chapters, while textbooks and co-authored textbooks were less published.

The study showed that social media use has a significant relationship with the research productivity of lecturers in private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The finding is in contrast to the study carried out by Munene and Nyaribo (2013), which revealed that organizations that allow employees to use social media in the workplace would lose productivity. The findings are an indication that the proper use of social media would be positively related to research productivity.

Conclusion

The study concludes that social media use is positively related to, and contributes to research productivity of lecturers in private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. Lecturers identify social networks, collaborative tools, Web video sites, and Blogs & Microblogs as the social media tools used for research. While examining the research productivity of lecturers, it was found that the research productivity of lecturers was low with journal publications being the most published and chapters in books, textbooks, workshop & seminar papers, and co-authored textbooks being the least. The study recommends that the university management be more responsive to the programs supporting productivity in other types of publications apart from journal articles. Also, the management team should continually conduct workshops, or seminars to enable their staff in their various departments to present and publish more workshop & seminar papers.

Implications of the study

The implication of this study indicates that social media is necessary for improved research productivity of lecturers. Where social media is used, there is a great chance of identifying, creating and disseminating information better, which could have positive impact on their research productivity. However, other variables which were not accounted for in this research must be in place for research productivity to greatly improve since social media only contribute 17.3 percent of research productivity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following were suggested.

1. Overall, a high 75.2% of the lecturers do not use Social bookmarking tools and 70.9% of them do not also use Social citation-sharing tools for research. It is suggested that lecturers be motivated to use this tools as some of them may provide ideas that could further improve their research productivity.
2. In the area of the lecturers' research productivity, we recommend that the universities management be more responsive to the programmes supporting productivity in other types of publication apart from journal articles. Also, the management team should continually conduct workshops, or seminars to enable their staff in their various departments to present and publish more workshop & seminar papers.
3. Considering the positive relationship between the use of social media for building social networks and identifying research opportunities with research productivity, it is recommended that lecturers who do not use social media for these research activities should begin to do so in order to reap the associated benefits.
4. Management team should also ensure that funding for internet facilities be made available to address the issue of slow internet connectivity which lecturers perceive to be a major inhibitor to research productivity.
5. There should also be continuous and periodic training of techniques on retrieving information from the voluminous information on social media. This will help provide them with practical and functional knowledge of the workings of social media and associated technologies.

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