

USE, FREQUENCY AND BENEFITS OF MICROBLOGGING AS CORRELATE OF INFORMATION NEEDS OF MIDDLE MANAGERS IN GLOBAL SYSTEM FOR MOBILE COMMUNICATION (GSM) PROVIDERS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper examined the relationship between the purpose of usage, benefits derived from usage of microblogging and information needs using the Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Providers in Nigeria as a case study. The population of study comprised staff in the middle management cadre in the Marketing Department, Information Technology Department, Customer Care Department and Administrative Department of the studied sector in Nigerian telecommunication industry. Descriptive survey research design was used and questionnaire was employed as research instrument. Copies of the questionnaire were administered using total enumeration techniques. The study revealed that most of the respondents use microblogging regularly for marketing of products and services, collaboration among professional colleagues and for knowledge sharing among others. Majority of the respondents also agreed that microblogging improves organizational productivity, bring connection among professional colleagues, aids interaction with customers, facilitates attraction of potential customers and facilitates provision of product and services. The study however found no significant relationship between usage of microblogging and information needs of the respondents and no significant relationship between the benefits of microblogging and information needs of the respondents. The paper recommended that Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Providers and by extension telecommunication industry should not only encourage microblogging for internal workplace communication but should also embrace its usage as this will further enhance their productivity.

Keywords: Microblogging, Global System for Mobile Communication, social media, networking, telecommunication, information needs, Nigerian telecommunication industries

Introduction

The spate of advances in technology has aided organisations to stay up-to-date with communication tools that engender workplace communication. Workplace communication is described as the process of exchanging verbal and non-verbal information for achievement of organisational objectives. Such communication tools as email, blogs, instant messaging and social media sites like Twitter, Facebook are known to provide effective communication in a workplace. Effective communication is integral to successful growth of any organisation as it assists managers to perform business activities such as planning, organising, motivating and controlling. Without communication, it will be impossible for any group of people to make decisions about their common interests. There are two main modes of communication indulged in by organisations. The first is communication with external stakeholders such as customers and the public. They usually maintain and share pages on social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. The second and less explored means is internal communication and interaction with the organisation which include microblogging and social tagging. This study thus focuses on the internal social media platform, specifically microblogging such as Twitter and Yammer.

In Nigeria, the history of Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) can be traced to the deregulation of the telecommunication industry that gave birth to the GSM revolution from the year 2001 till present i.e period of this study. Prior to this deregulation, telecommunication in Nigeria was provided through landline which was characterised with inefficiency and often led to frustration of consumers. The first GSM network provider in Nigeria which was ECONET was formally launched in 2001 (and has at different times changed its name from ECONET to V-Mobile, to Zain to Celtel and presently to Airtel). This was followed by MTN, Globacom and Etisalat (Now 9 Mobile) bringing the GSM network providers to four, as at the time of this study. This study explores the use of microblogging as an aspect of social media by these industries to derive information for workplace communication and interaction, otherwise identified as Enterprise Social Media among four major GSM Network Providers in Nigeria. First, we will look at information needs of organisations that necessitate workplace communication, the tools deployed for the purpose, as well as their uses and benefits. By Nigerian business classification, these GSM providers fall under large scale enterprise.

Literature Review

Information Needs

Information and knowledge have been seen by researchers in information science and the service sector as interwoven variables. Processed information becomes knowledge which when the possessor applies properly could lead to effective job performance vis-a vis organisational effectiveness. Information needs is the quest for particular information with a view to enable the seeker perform a particular task. There is a close nexus between information needs and knowledge sharing, one of the critical aspects of knowledge management. In a study of information needs and information-seeking behaviour of Janitorial workers in University of Lagos it was reported that, despite the fact that majority of the respondents have had training on ICT, they did not have access to and usage of ICT. This was attributed to the nature of their work which was not directly linked with the application of ICT. In another study on complex information needs in business activities of Lithuanian business middle-to-senior managers, it was reported that the respondents expressed

the heterogeneous nature of complex information needs and listed market information, accounting and financial information as well as customer information as top three of complex information.

According to researchers, information needs can either be simple or complex in nature. Simple needs were described as of routine nature that are based on clearly structured questions leading to routine actions or simple decisions using data from a single source or a small number of easily accessible sources. Complex needs on the other hand are much less of a routine nature. They are often based on vaguely structured questions that require composite results drawn from data sources that are numerous, incompatible, eclectic and often external; while they also use heterogeneous data and procedures. In the same vein a study on information needs, utilization and socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Southern Nigeria revealed that there was a relative influence of information needs, seeking, and use on the socio-economic empowerment of the textile market women studied.

