Use of Social Media by Religious Organizations in Nigeria: Lessons for Libraries and Information Centres

Uchechukwu Victoria ENWEANi[1] Catherine Chinyere EKE[2]

University Library, Chukwuemeka Odimegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus, Nigeria[1] Department of Library and Information Science, Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri[2]

enweani.uchechukwu@gmail.com[1] catherine.eke2018@gmail.com[2]

Abstract
Purpose: *This paper examined the lessons that libraries and information centres can learn from non-profit organizations use of social media platforms.*
Design/methodology: *The participatory approach and documentary evidence from websites were used to generate data for the study.*
Findings: *Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Instagram were revealed to be mostly used by the Christian Religious Organizations in Nigeria. These social media were used to keep members and the larger communities abreast of their programmes and church activities. They were also used as tools for attracting people to the church.*
Originality/value: *the study carried out using non-print organization (i.e Christian organization has a lot of implication for libraries and information centres. It has helped to bring the forefront the urgency and necessity of integrating social media to library services in all settings.*
Implications: *Libraries and information centres like Christian Religious Organizations should fully embrace the use of social media platforms in announcing arrival of new books, providing library orientation, current awareness services and SDI.*
Keywords: *Social Media, Non-Profit Organization, Christian Organizations, Religious Organization.*
Paper type: Empirical

Introduction

The rapid diffusion of social media applications is ushering in new possibilities for non-profit organizations to communicate with and engage the public (Nah & Sexton, n.d.). Social media is now being harnessed by religious organizations to disseminate information to their esteemed members and viewers. The advent of social media has created a social cyber environment, where people, businesses, organization etc connect to each other with ease irrespective of distance or geographical barriers. Non-profit organizations like any other organization have not been left out in the social networking activities. These organizations have fully embraced social media as a platform for telling the world who they are, what they do and where they are and why they are there. Social media have added new dimension to religious activities both in developed and developing countries. There is a lot that that religions organizations can do with social media tools. The introduction and expansion of social media technologies create new opportunities for development agencies, businesses, NGOs, and information agencies (Owiny, Mehta &Maretzki, 2014).

Social media is user-centred online content designed in a collaborative environment where users share opinions, knowledge and information with each other (Suraweera, et al (2011). Tools used in carrying out social media contents include: blogs, social networking sites (i.e. Facebook, Twitter), Wikis, photo sharing sites (i.e YouTube, Flicker, Instagram etc), podcasting and vodcasting. YouTube as a social media allows users to upload, share and view videos. For instance, It can be deployed by the religious organizations to showcase their activities and special event. Facebook allows individuals to post videos, share interests, make connections, and form groups with similar interests. Also, some services, such as Face book and Twitter, have a broad range of users, while others cater to specific interest. LinkedIn for instance has positioned itself as a professional networking site.

(McDowell & Morda, 2011). The blogs is a platform on a webpage where information, views, opinions or ideas are frequently updated and arranged in a reversed chronological order. However, the place of social media was aptly underscored by Aras (2014:23), when she asserted that:

> Millions of people are actively using social media. The most important reason is that people can be able to express themselves without hindrance by combining technology and social media. When people want to search or to give information about something, the social media is the first place that is looking on the internet. With mobile technologies communication is never cut off at home.

Non-profit organizations have come to realize the need to incorporate social media as a tool for keeping in touch with its members and the larger society. The social and communication pattern of our society are being shifted by the influx of social media products and services such as Twitter, Face book, YouTube, Flicker, Bloggers, WordPress, Delicious etc (Alonge, 2012). Not only do individual use these sites for self-promotion, business organizations have also started creating their own pages to promote their services (Alkindi & Al-Suqri, 2013).

