Use of Social Media for Information Sharing among Students of Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examined the use of social media for information sharing among students of the Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This paper is a descriptive research which adopted a survey design to investigate the use of social media for information sharing among students of Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun (FUPRE). A sample of 795 students was drawn from a population of 1,610 students of the institution for the 2013/2014 academic session. A questionnaire tagged Students Use of Social Media Questionnaire (SUSMQ) was the only instrument of data collection. The mean was used as the method of data analysis.

Findings: The findings of the study showed that students mainly use social media platforms for social interaction, photo sharing and connecting with loved ones. Students also perceived social media as a medium for fun and not for academics was found to be among the challenges to the use of social media for sharing information related to academics. The students were of the opinion that the library should promote use of the platform by extending or rendering their services through the media like Library 2.0 and Web 2.0.

Implication: The findings implicate the need for the creation of a social media platform for research, and the promotion of use of the platform the library through extending or rendering services through the media like Library 2.0 and web 2.0.

Originality/Value: The originality of the paper lies in its recommendation for a paradigm shift from the use social media platforms for fun to their use for more serious academic goals such as transmission lecture notes and research information through social media platforms.

Keywords: Effurun, Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Library, Information Sharing, Social Media.

Introduction

The emergence of social media has led to the expansion of the level of socialization among individuals in the society in general and schools in particular. University students now find it very easy to express their thoughts, ideas and beliefs through social networks like facebook, twitter, myspace, skype, messengers, etc. with the aid of internet connectivity. The mention of an online community in academia brings to mind an image of students chatting aimlessly away. New technologies have probably already changed the way most students share knowledge as well as their academic work environment and will very likely do so even more in the future into the direction of a more virtualized world. Email and IM are already prevalent, and newer tools are in the marketplace (Olasina, 2013).

Social networking sites are web-based services that allow individuals to either construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, or articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, view, and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd and Ellison, 2007 as cited by Olasina, 2013). According to the same authors, the first recognizable social network site was launched in 1997. Facebook began in early 2004 as a Harvard-only social networking site (Cassidy, 2006). The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.

Inasmuch as the most populous of social media like facebook encouraged interconnectivity among individuals in remote locations, it has been observed that these veritable tools are mainly used to share information relating

to social life and not used to share academic information like information on assignments, examinations, time tables, lecture hours, group readings, seminars, and research. This study therefore deems it important to investigate if students of the Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun use these social media to share academic information, the challenges to their use of such invaluable devices to share information relating to academics and their course work, and prospects for the effective use of social media for academic information sharing.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study

RQ$_1$: What are the reasons for the use of social media by students of Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun?

RQ$_2$: To what extent do the students make use of social media for academic information sharing?

RQ$_3$: What is the frequency of use of social media for academic information sharing?

RQ$_4$: What are the challenges to the students' use of social media for academic information sharing?

RQ$_5$: What are the prospects for the use of social media for academic information sharing?

Literature Review

Lots and lots of literatures exists in the area of social media use among university students but only a handful exist in the area of its use for academic information sharing. Over the past six years there has been an increasing interest in the new generation of web-based technologies, tools and services offered by social media. This Social media, popularly known as Web 2.0 is becoming a central topic in our information world. The concept was coined officially by Tim O'Reilly and Dale Dougherty. Social media is a place where everyone can add or edit information. It is a web where digital tools allow users to create, change and publish dynamic content (Aharony, 2008). According to O'Reilly (2005), it can be defined as "the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; social media applications are those that make the most of the built-in

advantages of that platform: delivering software as a continually-updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an 'architecture of participation,' and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences".

In a 2011 research on uses of social sites, Nwosu (2011) findings revealed the same pattern in Nigeria as those revealed in US on reasons for the use of social media, with 170 0f the 200 sample respondents using social media as a platform of chatting, dating, e-mailing, photo/video sharing, and connecting with friends, while the remaining 30 said they sometimes use it to search for information besides connecting with friends. In particular, higher institutions students form a large proportion of users on social media networks. Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, and Zickuhr (2010) found that 72% of all college students have a social media profile with 45% of college students using a social media site at least once a day. Many of these young adults use social media networks to communicate with family, friends, and even strangers. Social media sites have created new and non-personal ways for students to interact among themselves neither positively and negatively. According to Baym, Zhang, and Lin (2004) studied social interactions of college students across all media. Their results indicated that 64% still prefer face-to-face interaction, 18.4% prefer the telephone, and only 16.1% prefer the internet for making social contacts. The internet interactions reported showed that e-mail was by far the most dominant form of contact, followed by chat and instant-messaging (Baym et al., 2004). Of the 51 participants in the study, 49 reported conducting their social life contacts through at least two, and often three, methods on any given day (Baym et al., 2004).