Microblogging: Use and benefits

Blog is defined as a short term for weblog and is a personal online journal that is frequently updated and intended for general public consumption. Microblog on the other hand is a form of multimedia blogging that allows users to send brief text updates or micro media such as photos or audio clips and publish them. Microblogging is defined as “small scale form of blogging, generally made up of short, succinct messages used by both consumers and businesses to share news, post status updates and carry on conversations”. Microblogging has also been described as a communication service which permits users to post short messages into an initially undirected message stream. Users can thereafter subscribe to other users’ messages, so that a directed information stream can be created. Microblogging has consequently soared in organisations globally with employers using microblogs for internal communication with staff.

In another study on the use and risks of microblogging in small and medium enterprises, it was discovered that microblogging can be used both internally and externally to create awareness and sense of connectedness in the workplace. The study also found that it can be used internally and externally for marketing, improving customer relations, monitoring competitors, learning from mistakes, socialising, sharing and accessing information. Some of the benefits of application of microblogging to business include improving organizational productivity, interaction with customers, facilitating information and knowledge. Microblogging does not have many features and this makes it very easy and cheap to use. Examples of social media tools that are frequently used for microblogging and their specific usage include Twitter, Yammer and Facebook

Justification of the Study

Literature reveals that many studies have been conducted to investigate the information needs of various user groups based on their subject interests, information environment and geographical location but none seems to have been conducted in the communication industry, at least in Nigeria. Also, literature reveals that there is paucity of writings on microblogging as usable source of information to meet information needs in a workplace. Thus while researchers on microblogging from the western world are very few, the situation is extremely poor in African countries as there seems to be very little focus on the concept in this region. This study thus intends to fill this gap by investigating the extent of usage of social media networks, especially microblogging for workplace communication in four GSM companies – MTN GLOBACOM, AIRTEL AND

9MOBILE in Nigeria. The choice of these companies has been due to their strong affiliation with social media network.

Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To find out the information needs of middle managers in Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) sector.
2. To find out purpose of usage of microblogging by middle managers in Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) sector.
3. To find out frequency of usage of microblogging by middle managers in Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) sector.
4. To determine benefits of usage of microblogging by middle managers in Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) sector.

Hypotheses

The study is anchored on the following hypotheses:

- Ho1: There will be no significant relationship between information needs and purpose of usage of microblogging in Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) sector.
- Ho2: There will be no significant relationship between information needs and frequency of usage of microblogging in Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) sector.
- Ho3: There will be no significant relationship between information needs and benefits of usage of microblogging in Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) sector.
- Ho4: There will be no significant relationship between the independent and the dependent Variables

Methodology

The study involved a quantitative survey conducted on four major GSM companies based in Lagos, Nigeria. Data was gathered using a structured questionnaire as research instrument on population of study which comprised staff in the middle management cadre of the Marketing, Information Technology, and Customer Care Departments of the companies. Two hundred copies of the questionnaire were administered on the respondents using total enumeration technique. At the end of the study, which spanned three months, one hundred and thirty five copies of the questionnaire were retrieved. The retrieved copies were screened to ensure those that were usable for analysis, at the end of which thirty four copies were found not usable. Thus the report presented in this study is based on the usable 101 copies of the questionnaire. The researchers also had a follow-up conversation with three of the respondents who were willing to clarify some responses.

Descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentages, mean score and standard deviation and multiple regression were used to analyze the research questions. Pearson Product Moment

Correlation and multiple regression analysis were also used to test the hypotheses. Computer software known as Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 2.0 was used to analyse data collected.

Each item was score on a three (3) point rating scale: Strongly Disagree =1, Disagree =2, Agree = 3. With a three point- liket scale, the average score is 2.0. Either in favour or disfavour of what is being measured.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Table 1: Showing information needs of middle managers in Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Providers in Nigeria

s/n	Items	SD	D	A	Mean	SD
1	Enhance job performance	9(8.9%)	9(8.9%)	83(82.2%)	2.73	0.62
2	Social media updates among colleagues	9(8.9%)	29(28.7%)	63(62.4%)	2.53	0.66
3	Possible collaboration with others	5(5.0%)	14(13.9%)	82(81.2%)	2.76	0.53
4	Current affairs	2(2.0%)	10(9.9%)	89(88.1%)	2.86	0.40
5	Current trends in administrative practices	5(5.0%)	14(13.9%)	82(81.2%)	2.76	0.53
	Grand mean				2.73	0.55

Table 1 reveals that majority of the respondents agreed they needed information to enhance their job performance (Mean=2.73>2.00), for social media updates among colleagues (Mean=2.53>2.00), for collaboration with others (Mean=2.76>2.00), current affairs (Mean=2.86>2.00) and for Current trends in administrative practice (Mean=2.763>2.00).