Social media when used effectively guarantees the opportunity to communicate with and engaged an organization's employees and customers in exciting new ways (Ployhart, 2011). Mannan (2012:209) noted that:

> Social networks have emerged as a unique means of communication and collaborations for all kinds of people. It has provided us with an effective platform for making our voices heard and also for keeping in touch with the thoughts and opinions voiced by other people. The people who form social networks or online communities actively engaged themselves in constant exchange of views and ideas, thereby creating social groups who knowingly or unknowingly influence the thoughts and opinions of the group members.

Nonprofit organizations such as religious organizations derived benefits from using social media for promoting their activities which include: building brand loyalty, saving time, enhancing fast two-way communication, saves costs and increase revenue, increases patronage. These benefits are applicable to the libraries and information centres. Social media do not require specialized skills or training, even though some social media technologies require reading and writing abilities, so they are accessible only to literate individuals (Owiny, Mehta & Maretzki, 2014; Akporhonor & Olise, 2015).

Justification for the Study

The study focuses on the use of social media tools by some selected religious organizations. There is no research regarding the usage of social media by religious organization in Nigeria. It is imperative for library and information service providers to have full understanding of what religious organization do using social media. This would help them to re-appraise their services as a non-profit organization like the religious organizations and see how to integrate it to their services. Nevertheless, if non-profit organization like Religious Organization is exploiting social media to spread messages about themselves, their activities in order to retain followership and membership, then libraries cannot exclude themselves from this trend. It is against this backdrop, that this study seeks to examine the practical lessons that libraries in Nigeria should draw from use of social media by religious organization.

This study is timely because religious organizations and libraries are non-profit organization hence, the need to carry out this study.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to draw lessons that libraries can learn from religious organizations that have integrated social media to their services with special reference to Christian Religious Organizations in Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study are, to:

i. ascertain the type of social media used by Christian religious organizations in Nigeria.
ii. ascertain/compare the number of followers of their social media page.
iii. identify the type of information posted on the social media pages
iv. draw the lessons that libraries and information centres can learn from non-profit organizations adoption of social media in the provision of services.

Uchechukwu Victoria Enweani[1] Catherine Chinyere Eke[2]

Literature Review

Several articles have been published on use of social media but none specifically has addressed the lessons that libraries can learn from non-profit organizations. However, the following related articles are reviewed.

McDowell & Morda (2011) posits that people may use social networking services for different reasons: to network with new contacts, reconnect with former friends, maintain current relationships, build or promote a business or project, participate on discussions about a certain topic, or just have fun meeting and interacting with other users. According to Religious Institute (2013), far fewer are using other social media. Only 27% of congregations have a blog, only one in four (23%) are on Twitter, and only 20% have a YouTube channel. Almost all congregations (94%) use email to communicate with their congregations, and 74% of congregations' use facebook posting. Only one in three (31%) use texting, and 27% use blogs to communicate. Furthermore, social media is being used for congregational news (81%) and clergy interaction with congregants (68%), for reaching people outside of the congregation (53%), for members interacting with each other (43) and for disseminating prayer request (29%).Religious Institute (2013) in their survey reveals that clergy use social media in large members, with 96% having a personal facebook page and 60% using facebook once or more per day. Forty percent of clergy report that they have a Twitter account.

Also, Abdullah et al (2015) affirms that the interactive aura of the new media confers an unprecedented popularity on them and the ubiquity of the social networking sites within their short period of arrival is unparallel in the annals of media industry (Eke, Omekwu & Odoh, 2014). Social media served a variety of different purposes: social media is being used as tool that enhances communication. They are media for social interaction, highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques (Alonge, 2012). Social media are web-based tools and technologies used to share information and turn communication into interactive dialogue with internal or external audiences (Ployhart, 2011).

Rogers (2012) revealed that libraries are using Web 2.0 tools to collaborate with other college department, introduce new and showcase existing resources, have conversations with users and learn more about/from them, sharing reading suggestions etc. Ployhart (2011) posits that social media use may be formal or informal. He identified formal applications of social media to include: recruitment and selection, socialization and on boarding, training and developing and knowledge sharing and transfer.