Social network sites help fulfill communication needs and wants among students. It is a convenient method of communication and provides the ability to stay connected with friends and family, but on the users own rate and time (Urista, Dong, & Day, 2009). Users can manage their interactions within their own schedule by choosing when they want to read and respond. The internet communication is a solitary activity usually done alone. However, it

is efficient because it is a one-to-many method of communication that allows users to quickly spread information. The gratification received from this social information helped users feel that they were a part of a peer network of knowing what was going on about events and activities (Quan Haase et al., 2010 as cited in Sanusi, Adelabu and Okunade, 2014).

Data from the study of Mujeeb-ur, Li, Abdul and Syed (2014) show the respondents were asked about the frequent use of social media majority of 89% respondents replied that they have regularly use social networking sites and similarly the study was conducted in Malaysia (Hamat, Embi & Hassan, 2012) showed that more than 80% of the university students were having account on social media and they use social media frequently. While 11% of the respondents said they sometimes use social media. The respondents were also inquired about the favourite /frequently used social media, as expectedly the result showed that 96% of the respondents used Facebook, whereas 3.5% respondents were frequent users of twitter and only one per cent used other social network sites. Despite the fact that social media are used by students, none of the studies reviewed reported using social media for academic information sharing.

However, studies in Turkey conducted by Ahmed and Qazi(2012) as cited by Abdelraheem(2013) revealed that students are managing their time efficiently and hence, use of social media does not harm their academic performance. On the other hand, Bauerlein (2008) in Abdelraheem(2013)explained that social networking sites (i.e. Facebook) lead to weaker writing and reading skills because students are using short-hand versions of words and new lingo (i.e. lol, g2g,brb and ttyl). Online social network sites are filled with incorrect grammar and new lingo. So, if students are using Facebook during their academic preparation time, they may increase grammar mistakes when writing a paper or working on a project because they are in a ″ social networking mindset″ instead of an ″ academic mindset.″ Many of the professors blame social media, such as Facebook, for the lack of quality in their students' writing. VandenBoogart (2006) found that a high level of Facebook use was found among students with lower GPAs. Karpinski and Duberstein (2009) in Abdelraheem (2013) found significant differences in grades between Facebook users and non-Facebook users. On the

other hand, some researchers have found Facebook use to be a helpful tool and resource for college students (Ellison, 2010; Lipsett 2008; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Lipsett (2008) believes that Facebook could be used as an alternative place to house and record academic achievements and examples of school work. While Ellison (2010) found that college students used Facebook to arrange face-to-face study groups, help manage group projects, coordinate meetings, and chat or message about assignments. Ellison (2010) also asserted that college students are able to use Facebook to facilitate their academic goals and that Facebook is an untapped educational resource. Additionally, students from the Ellison (2010) study stated that they wished Facebook would offer more features and tools to help them with schoolwork Facebook can be very engaging, which is why professors might consider using Facebook as an educational tool. Professors could use Facebook to engage their students and find productive ways to reach academic objectives. For example, Facebook can be used to facilitate instructor-to-student and student-to-student course communication, respond to questions, get announcements and updates, and manage out-of-class projects. It is clear that. Social media for education have become dynamic, ubiquitous, distributed, real time, collaborative, bottom up, many to many, value based, and personalized. Some have referred to this movement as Education 2.0, but it should, more likely, be understood as an early glimpse of the future of the entire educational process.

Sanusi, Adelabu and Okunade (2014) reported that there are several challenges to the use of social media for academic information sharing. The author highlighted that lack of basic amenities, lack of conducive environment, access to computers, structure of educational system, cost of internet connection, and lack of enthusiasm on the part of instructor are all challenges militating against the use of social media for academic information sharing. A summary of findings of Abir and Ali (2013) highlights three main findings: college students spend a long time on social networking sites; college students are facing problems in trusting, filtering and selecting all the different information accessed from social networking sites; and social networks affect students in both positive and negative ways. Abdelraheem (2013) found that students′ use of social media for social purposes was found to be more than their

use for academic purposes. Facebook was found to be the most used and popular sites and after it the YouTube sites. However, Abdelraheem (2013) submitted that though social media may make learning easier, comfortable and more fun for the students, learning through them demands that the student is:

- highly discipline by not getting sidetracked by other websites that has no learning material to serve;

- concentrate on and stay committed to the tasks ahead, taking cognizance of the challenges within the environment of his/her is learning, and

- Flexible learning – when simplified and reduced to internet-mediated education – must be introduced carefully and critically.

