

INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: MAKERERE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Social media tools are essential for instant communication. These tools are increasingly contributing to instant communication in this virtual environment. It is therefore important for libraries to reconsider their use. Social media refers to the interaction, sharing, creation of information, videos and pictures in the virtual world using a computer as a tool of moderation; based on the ability of the networked people to post and analyze other people's thoughts. Social media can help researchers, academicians, students to communicate instantly and gain increased access to publications and resources in libraries. These tools can contribute to facilitating access to library holdings in digitized environment. This paper highlights the roles of social media tools in promoting and facilitating access to knowledge; the extent to which Makerere University library is benefiting from these platforms to enhance availability of knowledge. This paper probes into challenges and recommendation of social media tools in libraries. Data was collected using online questionnaire sent to 40 undergraduate final year students selected from four colleges. Questionnaires were sent to final year students from the respective colleges who had cleared with the university library as required. The study revealed that students take advantage of the virtual environment in the library to do both their academic and non academic social networking. The library has not utilized the virtual environment to communicate to users instantly. The study recommended that in order to stay in touch with the users, the library should take advantage of the virtual environment to communicate to users instantly.

Keywords: Social media; Academic perspective; Library resources; Makerere University Library; Use of social media

1. Introduction

Social media refers to the interaction, sharing and creation of information, videos and pictures in the virtual world using a computer as a tool of moderation. It is based on the ability of the networked people to post and analyze other people's thoughts. These tools are increasingly contributing to instant communication in this networked environment. It is therefore important for libraries to take advantage of these tools. Social media, social media tools are essential for instant communication. Researchers, academicians, students can communicate instantly and gain increased access to publications and resources available in libraries. These tools can contribute to facilitating access to library holdings in this digitized environment. Social media platforms are increasingly becoming a mode of communication in all sectors. It is therefore important for libraries to take advantage of these tools. This calls the attention of libraries for its relevance.

Unlike posters and newsletters used by libraries to communicate social media is like a reference librarian in the background where the library creates a mode of dialogue with the users in the steady stream of content.

1.1 Makerere University Library Systems

Makerere University started operating a collegiate system in March 2012 as per (GOU, 2012). This resulted into formation of 10 constituent colleges which include College of Health Sciences (CHS); College of Business and Management Studies (COBAMS); College of Veterinary and Animal Science (COVABS); College of Computing and Information Sciences (COCIS); College of Education and External Studies (CEES); College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS); College of Agriculture and Environmental Studies (CAES); College of Natural Sciences (CONAS); College of Engineering, Design and Architectural Technology (CEDAT) and School of Law (SLAW). This transformation also called for the library structure to perform as the law dictated. However, the University Library maintained its role of serving the newly formed colleges accordingly. Due to such change the number of students from the respective colleges is also becoming bigger. Thus trainings, reference services and contributing to the goal of teaching, learning and research of the whole institution. With these multi roles of the University library there is need of changing the mode of communication to the widespread users in the respective disciplines. This called for the study into the integration of social media into the academic setting.

2. Objectives

The study from which this paper is derived had three objectives:- First, to highlight the important roles of social media tools in promoting and facilitating access to knowledge. Secondly, to find out how the library can use the social for the benefit of students. Thirdly, to establish the extent to which Makerere University is taking advantage of these platforms to enhance the availability of knowledge and to investigate the challenges and recommendation of social media tools in libraries.

3. Literature review

Social media is now playing a major role in the world youth community and now focus has been put on libraries how they can integrate it in the academic setting in order to remain relevant to their patrons.

Within the existing literature, various social media tools have been used for different purposes in order to enhance the teaching, learning and research at universities. In the study about social media and academic libraries (Collins & Quan-Haase, 2012) where a 21 member libraries of the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) was used, social media platform available on the library website suggested that libraries could improve their reach by diversifying some of their output in formats like YouTube videos rather than posts only. In this same study, (Collins & Quan-Haase, 2012) further stated that social media in academic libraries serves a variety of purposes ranging from news, promotions, external linkages, response to requests and general announcements. In a research carried out about social media for academics (Fiander, 2012) argued that social media, being *social*, users do not expect research help or catalogue search box via social channels but expect library staff to pay attention to their complaints about service quality and a prompt response, events and provide customer support services.