Table 2: Showing purpose of usage of microblogging by middle managers in Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Providers in Nigeria

s/n	Items	Indifferent	Disagree	Agree	Mean	St dev	Rank
1	Marketing of products and services	17(16.8%)	23(22.8%)	61(60.4%)	2.44	0.77	7
2	Collaboration among professional colleagues	13(12.9%)	18(17.8%)	70(69.3%)	2.56	0.71	4
3	Social interaction with colleagues	13(12.9%)	14(13.9%)	74(73.3%)	2.60	0.71	3
4	Knowledge sharing	9(8.9%)	10(9.9%)	82(81.2%)	2.72	0.62	1
5	Administrative purposes	16(15.8%)	25(24.8%)	60(59.4%)	2.52	1.21	6
6	Sharing news	11(10.9%)	12(11.9%)	78(77.2%)	2.66	0.67	2
7	Sharing status	13(12.9%)	20(19.8%)	68(67.3%)	2.54	0.71	5
	Grand mean				2.61	0.78	

Table 2 reveals respondents' views on the purpose of using microblogging. The study revealed that most of the respondents use microblogging for marketing of products and services (Mean=2.44>2.00), collaboration among professional colleagues (Mean=2.56<2.00), social interaction with colleagues (Mean=2.60>2.00), knowledge sharing (Mean=2.72<2.00), administrative purposes (Mean=2.52>2.00), sharing news (Mean=2.6>2.00) and sharing status (Mean=2.54>2.00). the foregoing reveals that since the grand mean of 2.61 is more than the average score of 2.0, it implies that many of the respondents agreed with the usage of the microblogging to meet their information needs.

Respondents were further asked to indicate frequency of their usage of microblogging. It was revealed that many of the respondents use microblogging "regularly" (Mean=2.52, SD 0.77) and followed with using the microblogging "occasionally" (2.38, SD 0.75). By inference, it can be concluded that middle managers in Global System for Mobile Communication Providers in Nigeria do engage in using microblogging.

Table 3: Showing benefits of using microblogging by middle managers in Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Providers in Nigeria

s/n	Items	Indifferent	Disagree	Agree	Mean	St dev	Rank
1	Improve organizational productivity	17(16.8%)	21(20.8%)	63(62.4%)	2.46	0.77	9
2	Bring connection among professional colleagues	12(11.9%)	16(15.8%)	73(72.3%)	2.60	0.69	6
3	Aids interaction with customer	17(16.8%)	13(12.9%)	71(70.3%)	2.53	0.77	8
4	Facilitates attraction of potential customers	15(14.9%)	12(11.9%)	74(73.3%)	2.58	0.74	7
5	Facilitates provision of product and services	12(11.9%)	12(11.9%)	77(76.2%)	2.64	0.69	5
6	Facilitates information /knowledge sharing	7(6.9%)	10(9.9%)	84(83.2%)	2.76	0.57	1
7	Facilitates social interaction among colleagues	9(8.9%)	13(12.9%)	79(78.2%)	2.69	0.63	2
8	Brings about awareness among colleagues	12(11.9%)	11(10.9%)	78(77.2%)	2.65	0.69	4
9	Facilitates easy sharing of data	12(11.9%)	9(8.9%)	80(79.2%)	2.67	0.68	3
	Grand mean				2.68	0.65	

Table 3 shows respondents' response to the benefits derived from using microblogging. Majority of the respondents agreed that microblogging improves organizational productivity (Mean=2.46>2.00), brings connection among professional colleagues (Mean=2.60>2.00), aids interaction with customers (Mean=2.53>2.00), facilitates attraction of potential customers (Mean=2.58>2.00) and facilitates provision of product and services (Mean=2.64>2.00). Other benefits of microblogging is that it facilitates information /knowledge sharing (Mean=2.76>2.00), facilitates social interaction among colleagues (Mean=2.69>2.00), brings about awareness among colleagues (Mean=2.65>2.00) and facilitates easy sharing of data (Mean=2.67>2.00)

Test of Hypotheses

Ho1: There will be no significant relationship between information needs and purpose of usage of microblogging in Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) sector.