Akporhonor & Olise (2015) highlighted on the following benefits that librarians derived from using social media for promoting library and information resources and services. These benefits are applicable to the religious organizations and they include: building brand loyalty; saves time, enhanced fast two-way communication, saves costs and increase revenue, increases patronage. Owiny, Mehta & Maretzki (2014) notes that social media do not require specialized skills or training, even though some social media technologies required reading and writing abilities so they are accessible only to literate individuals.

Akporhonor & Olise (2015) identified challenges such as privacy concern problems, low level of technologies penetration and network problems as issues that must be looked at critically for maximum tapping of the benefits derived from the use of social media. Religions Institute (2013) recommends that congregations have formalized written policies governing all online interactions and these should govern use of social media, websites, and other internet technologies.

Methodology

Various Christian religious organizations were purposively selected for the study based on confirmation of their presence and visibility in digital social space. The parameters for inclusion are follows:

1. Each ministry has a functional website
2. Each ministry has a account with facebook, twitter and YouTube
3. Each ministry updates its social media applications
4. The research first of all, visited their website and like there Facebook page and followed them on twitter.

The researcher visited the selected Christian organizations page to like their Facebook pages, follows them on their twitter handle and subscribed to their Youtube. Their activities were monitored over a period of six months between 18th of December, 2016 to 18th of December 2018.

Name of Church	Facebook Likes	Tweets	Twitter			Instagram		YouTube
			Following	Followers	Likes	Post	Followers	Subscribers
Deeper Life Bible Church	143,369	4,105	7	10,085		498		
Salvation Ministries	180,161	5,119	-	28,137	1,224			7,117
Dunamis Intl' Gospel Centre	360,093	11,274	17	12,074	37	-	-	-
Omega Fire Ministries	300,886	5	-	503			-	660
Living Faith Tabernacle Canaan land, Otta	1,547,058	-	-	-		-	-	-
Daystar Christian Centre	133,480	25,880	44	97,692	19			5,859
Redeemed Christian Church of God	304, 098	18,523	201	31,228	955			
Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries	18, 016	1,211	53	5,630	1			2,466

Findings and Discussion
Table 1 showing the various Church positions (i.e. number of likes, followers and subscribers) in selected social media platforms as at 18th December, 2017

Table 2 showing the various Church positions (i.e. number of likes, followers and subscribers) in selected social media platforms as at 2nd February, 2019

Name of Church	Facebook Likes	Tweets	Twitter			Instagram		YouTube
			Following	Followers	Likes	Post	Followers	Subscribers
Deeper Life Bible Church	182,591	10,413	6	14,278	1,885	498		46,438
Salvation Ministries	1,129,495	7,182	2	52,493	1,360	1,575	212K	27,623
Dunamis Intl' Gospel Centre	565,654	16,223	19	24,445	250	170	44.1K	49,210
Omega Fire Ministries	539,204	155	28	1,453	26	-	-	3.2K
Living Faith Tabernacle Canaan land, Otta	1,547,058	-	-	-		-	-	577
Daystar Christian Centre	195,179	37,124	5	185,509	397	-	-	22,144
Redeemed Christian Church of God	466, 657	37,124	5	185,509	397	36	2,683	66,537
Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries	96, 359	1,195	51	6,595	1		-	23,885

Specific social media platforms used by Christian religious organizations in Nigeria.
Facebook

Findings show that Christian religious organization used face book for various activities. Deeper Life Christian Church uses face book to advertise their leadership development programmes. The most common feature on the Salvation Ministries face book page is *Healing School* programs and 5 Nights of Glory advertisement. Omega Fire Ministries uses face book to showcase past crusades and special feature i.e. miracles and sharing of live broadcast. Dunamis International Gospel Christian Centre (DIGCC) uses face book to share their daily devotion write-ups, crusades, songs and posters. Similarly, daystar Christian centre use face book to advertise up-coming events and share pictures and YouTube links, while the

Uchechukwu Victoria Enweani[1] Catherine Chinyere Eke[2]

Redeemed Christian Church of God uses Face book to share YouTube link and other activities of the church.