In a review of library literature and information full text database for articles about social networking (Dickson & Holley, 2010) urged libraries to use social media to continuously consider adjustments in the use of social platforms in order to be more effective to their users and outside the library walls. However, (Romero, 2011) realized a challenge for libraries of opening a new channel of communication with users, though, recommended social media as valuable tools in increasing the visibility and improving the services of an institution and its users' experience and urged libraries to make an effort to manage these resources efficiently in order to obtain maximum return of their usage.

Scholars that have interrogated the use of facebook in higher education found out that actually students liked their instructional materials to be posted on facebook unlike their faculty hence retarding the greatest potential social media has in improving education (Roblyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman, & Witty, 2010).

4. Methodology and tools

This section presents the methodology that guided the study on integration of social media tools into academic libraries capturing the users' perspective. A descriptive design was employed in this study whereby both qualitative and quantitative data was collected concurrently. A descriptive study can accommodate both the survey and case studies from individual units (Sarantakos, 2005). In this regard the researcher was able to mail questionnaires to respondents who accepted to respond using their e-mails which they submitted at the time of clearance with the University Library.

At the time of the study, the university students that participated in this study comprised of students who had completed their final year in 2015 at Makerere University. Their representation signifies that they had been through with their academics at the university and the use of the various media for their completion among which social media is inclusive. Makerere University is currently under a collegiate system since 2012 (GOU, 2012) comprising of 10 colleges. In order to be considered for graduation, each student from the respective colleges is expected to report at the university library for clearance. For the purpose of this study students who had completed their final year were considered since they were expected to come and clear with the university library. Since there are ten colleges, for the purpose of this study students from four colleges were considered whereby a maximum of ten students was used employing a random sampling method hence a total of 40 students was used in this study. This study considered two colleges from the science orientation and two from the arts discipline. The College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS); College of Education and External studies were considered on the arts discipline while College of Natural Sciences (CONAS) and College of Engineering, Art and Design (CEDAT) were considered for the sciences. In this study an equal number of both the males and females were considered from the respective colleges. As students came to clear with the University Library the students who were within the required sample were approached and informed about the survey and consent for their involvement in the study was sought. Those that accepted were considered and their emails taken so that a semi structured questionnaire about the study was sent to the respondents online comprising of 18 questions. In order to establish the validity and reliability of the tools pretesting of the questionnaire was done using students from COCIS and CAES; ambiguities in the instruments were rectified then the actual data collection commenced with confidentiality as a major aspect to consider. Data was gathered using a Google forms which was sent to the respondents' e-mails addresses after acceptance to participate in the study. The data that was entered in Google forms was later exported to Microsoft excel for analysis whereby descriptive analysis was done in by running summary statistics, frequencies and cross tabulations which were later used for interpreting and report writing.

5. Study results and implications

5.1 Social Demographics

Out of the 40 questionnaires that were sent to the respondents 37 were returned whereby 19 of the respondents were males while 18 females managed to mail back the responses. These respondents comprised of different age groups with majority 22(66.1%) falling in the age range of 18-24 years followed by 9(25%) in the age range of 25-29; 30-34 made up 3(8.3%) while the least being 2(5.6%) in the age range of 40 and above (See table 1). In CHUSS and CEES all the expected respondents that is ten were got respectively while CEDAT had 9(25%) and 4 (11.1%) from CONAS. One respondent from College of Computing and Information Sciences (COCIS) and two respondents from College of Agriculture and Environmental Studies (CAES) were used for pretesting.

Age group	Frequency	Percent
18-24	22	59.5
25-29	9	24.3
30-34	4	10.8
40 & above	2	5.4
Total	37	100.0

Table 1: Composition of respondents' ages

Among the 4 colleges chosen 27% were from CHUSS, 27% CEES while CEDAT had 24% and CONAS 14% whereas the pretesting responses contributed 5% from CAES and 3% from COCIS.

