

Influence Usage of Media Platforms in Improving Uptake of Academic Library Services in Selected Universities in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The significance of social media in academic library cannot be overstressed. The evolution of *Information technology in academic libraries has presented change in users' views, demands, alterations in library services and changes in library staff functions. Academic Libraries have adopted and embraced various social media tools. However, there seems to be no clear picture on how exactly the social media technologies are being used by staff in the library for academic library services. This study was on utilization of social media platforms in improving uptake of academic library services in selected universities in Kenya. The study was basically narrowed to selected public university libraries in Kitui and Muranga Counties. The study aimed at achieving examining the factors influencing the use of social media in improving the uptake of academic library services. The study adopted Technology Acceptance Model as its conceptual framework. Descriptive research design was adopted, applying qualitative and quantitative methods. The target population comprised of two selected public university libraries in Kitui and Muranga Counties. The total sample size was 17 Librarians inclusive of the Chief University Librarians while total sample size for postgraduate students was 400. Literature was reviewed based on the objectives of the study. Semi-structured questionnaires were tools used for collection of data. Pilot study was carried out at Kenyatta university Kitui campus library which had similar characteristics to the libraries where the research was done to determine the reliability and validity of data collection tools. From the analysis of the collected data, the study established seventeen (17) different types of social media platforms that are currently being used to enhance uptake of the academic libraries' services. Facebook and YouTube were the most outstanding of the platforms. Internet connectivity stood out among the factors influencing the use of social media platforms to enhance uptake of library and information services.*

Key Words: *Social Media Platforms, Uptake of Academic Library Services, Universities in Kenya*

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1.0 Introduction

1.2 Background to the Study

Social media is a modern device which permits clients to swiftly generate and distribute to the public, (Matthew Hudson, 2020). Social media covers a broad series of sites and applications. The benefit of adopting and applying social media is huge. Interest in social media is escalating, on the one hand knowledge workers and managers are hoping to get engaged in this collaborative world, whereas they may not feel inspired or may not be well informed of the advantages of using these tools for work purposes. Libraries in the 21st century are adopting

the usage of social media in order to connect to its clientele (Yalung *et al.*, 2020). This is a cost-efficient method of improving the standard of the services rendered via library.

Social media may be utilized to fulfil library users' anticipations, which provides greater services in gaining information and conditions needed. In this technological era, libraries have become more modern in their services, thus providing exceptional and unique library quality services for their 21st century users. Technological age has broadened the duties of librarians to deliver an extensive variety of resources to clients in addition to services that stretch outside actual walls of the library (Skare, 2018). Social media apps are highly used by students for a lot of non-academic purposes; these practices may severely distress students' educational life and education involvements, (Ali *et al.*, 2017).

In United States of America, university libraries social platforms are used to market library systems and resources to clients. Social platforms they use include twitter, blogs, flickr, podcasts, online videos and facebook is the most widespread according to (Rogers 2009). Macmanus, (2012), South Carolina State Library, the most common social platforms used are facebook and twitter other social media platforms used include, blog, youtube, flickr, google docs, wikis (Jain, 2013). Surveys of librarians in the U.S. and internationally display those librarians identify the use of social media as an advertising tool, the most significant aspect of their usage. The most prevalent use for social media is to promote facilities or resources at the library, (Trucks, 2019). Librarians in the 21st period are accepting the use of social media in order to stretch out to its clientele, (Yalung *et al.*, 2020). Librarians in the U.S. are increasingly using different types of social media to link with library users and to create library programmes and services reachable to the public (Idiedo, 2020).

In Asia, Bahar Biçen Aras, social media role in promoting University libraries in Marmara region, a total of 66 universities used for the study, the usage of online social tools by libraries and information administrations is gradually widespread besides being developing device engaged to connect with more promising library users, furthermore spreading services given to specific libraries, (Suraweera *et al.*, 2010). Aras & Çolaklar, (2015), also points that use of social platforms in university libraries in promotion and distribution is common. Information centres frequently use twitter, facebook, youtube or blogs to update on incidents, systems, or facilities. (Stoeckel & Sinkinson, 2015).