The findings indicate that as at December 2016, Living Faith Church (Aka Winners), Dunamis International Gospel Christian Centre, Redeemed Christian Church of God and Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries all used social media platforms in promoting their Church activities.

Twitter

All the selected Christian organizations have twitter handle. Deeper life use Twitter to tweet Sunday topics, Bible study, works and leadership meetings. Salvation Ministries uses the twitter to keep members abreast of activities such as 5 Night of Glory. Dunamis uses twitter for tweeting important quotes of messages preached and other salient aspects of the messages as it is being preached. Daystar Christian Centres tweets motivational teachings, programs for youths and singles. Mountain on Fire and Miracle Ministries usually tweets messages and prayer points in their Twitter handle.

Findings show that Daystar Christian Centre, Redeemed Christian Church of God, Salvation Ministries and Omega Fire Ministries all use twitter handles to promote church activities.

YouTube

Christian organizations use YouTube to share past messages, live programmes etc. For instance, Deeper Life Christian Church, Salvation Ministries, Daystar Christian Centre and Omega Fire Ministries utilize youtube in promoting church programmes and special activities.

Instagram

Salvation Ministries and Redeemed Christian Church of God, uses Instagram to share picture and fliers of church programs and activities as at the time the study was carried out. Only two (2) of the selected ministries were identified with Instagram; they are Salvation Ministries and Redeemed Christian Church of God.

Nature of information shared on social media

It was discovered that the various social media platform i.efacebook, twitter, Instagram and YouTube are used by the Christian organization to share information relating to their past, present and upcoming events. They used them as tools for disseminating information to members of their social community. Previous message are usually shared using YouTube and face book.

Lessons for Libraries and Information Centres in Nigeria

Christian organizations belong to the same class of non-profit making institutions like the library, and they have come to realize the power of reaching a wider populace through social media platform. Libraries and information centres in Nigeria should take a cue from them and begin to promote library products and services. The same way that social media is used for various reasons by religious organizations, librarians and libraries can use social media to reach out to new patrons, vendors and existing patrons. This is in line with McDowell and Morda (2011), when they posit that social networking services can be used to network with new contacts, reconnect with former friends, maintain current relationship, build or promote a business or project. Similarly, librarians can utilize social media platforms for promoting and projecting library products and services. This also corroborates Alonge (2012) that social media served a variety of different purposes.

Librarians can use social media in increasing and retaining patronage. In an environment where library users are being drifted away on regular basis, it is pertinent they maximize the opportunities presented by social media through ensuring that social media is used to increase patronage. This is in line with Akporhornor & Olise (2015) who identified increased patronage as one among the benefits derived from using social media.

Libraries can showcase their resources and services through social media for instance, library orientation programme can be achieved through Youtube, Whatappetc, this aligns also with Rogers (2012) that libraries are using web 2.0 tools to have conversations with users and learn more about/from them, sharing suggestions.

The arrival of new books or journals can be made known to the public through social media platform. The link to databases subscribed to by the library can be advertised to the public through social media. It is worth nothing, that using social media has no cost implication on the library. Library orientation programme can be executed using social media platforms, library rules and regulations, opening/closing hours can be shared to the public through social media while twitter can be very useful in current awareness, selective dissemination of services (SDI) and referral services.

Recommendations

The following recommendation were made based on the findings of the study

1. Heads of libraries in Nigeria (Whether public libraries, academic libraries, special libraries, national libraries etc) should ensure that social media are utilized in promoting their products and services, as this would help in changing the perception of the public about libraries and librarians. If non-profit organizations like the religious organizations are utilizing, social media platform there is no reason why the library should not adopt and integrate it to their services.

2. Libraries as an organization should have their own website. It is disheartening to note that most libraries in Nigeria, especially academic libraries do not have website. Efforts should be made by heads of libraries to ensure that their library pages are hosted on the World Wide Web network. This would facilitate their visibility in the digital social space.