College	Frequency	Percent
CHUSS	10	27
CEES	10	27
CEDAT	9	24
CONAS	5	14
COCIS	1	3
CAES	2	5
Total	37	100

Table 2: Composition of respondents

5.2 Awareness and Use of Social Media Tools

The findings indicated that all the respondents were knowledgeable about and used social media. The majority defined it as a mode of an online platform for communication, interaction and exchanging of information, ideas, skills, videos through internet. Thus referring to social media as an online platform of communicating, interacting and exchanging with people.

Social Media tool	Heard	Used
Facebook	26(70.3%)	23(62.2%)
Whatsap	19(51.4%)	16(43.2%)
Twitter	19(51.4%)	12(32.4%)
Instagram	11(29.7%)	5(13.5%)
Phones	7(18.9%)	5(13.5%)
Internet	5(13.5%)	3(8.1%)
Computers	5(13.5%)	4(10.8%)
Radios	5(13.5%)	4(10.8%)
Televisions	5(13.5%)	5(13.5%)
Utube	4(10.8%)	2(5.4%)
Email	4(10.8%)	2(5.4%)
Viber	4(10.8%)	5(13.5%)
Skype	3(8.1%)	1(2.7%)
LinkedIn	3(8.1%)	3(8.1%)
GooglePlus	3(8.1%)	2(5.4%)
Google	3(8.1%)	3(8.1%)
Messenger	2(5.4%)	1(2.7%)
Imo	2(5.4%)	1(2.7%)
gmail	2(5.4%)	3(8.1%)
Newspaper	1(2.7%)	1(2.7%)
Laptops	1(2.7%)	1(2.7%)
Hi 5	1(2.7%)	1(2.7%)
Myspace	1(2.7%)	0(0.0%)
Wechat	1(2.7%)	0(0.0%)
Drum	1(2.7%)	0(0.0%)
Yahoo	1(2.7%)	0(0.0%)
Wikispaces	1(2.7%)	0(0.0%)
Ipad	1(2.7%)	0(0.0%)
Tumbr	2(5.4%)	0(0.0%)
Twoo	1(2.7%)	0(0.0%)
Badoo	1(2.7%)	0(0.0%)

Table 3: Social media use

Based on the findings, respondents have heard and used a diverse number of social media tools. Facebook being the most heard (70.3%) and used (62.2%). This is followed by whatsapp and twitter. However, there was a number of respondents that cannot differentiate a social media tool and a social media device. For instance 18.9% who considered having heard phones and computers as social media tools and also the 13.5% who regarded having used it.

There was also a significant number of respondents that considered having used radios 10.8%, televisions 13.5% as a social media tool and another mentioned having heard a drum 2.7% as a social media tool though hadn't used. A respondent also mentioned having heard and used a newspaper as a social media tool. Surprisingly, the respondents that mentioned the television, radio, drum and newspaper defined social media well and were from different colleges.

The study revealed the majority of respondents use social media tools for Leisure, chatting and as a means of communication (see table 4) and very few use it for study purposes. The results indicate that social media is still at its infancy stages in the academic settings.

Use		CHUSS	CEES	CEDAT	CONAS	COCIS	CAES
Leisure/Chatting	24	5(50.0%)	6(60.0%)	7(77.8%)	4(80%)	1	1
Research	6	2(20.0%)	2(20.0%)	2(22.2%)	0(0.0%)		
Current awareness	14	2(20.0%)	4(40.0%)	4(44.4%)	3(60.0%)		1
Academic purposes	5	1(10.0%)	1(10.0%)	2(22.2%)	0(0.0%)		
Business transactions	8	1(10.0%)	1(10.0%)	3(33.3%)	1(20.0%)	1	1
Means of communication	21	9(90.0%)	4(40.0%)	5(55.6%)	1(20.0%)	1	1

Table 4: Use of social media tools

5.3 Social media use in academic setting

The study further revealed the various aspects in which respondents were using social media in the academic setting. From the findings 83.8% of the respondents indicated that they had ever used social media to access information about academic work while 16.2% had never used social media academically.