In Africa, Idiedo, (2020), librarians attitude ' on use of social media in information dissemination in universities in south- south Nigeria cites (Makori, 2012) social media use and practice by librarians in Africa University libraries is still at its lowest level in comparison to growth in other parts of the world. South Africa libraries have made great advancement in use of social platforms networks, though a good number were still yet to recognize the current system . According to K. D. Toit, (2013), Social Media for Libraries current studies show beyond doubt surge in intake of social media in South Africa. Globally a similar scenario is experienced with regards to social media with annual growth in use of social platforms. Statistics of operational users on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn in South Africa (Vermeulen, 2013): indicates 129% growth on twitter use between period of 2012 and 2013 August. Facebook's has realized tremendous growth in South Africa during the last 12 months, 87% of South African users accessing it from their cell phones. A growth of 1.9-million users in LinkedIn between 2012 to 2.7-million in 2013 August. According to Abok & Kwanya, (2016), in their study increasing the capability of social media in fulfilling library services to users: research conducted in technical university of Kenya library cites (Ezeani and Igwesi, 2012) libraries in Nigeria have commenced to employ social media instruments to be able to match pace with their users. Social media platforms are mostly used to deliver present and modern

information to consumers, provide connections to other open-source library materials, and offer information on latest arrivals of books through the library link (Dankowski, 2013).

In Kenya, Karanja, Joan Wanjiru (2008), Utilization of social media in Knowledge Sharing in Academic Libraries, a case of Kirinyaga university library cites (Nielsen and Razmerita, 2014), academic libraries are presently employing use of tools like whatsapp, facebook, youtube and twitter to aid in distribution of information materials, providing of orientation services, establishment of expert networks, and marketing of services they provide in libraries. According to (Nielsen and Razmerita, 2014), libraries that have set out use of social networks have profited greatly over enhanced tools of retrieving information, condensed business operation fee, improved returns and added innovative goods and services (Karanja, 2018). In line with the swift development of digital resources; libraries currently are accepting various social media expertise to better attend online proficiencies to their library community.

The study was conducted in South Eastern Kenya University (SEKU) and Murang'a University College (MRUC) libraries, South Eastern Kenya University Library and Murang'a University Technology libraries both offers information resources in both print and electronic formats which support teaching, learning and research. They have embraced the usage of information and communication technology associated facilities in conveyance of their services and online access to e-resources and digital content. The library setting has also access to WIFI internet connectivity. The universities were both given charter in the same year, are developing public universities in rural areas and slightly of the same size. It was interesting to find out how South Eastern Kenya University (SEKU) and Murang'a University College (MRUC) libraries uses social media in improving the uptake of their academic library services.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Framework

