



SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE FOR LIBRARY ENGAGEMENT OF ACADEMIC COMMUNITY IN SELECTED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated social media usage and library engagement of academic community in selected tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study. The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The population of the study consisted of all the 161 academic librarians in the five Federal universities in South-East Nigeria. The entire population of 161 academic libraries was used as the sample size. A structured validated questionnaire titled “Questionnaire on Social Media Usage and Library Engagement” (QSMULE) was used for data collection. The questionnaire was subjected to reliability testing using Cronbach Alpha Method. This method was used to test the internal consistency and an overall coefficient of 0.78 was obtained. Frequency counts and percentages was used to answer research question one while descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research question two and three. The finding revealed that social media platforms mostly used by the academic community for library-related activities are WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and Telegram while those rarely in use include YouTube and Blogs. It was also found that while academic librarians acknowledge the significant benefits of using social media such as improved communication, wider reach, and enhanced service visibility they also unanimously recognize the challenges, including poor infrastructure, inadequate training, and lack of institutional support. Based on the findings, it was recommended amongst others that regular workshops and hands-on training programmes should be organized for librarians to improve their digital literacy and social media competencies. Such initiatives will empower them to use various platforms effectively for service promotion, user interaction, and information dissemination.

Keywords: Social Media, Library, Library Engagement, Academic Community.



INTRODUCTION

Social media is ubiquitous and pervasive on the digital landscape today, including in tertiary institutions and academic libraries. Social media, defined as digital platforms that facilitate the creation, sharing, and exchange of user-generated content, has become an integral part of the modern digital landscape, permeating various sectors, including tertiary institutions and academic libraries (Oyesiku & Amalahu, 2022). Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube enable users to connect with peers, share interests, and access real-time information, transforming communication dynamics globally. In academic settings, social media serves as a bridge between offline and online environments, fostering interaction and collaboration. Academic libraries, recognizing the ubiquity of these platforms, have embraced social media to enhance their visibility and engagement with patrons.

In Southeast Nigeria, social media usage within the academic community of tertiary institutions, such as Nnamdi Azikiwe University and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, is widespread and multifaceted, reflecting both academic and social purposes (Ezeah et al., 2013). Studies indicate that platforms like WhatsApp, YouTube, and Facebook are heavily utilized by students and faculty for communication, resource sharing, and academic collaboration (Orubebe et al., 2024). WhatsApp, in particular, is favored for its instant messaging capabilities, enabling study group discussions and lecturer-student interactions, while YouTube supports access to educational content. However, excessive use for non-academic purposes, such as entertainment, can detract from academic focus, as noted by Peter (2015), who found that students at the University of Lagos often prioritize social networking over study time. This dual nature of social media usage highlights the need for strategic integration into academic frameworks to maximize its benefits.

The types of social media platforms prevalent in Southeast Nigerian tertiary institutions align with global trends but are shaped by local contexts, such as internet accessibility and cost. WhatsApp and YouTube dominate due to their accessibility on mobile devices and relatively low data requirements, followed by Facebook and Twitter for broader engagement (Orubebe et al., 2024). Instagram is gaining traction among younger students for visual content sharing, while professional platforms like LinkedIn are less common, reflecting a preference for socially engaging tools over career-oriented ones. Academic libraries in the region, such as those at the University of Nigeria, leverage these platforms to disseminate information about resources, events, and services, though their adoption is often inconsistent due to challenges like poor internet connectivity and limited digital literacy among staff (Onwubiko, 2023). These platforms enable



libraries to extend their reach beyond physical spaces, aligning with the evolving needs of savvy patrons.

Library engagement, conceptualized as the extent of interaction, participation, and involvement between individuals and library services, is a dynamic process that transcends traditional borrowing and reading activities (Kuh, 2016). It encompasses active participation in workshops, use of digital resources, and collaboration with community initiatives, fostering a sense of belonging and intellectual growth. Within the academic community, library engagement is vital for supporting research, teaching, and learning. Academic libraries provide access to critical resources—books, journals, and databases while offering programs to enhance information literacy, which equips students with skills to evaluate and utilize information effectively (Ariole & Okoroafor, 2017). Engagement is enhanced through outreach, such as partnerships with local schools and organizations, which promote library services and integrate them into the broader educational ecosystem.