Methodology

This study is a descriptive research that adopts the survey method. A sample of 805 (50%)

students was randomly selected from a population of 1,610 students of Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun, Delta State of Nigeria. about 10 students did not complete the questionnaire hence the researcher made use of 795 respondents. A questionnaire tagged *Students' Use of Social Media* (SUSQ) was the only instrument of data collection. The data collected was analyzed using mean. To obtain the mean response, the following procedure was followed. For a respondent who ticks strongly agree, his score is 4 while agree is 3, disagree is 2 and strongly disagree is 1. Hence 4+3+2+1= 10. The average of the scores is 10/4 which is 2.5. Therefore where the 795 respondents tick any of the options, the mean becomes the sum of all their scores divided by 795. When the mean is 2.5 and above then it is agreed for that item while if it is below 2.5, it is disagreed.

Data analysis and Discussion

Table 1: Respondents Personal Data

Gender		Level				Age			
Male	Female	100	200	300	400	Below 20	20-29	30-39	40 & above
435	360	104	301	240	150	235	435	125	-
	795			**795**				**795**	

Table above shows that 435 of the respondents are males, while 360 of them are females. 104 of the respondents were 100 level students, 301 were 200 level students, 240 were from 300 level while 150 were 400 level students. 235 of the students were below 20 years of age, 435

were 20-29 years, while 125 were between 30-39 years.

Research Question 1: What are the reasons for the use of social media by students of Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun? The data used to answer the research question 1 is presented in table 2

Table 2: Reasons for use of social media

ITEM	Total score	Mean
Information sharing	2712	2.2
Connecting with loved ones	2901	3.6
For news	1723	2.2
For social interaction	2344	2.9
For obtaining research information	1754	2.2
For photo sharing	2654	3.3

The data on table 2 shows that a mean of 2.2 was recorded for information sharing, 3.6 for connecting with loved ones, 2.2 for news, 2.9 for social interaction, 2.2 for obtaining research information and 3.3 for photo sharing. This shows that the students reasons for use of social media is for connecting with loved ones, social interaction and photo sharing. Olasina (2013)

found that the major reason for the use of social media for information sharing is connecting with loved ones, personal and social interaction and for video and photo sharing.

Research Question 2: To what extent do the students make use of social media for academic information sharing? The data used to answer the research question 2 is presented in table 3

Table 3: U se of social media for information sharing

Academic Information	Total score	Mean
Assignment	1675	2.1
Research	1567	2.0
Lecture hour	1724	2.2
Group discussion	1589	2.0
Tests	1468	1.8

The data on table 3 shows that for assignment, a mean of 2.1 was realized which means that the students do not use social media to share information related to assignment. Also, a mean of 2.0 was realized for sharing research information which means that the students do not use social media for sharing research information. A mean of 2.2 for lecture hour shows that students do not use social media for sharing information about lectures. A mean of 2.0 was realized for group discussion which implies that the students do not use such platforms for group discussion. Lastly, a mean of 1.8 was realized for tests which mean that the students do not use the platform to share information about tests. The implication for this is that the students do not use social media for sharing academic information. This finding matches with the findings of Nwosu (2011) who pointed out that most times the students make use of social media for socialization rather that for academics.

Research Question 3: What is the frequency of use of social media for academic information sharing? The data used to answer the research question 3 is presented in table 4 and 5

Table 4: Frequency of use of social media for information sharing (D = daily, W = Weekly, M = Monthly, N = Never)

Academic Information	D (mean)	W (mean)	M (mean)	N (mean)
Assignment	2.4	2.3	2.1	2.4
Research	1.3	2.2	1.7	2.6
Lecture hour/reminder	2.4	2.1	2.3	2.4
Group discussion	1.7	1.9.	1.2	2.5
Tests	1.7	2.2	1.6	2.1

The data on table 4 shows that a mean the frequency of use of social media for assignment daily is 2.4, weekly is 2.3, monthly is 2.1 while never is 2.4. This implies that the students do not frequently use social media for sharing information about assignments. For research information, a mean of 1.3 was recorded for those who use it daily, 2.2 for weekly, 1.7 for monthly and 2.6 for never. This shows that the students do not use social media for sharing research information. A mean of 2.4 was recorded for using social media for lecture hour on a daily basis, 2.1 was recorded for weekly, 2.3 for monthly, and 2.4 for never. This implies that the students' frequency of use of social media for sharing information about lecture hour/reminder is poor. The data revealed that a mean of 1.7 was realized for use of social media for group discussion on a daily basis. 1.9 was recorded for weekly, 1.2 for monthly and 2.5 for never. A mean of 1.7 was realized for the use of social media for sharing information related to test on a daily basis, 2.2 for weekly, 1.6 for monthly and 2.1 for never. This result confirms the finding that the students do not use social media for sharing academic information; rather, they spend more time on socializing with friends (Zickuhr, 2010).