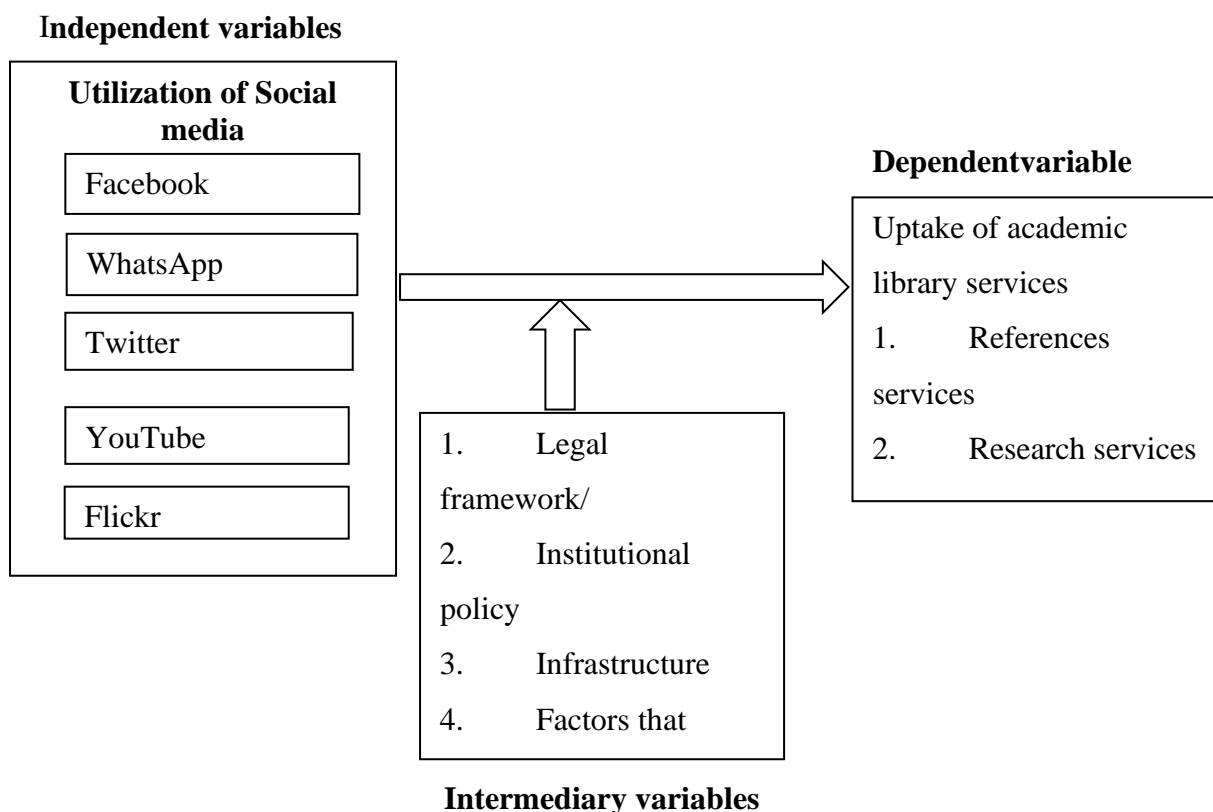


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Source: Researcher (2022)

The dependent variables of the study included reference services, research services and information services. If staff are informed of existence of social platforms, have access to social media, if the social media is available to staff users and they are able to use them appropriately while the legal framework, institutional policy, infrastructure and factors that enables, allows and supports the staff and users to use social media platforms like Facebook, twitter, YouTube and WhatsApp the outcome was that social media improved the uptake of academic library services that include reference services, research services and information services.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The research applied Technology acceptance model (TAM). This model was established by Fred Davis in 1985. The study model predicts use and acceptance of information systems and technology by specific users. In TAM model, two factors are perceived usefulness and convenience in use. The model forecasts the tolerance of a device and categorizes adjustments which is essential to be induced to the system to make it acceptable to users. Perceived usefulness is level which a person trusts that the usage of a system will improve his routine. Convenience in use is level of confidence one has in that use of a system will be smooth the two will affect the utilization and implementation of social platforms in enhancing use of academic library services. Significance of TAM model to the study is once users are confident with use of social technology platforms and accepts media platforms that was to lead to better use of social technologies which was in turn improve the uptake of academic library services.

2.3 Literature Review

2.3.1 Types and Uses of Social Media Platforms

Matthew, (2020) defines social media as a digital instrument that allows users to swiftly generate and share content with the public. Social media covers an extensive variety of sites and apps. (Igwe, n.d.)in his study the role of a Social Media Librarian in academic libraries explains that the Academic libraries across the world are progressively incorporating social media as means to realizing their principal concern of supporting education and research in their respective higher organizations. Librarians can render various library services for instance delivering resources to support education, cultural growth and ensuring accessibility to materials using media platforms tools like blog, whatsapp, twitter, facebook, youtube and linkedIn.

The platforms unique features like blogging, remarking and associate promotion, more participation, confidential messaging, debate settings, mass media and audiovisual aid uploading, collaborative and cooperative education rises vigorous. library use, encourages library functions. The commonly used platforms in university libraries include;

Facebook according to Wikipedia, facebook: is an American media platform conglomerate corporation based in Menlo Park, California. Facebook is the most popular social platform used for creating library awareness and marketing.

Twitter: Wikipedia defines twitter is an American microblog and social network service on where users interact with messages known as tweets. Users registered have the privilege of posting, liking and retweeting tweets, users not registered are only able to read them.

Blogs: According to google blog is an oftenly updated site or web page, one regulated by an group or individual, written in a conversational style or informal style, Weblogs are websites that secure specific beliefs, thoughts, or feelings gradually.