The nexus between social media usage and library engagement in Southeast Nigerian tertiary institutions is evident in how libraries leverage platforms to foster interaction and resource utilization. Social media enables libraries to market services, share updates, and conduct virtual information literacy workshops, thereby increasing patron engagement (Danquah & Onyancha, 2021). Ejitagha and Ivwighrehgweta (2021) noted that platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook are widely used for academic collaboration, such as sharing resources and forming study groups, with 68% of students reporting frequent use for educational purposes. However, the study noted limited library-driven social media initiatives, suggesting that libraries were not fully capitalizing on these platforms to engage students. Building on this, Omini and Osuolale (2019) noted that librarians used Facebook and WhatsApp to provide real-time reference services, with 62% of respondents noting improved patron interaction. However, inconsistent social media strategies and low digital literacy among librarians hindered sustained engagement. Further, a study by Danquah and Onyancha (2021) reported that while libraries adopted Facebook and instant messaging, low patron awareness (only 35% engaged with library social media) limited effectiveness. Orubebe et al. (2024) explained high usage of YouTube (25%) and WhatsApp (15%) for accessing educational content, yet only 20% of students interacted with library-specific social media accounts due to poor promotion. This low engagement rate emphasizes the need for a study to investigate how libraries in Southeast Nigeria can improve visibility and interaction through targeted social media campaigns, fostering a seamless integration of online and offline library services. It is therefore



Statement of the Problem

Library engagement, a critical indicator of academic library success, is hindered by challenges in integrating social media into services within Southeast Nigerian tertiary institutions. Social media offers potential to enhance user interaction but introduces significant barriers. Privacy concerns threaten user confidentiality due to the sensitive nature of library data, compounded by evolving regulations like the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR). Capturing audience attention is difficult in the dynamic social media environment, where library posts compete with academic and entertainment content, requiring expertise in content creation often lacking among librarians. Resource constraints, including limited budgets and understaffed teams, further impede consistent social media management, as librarians juggle multiple roles. Ariole and Okorafor (2017) noted low readiness among Southeast librarians to adopt social media, citing insufficient funding, absent policies, and limited ICT literacy. Despite efforts to modernize, these challenges persist, reducing library patronage and engagement. While studies like Ariole and Okorafor (2017) have explored social media integration in public libraries, few focus on academic libraries in Southeast Nigeria, and none comprehensively address privacy, audience engagement, and resource allocation using qualitative methods. This study fills this gap by investigating social media usage and its impact on library engagement in selected tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How are social media platforms used for library engagement of academic community in selected tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges of social media usage for library engagement of academic community in selected tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria?
3. What are the perceived benefits of using social media for library engagement among students in selected tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria?

Methodology

This study was conducted in South-East, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. This study was delimited to academic librarians in the five Federal universities in



South East Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of all the 161 academic librarians in five Federal universities in South-East Nigeria. The entire population of 161 academic libraries was used as the sample size. This is because the researcher deemed the figure manageable. A structured validated questionnaire titled “Questionnaire on Social Media Usage and Library Engagement” (QSMULE). The instrument was divided into two sections: A and B. Section A contained information on the demographic profile of the respondents while section B is subdivided into three clusters: I – III in line with the research questions. Cluster I centred on the types of social media platforms most frequently used by the academic community for library-related activities; cluster II addressed items on the challenges of social media usage and library engagement of academic community; and cluster III contained items on the perceived benefits of using social media for library engagement. The questionnaire was structured on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) with nominal values 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The questionnaire was subjected to reliability testing using Cronbach Alpha Method. This method was used to test the internal consistency of the three clusters and it yielded coefficient values of 0.77, 0.72 and 0.84 respectively. The researcher reached out to the respondents using Google form designed in line with the instrument. A softcopy draft of the instrument was uploaded on WhatsApp group platforms of Academic Librarians in the five tertiary institutions. This is to facilitate easy access to the respondents. A total number of 142 copies of questionnaires were filled and submitted from the Google form report. This means a retrieval rate of 88%. Frequency counts and percentages was used to answer research question one while descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research question two and three. The criterion mean score of 2.50 was used to adjudge the response. Any mean score below 2.50 criterion mean score was rated disagreed while any mean score above 2.50 criterion mean score was rated agreed.