Table 5: Hours of use of social media

Number of hours used (Tick the one applicable to you)|	1 hour	2 hours	3 hours	4 hours
Mean	2.6	2.7	2.3	2.4

Table 5 shows the hours of use of social media by students. The data reveals that a mean of 2.6 was achieved for the use of social media platforms for 1 hour, 2.7 for 2 hours, 2.3 for 3 hours and 2.4 for 4 hours. On a daily basis, the students use the platform for 2 hours maximum.

Research Question 4: What are the challenges to the students' use of social media for academic information sharing? The data used to answer the research question 4 is presented in table 6

Table 6: Challenges to the use of social media for information sharing

Challenges	Total	Mean
The platform is for fun and not for academics	1998	2.5
Network problems	2659	3.3
Am shy of being mocked by my colleagues	2010	2.5
None of my friends share research information	2899	3.6
Friends do not comment on academic information posts	2678	3.4
Lecturers do not support the use of social media for information sharing.	1789	2.3

The data on table 6 shows that a mean of 2.5 was realized for the use of the platform for fun and not for academics. This is a challenge to the use of social media for academics. A mean of 3.3 was realized for network problems, 2.5 for student's being shy of mockery by their fellow students when they relay academic information, 3.6 for none of their friends share research information, 3.4 for friends do not comment on academic information, and 2.3 for lecturers do not support the use of social media for information sharing. This shows that the challenges to the use of social medium include the perception of students on the use of the platform. They believe that the platform is not for academics. Network problems, shy of being mocked, lack of sharing of research information on the platform, and lack of comments on posts relating to academics. Sanusi, Adelabu and Okunade (2014), and Abir and Ali (2013).

Research Question 5: What are the prospects for the use of social media for academic information sharing? The data used to answer the research question 5 is presented in table 7

Table 7: Prospects for use of social media for information sharing

Prospects	Total	Mean
A social media platform for research should be created	2222	2.8
The library should promote use of the platform by extending or rendering their services through the media like Library 2.0 and web 2.0	2365	3.0
Students should be advised rather than being mocked to use the platform for sharing research information	2134	2.7
Class representatives should be encouraged to pass lecture notes and research information through social media platforms	2336	2.9
The school should develop software that should strictly be used to transmit research information among students and lecturers.	2987	3.8
Lecturers should promote the use of social media platform by posting assignments, instructions, lecture notes and lecture hours via the platform	2111	2.7

The table shows that a mean of 2.8 was realized for a social media platform for research should be created, 3.0 for the library should promote use of the platform by extending or rendering their services through the media like Library 2.0 and web 2.0, 2.7 for students should be advised rather than being mocked to use the platform for sharing research information, 2.9 for class representatives should be encouraged to pass lecture notes and research information through social media platforms, 3.8 for the school should develop software that should strictly be used to transmit research information among students and lecturers, and 2.7 for lecturers should promote the use of social media platform by posting assignments, instructions, lecture notes and lecture hours via the platform. This shows that the students' response to the prospects for use of social media for information sharing is affirmative. This finding is in line with the findings of Mujeeb-ur, Li, Abdul and Syed (2014).

Conclusion and Recommendation

The use of social media for information sharing cannot be over stated. There is no doubt that the platform was originally meant for socialization: today it can be used as a platform to promote information sharing relating to academics. However, the findings of this study show that the platform is not used for the sharing information relating to academics rather it is mainly used for socialization by students. The reason for this is that the students are shy of being mocked by their colleagues, the belief that the platform is for fun and not for academics by the students, lack of academic information posts, lack of

comments on academic information post, and network problems. These challenges could be avoided if a social media platform for research is created; if the library promote use of the platform by extending or rendering their services through the media like Library 2.0 and web 2.0; if students are advised rather than being mocked to use the platform for sharing research information; if class representatives are encouraged to pass lecture notes and research information through social media platforms; if the school develops software that should strictly be used to transmit research information among students and lecturers; and if lecturers promote the use of social media platform by posting assignments, instructions, lecture notes and lecture hours via the platform.

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