Flickr: Wikipedia defines Flickr as an American service that host video or image, as well as an online community. Ludicorp created this service in 2004 and it is popular in hosting high resolution images by professional photographers and amateur.

YouTube: Wikipedia defines YouTube as an American video-sharing online platform. Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim former PayPal employees created YouTube service in February 2005. Library videos, e-learning tutorials, events and other library services videos can be effectively used to promote and webcast through YouTube.

Pinterest: according to Wikipedia Pinterest is an American image sharing and social platform service tailor made to aid in discovering and saving of information on the World Wide Web using photos and, on a lesser extent, animated videos and GIFs, in the form of pinboards.

Slide Share: according to (Laura Spencer, 2017) SlideShare is a widespread exhibition and document distribution platform owned by LinkedIn. Since LinkedIn is a professional networking platform, SlideShare users tend to be focused on business.

Instagram: Bedriuw, (2020) defines Instagram as an American video and image sharing social networking service owned by Facebook, Instagram is user friendly and a good platform for circulation of images and engaging in video presentation with public.

Google+: Wikipedia defines google+ as social tool similar to Facebook that permit the users to build on, request, send, modify, transmit videos feature. The library can share the information of new services with the help of this tool to the members of a group using google services like newscasts & events.

Wiki: according to oxford dictionary Wiki as an internet site or catalogue established by a community of users, permitting users to enhance and edit content. Wiki acts as knowledge management tool. Other forms of social media platforms include, WhatsApp, Myspace, Tiktok, Snapchat Google Hangouts, Teacher Tube, Library Thing and Web 2.0.

2.3.2 Factors that Affect Utilization of Available Social Media Platforms in Universities Libraries

Anwar, (2019) in his study social media makes things possible for librarians explains that the quick growth of social media use and connected devices have simplified things for the library staff and experts. Social platforms acts as quickest channel of communication in present community, where every person can get in touch in a snap. Information specialists are learning to be familiar with social media plus correlated devices to implement it in associated individual information centre. Information specialists create online podium via social website to network with the clients, reach out to the targeted clientele, create awareness amongst users and for the marketing of their facilities and services. Library authorities have opinion that social media remains excellent way to attract library users to the library. Social media is putting an enormous push to academic libraries and resource centers to promote their amenities and facilities.

Social platforms put together library users in one place to employ their thoughts plus opinions about their appropriate and exact information. Library professionals are finding it easier to decrease gap amongst library clients, resources and services they are offering. Likewise, media platforms use in libraries is through its uses approach hence facilitating the achievement of library aims and purposes. Equally, social media use helps library experts improve on services effectiveness and efficiency. Social media creates connection amongst library services and facilities. Factors that impact use of social platforms in information centers include, communication with possible clients, promotion of services and resources, circulation and receiving the knowledge, conducting search for new clientele, time saving for library users,

achieving set goals and objectives of the library, creating a conducive environment and improving the library image.

According to Bristy, (2016) benefits of SNS (social networking sites) include easier communication with persons of alike interests, interaction with potential new friends, and keeping in touch with long-lost friends. Being able to generate a personal page without any particular technical skill, free signing-up, posting fascinating things and accomplishments. Mansumittrchai, Park, & Chiu, (2012). People implement social networking sites, because they may want to meet and make new friends, get in touch with old friends, pass free time, connect with interesting groups, create blog for friends and family, produce, share photos, videos and music, show own style. (Gangadharbatla, 2008). A few studies have researched on the pre-existence of social networking implementation. Different investigations show that people connect with social networking sites for a number of reasons, such as get entertained, posting or looking at photos, get kill boredom, reply someone trying to get in touch, communicate to somebody when there is no other way to do so, send messages to several individuals and to track the trend of using SNS.