One female respondent from CHUSS said

“I used utube to watch the ntoroko landslides to get information about my coursework” This is in agreement with (Collins & Quan-Haase, 2012) recommendation where libraries could also use utube to improve their outputs. Whereas both male and female responded from CEDAT also noted that

“my class has a facebook page where we would catch up and share information on the course” while another responded that *“my class has a whatsapp where we would share among ourselves class timetables, deadlines of course works and assignment”, “I use facebook/whatsapp to communicate with my final year project supervisor who is out of the country”* and *“research on course works and attaining reading materials”*

From CEES, a male respondent said that *“On some occasions notes were uploaded to the B.com (Ext) Page which is ODL.COX”*. This revealed that social media is used in the various colleges and encouraged by the teaching staff. However, those who have never used social media in the academic setting one male respondent from CHUSS indicated that *“lecturers didn't prefer it”*

could not access the pages; was able to get the work from friends around; lack of having a mobile phone. This reveals that students embrace social media in the academic setting and just need support from faculty.

Thirdly, in order to investigate the challenges involved in social media use in libraries a survey was conducted involving undergraduate students who were in their final year of completion.

Use of Social media in library	Responses
Yes	27(73.0%)
No	8(21.6%)
NR	2(5.4%)

Table 5: Use of Social media in the library

From the findings, 73% of the respondents considered use of social media in the library. In order to use social media effectively the respondents mentioned that the library management should first streamline the following areas: First of all, the library to repeal one of its rules hindering students to use phones in the library to decongest the computers in the library. Secondly, ; putting wireless everywhere in the library will be useful. Other issues that ought to be considered and which the respondents revealed were: increase the time allocated to use the computers in the library. developing a software to enable all students communicate on academic issues; the study found out that correspondence on the social media platform should involve; informing users on the new developments and the rules in the library; library out to inform users about the available scholarships; updating new books on the social media pages; library can use social media to ease communication between students and library staff; to give updates of new learning materials available in the library; posting library updates informing students; designing programs that are academic oriented; getting feedback on services provided by the library and getting feedback from students; giving clear information and teaching the learner how to use it

However, the 21.6% that had never thought of using social media in the library did not differ from those who had considered using it in the library. Giving updates about new developments in the library like new reading materials, rules and regulations were among the issues they considered to use social media in the library while 5.4% never responded at all. Another finding from the survey indicated that facebook, whatsapp, twitter as the most applicable tools in the academic setting. Websites were also mentioned and an applicable tool of communication in the academic setting.

5.4 Challenges encountered in the use of social media in libraries

Among the challenges encountered in the use of social media in libraries the survey found out among others: decongestion in the computer laboratories found in the library; inaccessibility of some documents; inadequate internet connectivity; the rule of switching off phones and not using phones while in the library; lack of enough knowledge to use computers; the library blocked use of social media tools in the computer laboratories; limited power sockets where phones and laptops can be charged; misuse of information; lack of enough devices to use in accessing these services; diversion to other non academic work and lying and hiding true identity.

5.5 Suggestions for improvement

Respondents suggested Makerere University library to The survey considered increase on wireless connections; provision of enough computers for use; allocation of enough time when accessing internet in the library; promotion of social media platform my Makerere University Library; stable power in the library; restrictions on using library computers for searching information concerning studies only ought to be revised; creation of social media tools which aid mostly in the studies not entertainment; provision of multiple means of charging for phones and laptops; extension of the provision of wireless connections to college libraries; improve on network strength; Library should designate a room for students to use their phones when carrying out searches without fear of library staff; urged the library to make social media updates regular; Library should use social media to communicate scholarships and also bring up educative debates; The university should request every students to come with a personal laptop then use the funds for computers to increase on the strength of the networks.

6. Conclusions

Makerere university students are well conversant with social media tools and are using them in their daily transactions in all colleges. It is therefore essential for the library to integrating social media tools in the academic setting.

If the university could avail wireless connections everywhere in the library most of the students would be able to access information for their studies. This is vital and can help in the library setting in a number of aspects including: reduction of the fund that can be used to buy and maintain more equipment and reaching a number of students with the library information.

Based on the findings it is clear that students and faculty are already engaging social media in the academic settings. This calls for librarians to move to their space but librarians seem to be slow at involving the students in the academic library setting. The library should make an effort to move faster and meet their users in their space.

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