Results

Table 1: Respondents’ ratings on how social media platforms are used for library engagement of academic community in selected tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria

S/N	Items on how social media platforms are used for library engagement of academic community	Yes		No	
		Freq	%	Freq	%
1	The library uses WhatsApp to share announcements and communicate with members of the academic community.	142	100	-	-



2	The library uses Facebook to promote events, services, and updates to the academic community.	142	100	-	
3	The library uses Instagram to share visual content such as resource guides, library activities, and event promotions with the academic community.	106	74.6	36	25.4
4	The library uses Twitter to disseminate news and interact with members of the academic community.	87	61.3	55	38.7
5	The library uses YouTube to upload and share tutorials or educational videos for the academic community.	38	26.7	104	73.2
6	The library uses LinkedIn to connect with the academic community for professional development and research-related library services.	112	78.9	30	21.1
7	The library uses Blogs to inform the academic community about available resources, services, and general library news.	47	33.1	95	66.9
8	The library uses Telegram to create discussion groups and provide updates to the academic community.	118	83.1	24	16.9

Data presented in Table 1 reveals libraries in South-East Nigeria widely use WhatsApp, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Telegram to engage the academic community. Instagram and Twitter are moderately used, while YouTube and blogs are largely underutilized. The findings highlight a preference for instant and interactive platforms, with potential to expand engagement through video and blog content.

The findings from research question one examined how social media platforms are used for library engagement of the academic community in selected tertiary institutions in South-East Nigeria, revealed that platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Telegram are actively employed by libraries to engage users. These platforms are used to share announcements, promote events, disseminate news, and foster professional and academic connections. Conversely, YouTube and Blogs are rarely utilized, indicating missed opportunities for delivering educational content and library updates in multimedia formats. This finding supports Fasae and Akporhonor (2020), who observed high usage of WhatsApp (98%) and Facebook (95.3%) for library services. It also aligns with Mogale and Bopape (2023), who found that while librarians frequently used platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram personally,



Facebook was the most utilized in professional contexts for marketing library services and communicating with users. Additionally, Dhokhani et al. (2017) emphasized Telegram's effectiveness for sharing files, images, and educational videos, a function similarly adopted by libraries in this study for engaging their academic communities. These findings underscore the growing reliance on social media as a strategic tool for enhancing library visibility, communication, and user engagement.

Table 2: Respondents' mean and standard deviation on the challenges of social media usage for library engagement of academic community in selected tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria

S/N	Item statement	X	SD	Remarks
9	Privacy concerns limit the academic community's engagement with library social media platforms.	3.47	0.82	Agree
10	The fast-paced nature of social media makes it difficult for library content to capture the academic community's attention.	2.11	0.76	Disagree
11	The informal communication style of social media conflicts with the formal tone expected from library services.	2.59	0.86	Agree
12	Limited staff resources hinder the library's ability to maintain a consistent social media presence	2.62	0.64	Agree
13	Insufficient budget allocation restricts the library's capacity to produce engaging social media content.	3.29	0.62	Agree
14	Low digital literacy among librarians impedes the effective use of social media for library engagement.	1.66	1.03	Disagree
15	Poor internet connectivity in the region reduces the academic community's engagement with library social media.	3.41	0.68	Agree
Cluster Mean		2.74		Agree

Data presented in Table 2 reveals that items 10 and 14 with mean scores 2.11 and 1.66 were rated disagreed while items 9, 11, 12, 13 and 15 with mean scores 3.47, 2.59, 2.62, 3.29 and 3.41 were rated agreed. The cluster mean of 2.74 summarized that academic librarians agreed on the challenges of social media usage and library engagement of academic community in selected tertiary institutions in South-East Nigeria.