3.0 Research Methods

The researcher adopted descriptive research design. The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather and analyse data. The research locale was Kitui and Muranga counties in Kenya. For the purposes of this study, only two institutions South Eastern Kenya University (SEKU) and Murang'a University Technology (MRUT) was used. Murang'a University Technology (MRUT) is evolved branch of JKUAT. Murang'a University Technology is tactically placed 1.5 km from Murang'a Town in Muranga County, MRUT a grown branch of MCT. South Eastern Kenya University (SEKU) is located in the Lower Yatta District in Kwa Vonza division, 13 Kilometers off Kwa Vonza Market, along the Kitui-Machakos main road. This study only covered public libraries. The reason behind settling for South Eastern Kenya University (SEKU) and Murang'a University Technology (MRUT) libraries is that they represent public university libraries in Kenya in the rural areas, they also got the charters in the same year 2013, they both have got libraries of the same size, these institutions are more likely to be affected with this study on how social media platforms may be utilised to improve uptake of academic library services in selected universities in Kenya.

The audience targeted comprised of librarians and postgraduate users from two selected chartered academic libraries in Kitui and Muranga Counties. The libraries are Murang'a University Technology (MRUT) and South Eastern Kenya University (SEKU). The target audience for this research is (MRUT) and (SEKU) library users and staff. The staff are believed to be skilled librarians, with familiarity in areas related to library facilities and procedures. Murang'a University Technology (MRUT) library has 6 members of staff which includes Chief Librarian plus 200 postgraduate students and South Eastern Kenya University (SEKU) has 11 members of staff plus the chief librarian and 200 postgraduate students. The study used semi-structured questionnaires for collection of its data. A questionnaire is defined as a research tool that is composed of a set of printed questions or urge with answers used to collect information from a respondent, (QuestionPro, 2020). Quantitative data evaluated by use of descriptive data such as rate of recurrence and ratio gave answers to research queries. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) tool facilitated statistics analysis. Qualitative and quantitative data presented in textual form, tables, and bar graphs.

4.0 Data Analysis Results

4.1 Types of social platforms used in improving uptake of academic library services

The first objective of the current study was to establish the types of social media platforms that are commonly used by postgraduate students to access library services. This objective was assessed by asking the students to indicate the different social media platforms they use frequently to access different library services. The sampled librarians were also asked to indicate their commonly used social media platforms to offer library services.