3. Formulation of social media policy (SMP): librarians as a matter of urgency should see to the need of formulating a viable social media policy that would serve as framework. The policy should state in clear terms, the products and services that social media should be applied, how the social media platform would be updated.

Conclusion

The paper examined use of social media by religious organizations with focus on practical lessons for libraries and information centre. The findings have shown that religious organization which belongs to the category of non-profit organization like libraries, is fully involved in the use of social media o promote their programmes and services. Facebook, twitter, YouTube and Instagram are the most popular social media used as tools for disseminating information to members of the society. There is the need for libraries and information centres in Nigeria to intensively use social media to promote library products and information services. It is imperative that heads of libraries should see the need to maximize these social media as most of them are cost effective. It is important that librarians re-appraise the various services they provide and ensure that social media is integrated fully into the provision of library products and services.

References

Abdullah, N. & Chu, S. K., Rajagopal, S., Wan, W.T.A., & Yeung, K. M. (2015). Exploring libraries effort in inclusion and outreach activities using social media. *LIBRI*, 65(1):34-47.

Akporhonor, B. A. &Olise, F. N. (2015). Librarians' use of social media for promoting library and information resources and services in university libraries in south-south Nigeria. *Information and Knowledge Management,* 5(6):1-8.

Alkindi, S. S. & Al-Suqri, M. N. (2013). Social networking sites as marketing and outreach tools of library and information services. *Global Journal of Human Social Science, Arts, Humanities & Psychology*, 13(2):1-14.

Alonge, A. J. (2012). Social media in library and information centres. Available online at: DOI: 10.4018/978-161350-335-5ch021.

Aras, B. B. (2014). University libraries and social media policies. *Journal of Balkan Libraries Union,* 2 (1):21-27.

Eke, H. N., Omekwu, C. O. and Odoh, J. N. (2014). The use of social networking sites among the undergraduate students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journa*l). Paper 1195.

McDowel, M. &Morda, D. (2011). Socializing securely using social networking services. Available online at:https://www.us-cert.gov/sites/default/files/publications/safe_social_networking.pdf Retrieved 17th June 2018.

Nah, S. & Saxton, G. D. (n.d.) Modeling the adoption and use of social media by non-profit organizations. Available online at:https://arxiv.org/abs/1208.3394. Retrieved 16th March, 2018**.**

Owiny, S. A., Mehta, K. &Maretzki, A. N. (2014). The use of social media technologies to create, preserve and disseminate indigenous knowledge and skills to communities in East Africa. *International Journal of Communication,* 8:234-247.

Ployhart, R. E. (2011). Social media in the workplace: Issues and strategies questions. Available online at:http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/sbhra.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/Docs/SHRM_Foundation_Social_Media.pdf. Retrieved on 11th March, 2018.

Religious Institute (2013). Survey of religious professionals on Internet and social media use. Available online at:http://religiousinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Religious-Institute-Survey-of-Religious-Professionals-on-Internet-and-Social-Media-Use.pdf Retrieved on 9th April, 2018.

Uchechukwu Victoria Enweani[1] Catherine Chinyere Eke[2]

Rogers, C. R. (2012). Social media, libraries and web 2.0: How American libraries are using new tools for public relations and to attract new users- *Fourth Annual Survey.* Available online at:http://dc.statelibrary.sc.gov/bitstream/handle/10827/7271/SCSL_Social_Media_Libraries_2011.pdf?sequence=1 Accessed on 15th March, 2018.

Suraweera, S. A. D. H. N., Razali, N., Chouchan, L. B., Tamang, N. Hubilla, A. M. K., Malik, F. A., &Mahesar, S. N. (2011). Value of social networking in libraries and information organizations in Asia and Oceania. Paper presented at World Library and Information Congress: 76th IFLA General Conference and Assembly, 10-15 August 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden. Retrieved from http://www.ifla.org/en/ifla76. Accessed on 6th February, 2018.