The finding in research question two revealed that academic librarians agreed challenges of social media usage and library engagement of academic community in selected tertiary institutions in South-East Nigeria. This finding supported that of Mogale and Bopape (2023) that restrictions of access to social media platforms during working hours, lack of skills, own social media policy and management support in the form of training were found to be factors that impede social media usage by academic librarians. Ariole and Okorafor (2017) found that librarians in public libraries in South-East Nigeria exhibited low readiness to integrate social media into library services, attributing this to factors such as insufficient funding, lack of ICT facilities, and inadequate power supply. Similarly, Benson, Amaechi, Onuoha and Anyalabeche (2016) highlighted that university libraries in the region faced challenges like low bandwidth, unreliable internet connectivity, and inconsistent power supply, which hindered the integration of social media into knowledge management practices.

Table 3: Respondents' mean and standard deviation ratings on the perceived benefits of using social media for library engagement among students in selected tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria

S/N	Items on the perceived benefits of using social media for library engagement among students	X	SD	Remarks
16	Social media increases students' awareness of library resources and services.	3.23	0.88	Agree
17	Social media platforms make it easier for students to access library announcements and updates.	3.19	0.49	Agree
18	Social media provides students with convenient access to library tutorials and educational content.	3.35	0.58	Agree
19	Social media fosters better communication between students and librarians.	2.87	0.82	Agree
20	Social media encourages students to collaborate on academic projects through library-related platforms.	2.77	0.52	Agree
21	Social media helps students feel more connected to the library community.	2.53	0.74	Agree
Cluster Mean		2.99		Agree

Data presented in Table 3 reveals that all the items (16 – 21) with mean scores 3.23, 3.19, 3.35, 2.87, 2.77 and 2.53 were rated agreed. The cluster mean of 2.99 summarized that academic



librarians agreed on the perceived benefits of using social media for library engagement among students in selected tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria.

The finding in research question three revealed that academic librarians agreed on the perceived benefits of using social media for library engagement among students in selected tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria. This finding was in tandem with that of Omini and Osuolale (2019) that librarians utilize social media platforms to promote library resources and services. The finding reported that Facebook and blogs were the most frequently used platforms, facilitating two-way communication and making connections with library users more accessible. The finding of Ejitagha and Ivwighrehweta (2021) reported that librarians' use of social media in public universities in South-West Nigeria. The study found that platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp are utilized to provide real-time updates on library services, facilitate feedback from users, and disseminate up-to-date information.

Conclusion

In an era where digital connectivity shapes information access and communication, academic libraries are increasingly turning to social media as a bridge between library services and their academic communities. The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that social media has become an essential tool for academic library engagement in South-East Nigeria. Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Telegram emerged as the most frequently used by the academic community for library-related activities, reflecting the growing digital interaction between students and libraries. However, the underutilization of platforms like YouTube and blogs indicates untapped potential for broader engagement. While academic librarians acknowledge the significant benefits of using social media such as improved communication, wider reach, and enhanced service visibility they also unanimously recognize the challenges, including poor infrastructure, inadequate training, and lack of institutional support. These insights suggest that for academic libraries to fully harness the power of social media, there must be a strategic approach that addresses these limitations. With the right support and policy backing, social media can transform academic libraries into dynamic, student-centered knowledge hubs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Tertiary institutions in South-East Nigeria should prioritize the provision of adequate funding to academic libraries for the procurement of ICT infrastructure and the



maintenance of social media platforms. This includes reliable internet connectivity and social media management tools to support consistent engagement.

2. Regular workshops and hands-on training programmes should be organized for librarians to improve their digital literacy and social media competencies. Such initiatives will empower them to use various platforms effectively for service promotion, user interaction, and information dissemination.
3. Libraries in tertiary institutions in South-East Nigeria should develop comprehensive social media policies that align with institutional goals and outline best practices for content creation, user engagement, and information ethics. This ensures consistency, professionalism, and responsible usage.
4. Librarians in tertiary institutions in South-East Nigeria should create engaging, educational, and student-focused content tailored to each social media platform. Infographics, tutorial videos, live Q&A sessions, and timely announcements can make library services more relatable and accessible to the student body.

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