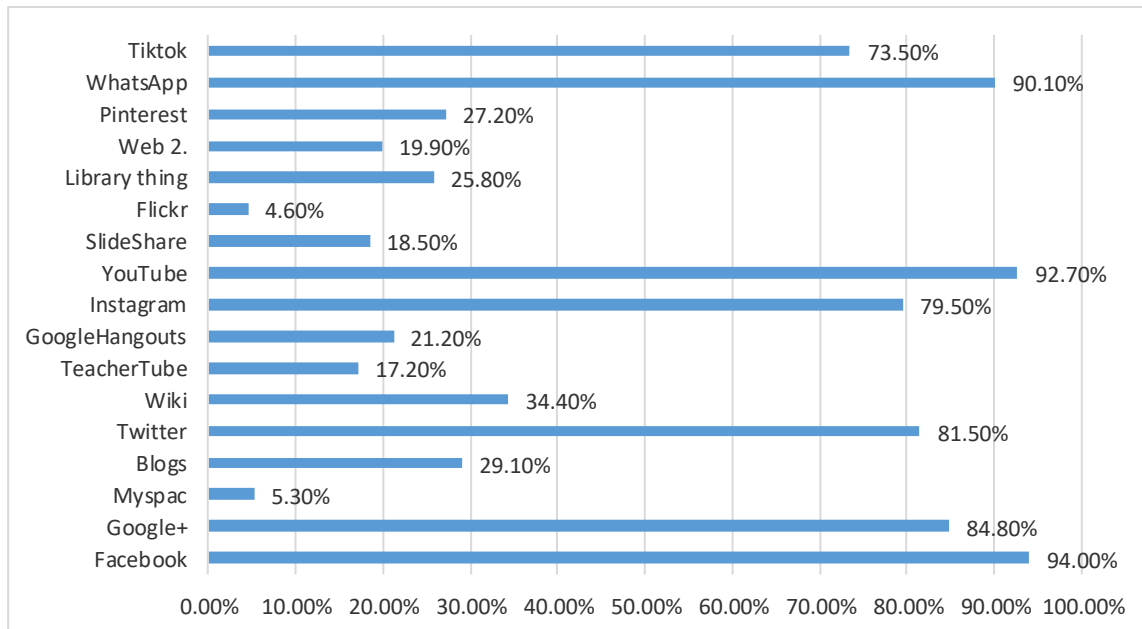


Figure 1: Commonly used Social media platforms among Students

Figure 1 above indicates that seventeen (17) social media platforms were identified as commonly used by postgraduate students to access library services. However, some of the platforms were more popular. For instance, Facebook was the most popular social platform used to access library services by the postgraduate students as cited by 94% of the sampled respondents. This finding conforms to Cheng, Lam and Chiu (2020) that reported Facebook as the most popular tool used by libraries in marketing their services. The popularity of Facebook was also outstanding among the sampled librarians as 93.3% of them indicated it as their commonly used social media platform to offer library services as shown in Figure 2.

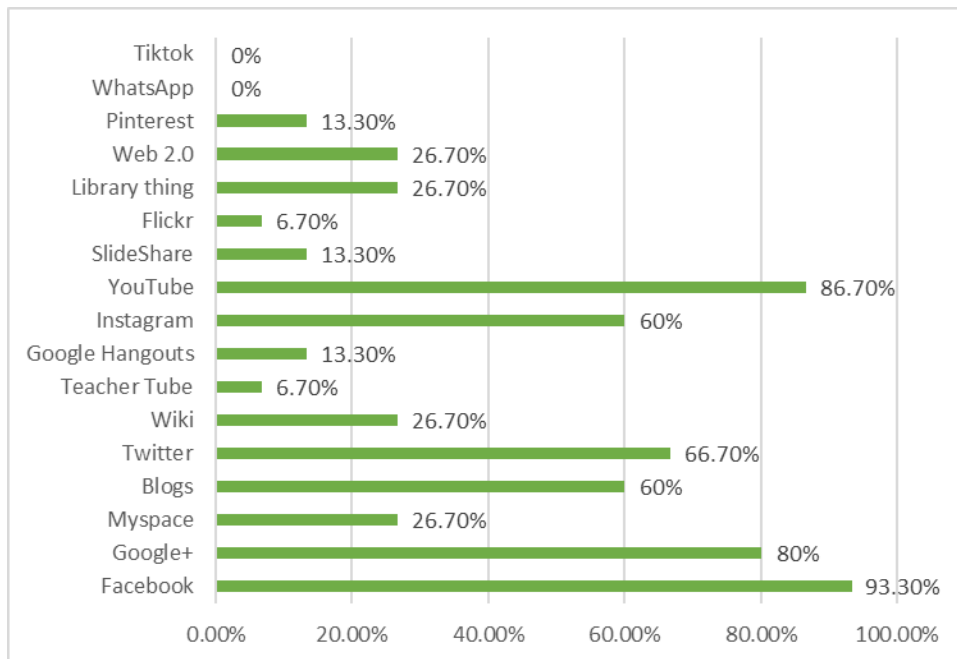


Figure 2: Commonly used Social media platforms among Librarians

The second platform in terms of popularity among the postgraduate students and the librarians is Youtube according to 92.7% of the students (Figure 4.3) and 86.7% of the librarians. Whereas 90.1% of the students indicated WhatsApp as their commonly used social media platform when accessing library services, none of the sampled librarians indicated the same platform among their commonly used avenues in providing library services. This finding confirms Nilanjana and Chanda (2018) that revealed the Information Professionals' tendency to use of WhatsApp messenger exclusively for communication purposes among themselves without applying it serving their end users. This trend was also similar in the case of Tiktok and Blogs. While 73.5% of the students indicated that they use Tiktok to access library services, none of the librarians mentioned Tiktok among their commonly used platforms. The inverse was true for blogs, which appeared a common platform among 60% of the sampled librarians but was never cited by any of the students. This observation points to a possible technological disconnect between academic librarians and the students, who are the biggest portion of the patrons.

Google+ was also popular among the sampled postgraduate students and the librarian as indicated by 84% of the students and 80% of the librarians. Other outstanding social media platforms between both categories of the respondents included Twitter (81.5% of the students and 66.7% of the librarians), and Instagram (79.5% of the students and 60% of the librarians). Other social medial platforms like Pinterest, Web2, Library Thing, Flicr, Slideshare, GoogleHangouts, Teacher Tube, Wiki, and Myspace were less popular and hardly used by many of the sampled respondents. Each of these platforms were used by less than 40% of either the postgraduate students or the librarians in accessing or delivery library services.

4.2 Factors influencing usage of media platforms

The study's third objective was to establish the main factors that influence the use of different social media platforms in the access and provision of library services among postgraduate students and academic librarians respectively. Both postgraduate students and librarians were requested to indicate factors influencing their use of social media platforms to use or offer library services.

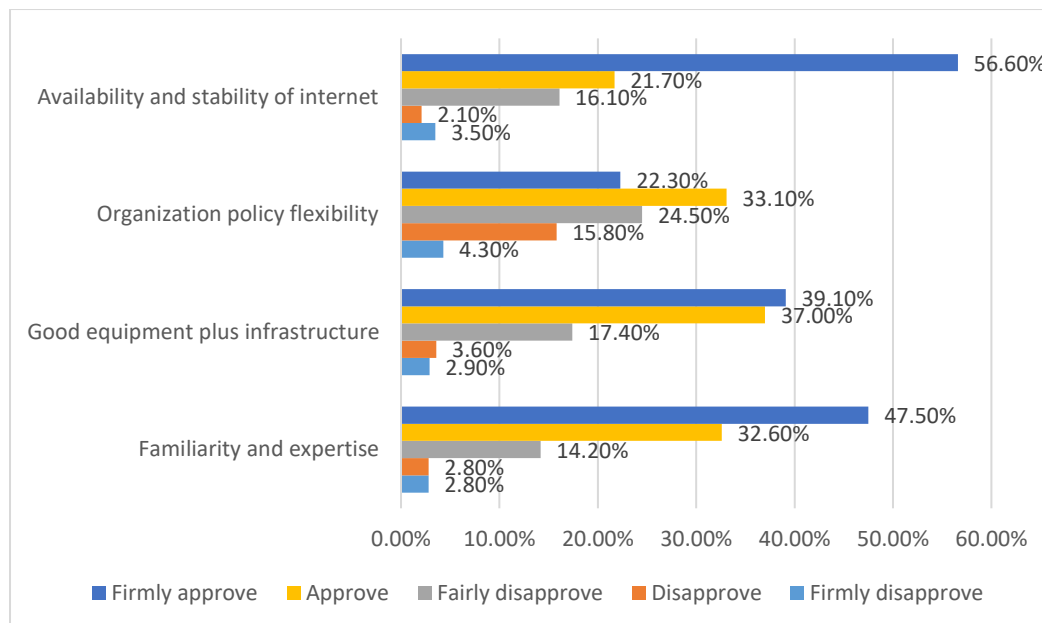


Figure 3: Factors influencing Students' usage of Social media

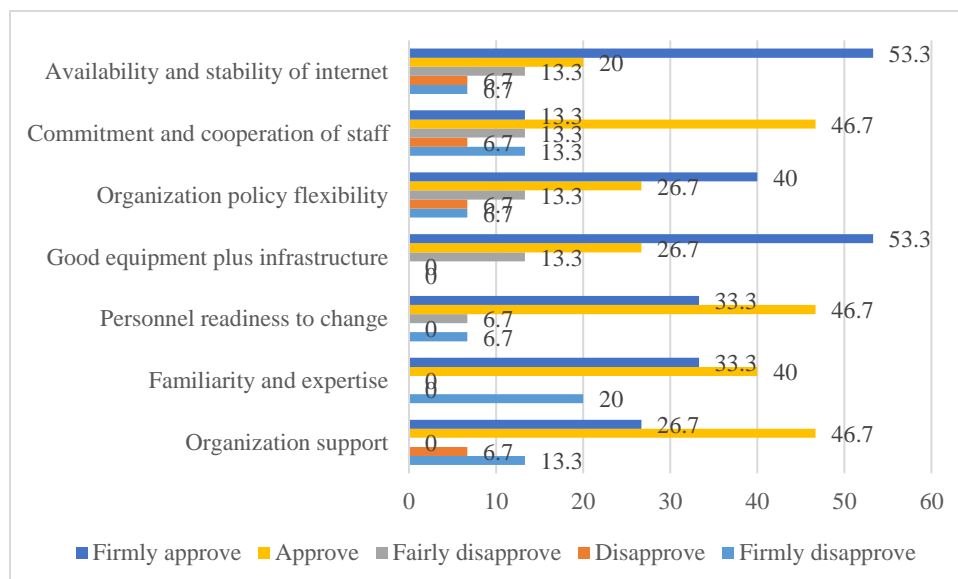


Figure 4: Factors influencing Librarians' usage of Social media

Whereas the sampled postgraduates identified four factors influencing their usage of social media platforms to access library services, the librarians identified seven factors including the four mentioned by the students. The most outstanding factor between both categories of the respondents was availability and stability of internet. A big percentage, 56.6% and 53.3% of the students and librarians respectively firmly approved availability and stability of internet as a factor influencing their use of social media platforms in accessing or offering library services. The same factor was approved by 21.7% of the students and 20% the sampled librarians. Less than 7% of both categories of the respondents disapproved the influence of internet availability and stability in their use of library services. This finding conforms to O'Dell (2010) that pointed out at internet connectivity and social media application as key opportunities for providers of information services.

However, the sampled students and librarians differed in their ranking of the second most influential factor. Familiarity and level of expertise was number two in terms of influencing

the students' usage of social media platforms as firmly approved by 47.5% and approved by 32.6% of the students. The same factor was "firmly approved" and "approved" by 33.3% and 40% of the sampled librarians. However, 20% of the librarians firmly disapproved the influence of familiarity and expertise in their use of social media platforms to offer library services. According to majority of the librarians, good equipment and infrastructure were the second-most influential factors in their use of social media platforms. This was "firmly approved" and "approved" by 53.3% and 26.7% of them respectively. Similarly, 39.1% and 37% of the students "firmly approved" and "approved" the same factor in their use of social media platforms to access library services. Fair approval of the same factors was expressed by 17.4% of the students. While 3.6% and 2.9% of the students "disapproved" and "strongly disapproved" the influence of good equipment and infrastructure in their use of social media platforms, none of the librarians expressed any form of disapproval of the same factor. It can be deduced that good equipment and infrastructure were more influential to the librarians' use of social compared to the sampled students. This difference may be attributed to the fact that uploading information resources or offering library services through different social media platforms required advanced equipment and infrastructure compared to the equipment's needed by end-users to access such services (Sun & Lu, 2022).

Another factor influencing the sampled respondents' use of different social media platforms was flexibility of an organization's policy. This was "firmly approved" by 22.3% and 40% of the postgraduate students and the sampled librarians respectively. The same factors was "approved" by 33.1% and 26.7% of the students and librarians respectively. Fair approval of the same factor was expressed by 24.5% and 13.3% of the students and librarian in that order. Nevertheless, 15.8% and 6.7% of the students and librarians disapproved the influence of the same factor in their use of social media platforms to access or offer library services. Other three factors identified by the librarians include commitment and cooperation among members of the library staff, personnel's readiness to change, and organization's support. The facts that the three factors are management issues may have their exclusion from the list of factors influencing postgraduate students' use of social media platforms. However, they were all approved by 46.7% of the sampled librarians. However, the influence of personnel's readiness to change received firm approval from the largest number, 33.3% of the librarians. It was followed by organization support (26.7%) then commitment and cooperation of the library staff at 13.3%.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

An impressive number of social media platforms is currently being used to enhance uptake of academic library services among postgraduate students. Facebook and Youtube are among the most used of the platforms by both students and librarians. This usage is anchored on availability of Wi-Fi or internet connectivity within the academic libraries or at the users' residential homes. The place of internet connectivity is furthered highlighted by the study's observation that availability and stability of internet connection is a key factor influencing the postgraduate students and librarians' use of social media platforms to access or offer library and information services. However, the challenges that substantial inhibit usage of the said platforms are yet to be established besides limited internet connectivity.

5.4 Recommendations


The study recommends that chief University Librarians or decision makers within academic libraries are advised to embrace different social media platforms as viable vehicles of enhancing uptake of their services. Further, the decision makers within academic libraries

should prioritize sensitization of their users and members of staff on the use of Facebook and Youtube as they key platforms through which they can boost uptake of their services among majority of their students.

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