Table 4: Relationship between purpose of usage of microblogging and information needs of middle managers in Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Providers in Nigeria

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Purpose of usage of microblogging	101	18.06	3.660.04	0.70		Not Significant
Information needs	101	13.65	1.70			

Table 4 reveals that the r calculated of 0.04 or 4% ($p=0.70>0.05$) showing the degree of relationship between purpose of usage of microblogging and information needs. This implies that there is a positive and not significant relationship between use of microblogging and information needs. The null hypothesis is accepted.

Ho2: There will be no significant relationship between information needs and frequency of usage of microblogging in Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) sector

Table 5: Relationship between frequency of using microblogging and information needs of middle managers in Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Providers in Nigeria

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Frequency of using microblogging	101	7.21	1.570.10	0.28		Not Significant
Information needs	101	13.65	1.70			

Table 5 reveals that the r calculated of 0.10 is not significant at 5% ($p=0.28$). This implies that there is no significant relationship between frequency of using microblogging and information needs in Global System for Mobile Communication in Nigeria. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Ho3: There will be no significant relationship between information needs and benefits of usage of microblogging in Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) sector

Table 6: Relationship between benefit of using microblogging and information needs of middle managers in Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Providers in Nigeria

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Benefit of using microblogging	101	23.60	3.730.03	0.77		Not Significant
Information needs	101	13.65	1.70			

Table 6 reveals that the r calculated of 0.03 or 3% ($p=0.76>0.05$) showing the degree of relationship between benefit of microblogging and information needs. This implies that there is a positive and not significant relationship between benefit of microblogging and information needs. The null hypothesis is accepted.

Ho4: There will be no significant relationship between the independent variables (use, frequency and benefits of using Microblogging) and the dependent variables (information needs)

Table 7: Multiple Regression Model of use, frequency and benefits of using Microblogging with information needs

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.132 ^a	.017	-.013	1.71056

a. Predictors: (Constant), use, frequency and benefits

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.047	3	1.682	.575	.633 ^b
	Residual	283.825	97	2.926		

Total	288.871	100
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a. Dependent Variable: information_needs

b. Predictors: (Constant), use, frequency,benefits)

Table 7 indicates that coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2) = 0.02, which gives proportion of variance (Adjusted $R^2 \times 100$) = 0.02%. This implies that the independent variables use,frequency and benefits of using microblogging, accounted for 2% of the variance in the dependent variable information needs. Hence, the joint effect use, frequency and benefits of using microblogging is not significant on the information needs of GSM Providers in Nigeria ($F=1.68$; $df= (3; 100)$; not significant value $p = 0.633 > 0.05$).

Ho5: There will be no significant relative contribution of use, frequency and benefits of Using microblogging on information needs

Table 8 : Relative Contribution of the Independent Multiple Regression Model use, frequency and benefits of using microblogging with information needs Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Remark
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	13.393	1.188		11.273	.000	
	Use	.011	.062	.024	.183	.855	Not significant
	Frequency	.138	.126	.127	1.090	.278	Not significant
	Benefits	-.040	.056	-.087	-.709	.480	Not significant

a. Dependent Variable: information needs

Table 8 shows the relative contribution of independent variables (use, frequency and benefits of using microblogging) to dependent variable (information needs) of GSM Providers in Nigeria. Evidence from the data revealed that Use: $B=0.011$, $t=0.183$, $p=0.86 > 0.05$; frequency : $B=0.138$ $t=1.090$, $p=0.278 > 0.05$; and degree of benefit $B=-0.040$, $t=-0.709$, $p=0.48 > 0.05$; do not contribute significantly to information needs of GSM Providers in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The paper investigated the use of microblogging in four GSM companies in Nigeria for internal workplace communication among middle managers. The study revealed that majority of the respondents need information to enhance their job performance and for social media updates among colleagues among others. Evidence from the study also revealed that many of the respondents were aware of social media tools such as Linda-Ikeji, Twitter, Yammer and Instant messaging, though Linda-Ikeji and Twitter were rated higher in terms of awareness. The study revealed further that most of the respondents use microblogging regularly for marketing of products and services, collaboration among professional colleagues and for knowledge sharing among others. Majority of the respondents also agreed that microblogging improves organizational productivity, promotes interaction among professional colleagues as well as enhances customer

relationship, facilitates attraction with potential customers and ensures effective provision of products and services. Other benefits of microblogging as identified by the respondents include facilitating information/knowledge sharing, social interaction among colleagues and easy sharing of data.

The study reveals that, there was a positive but not significant relationship between purpose of usage and frequency of using microblogging and information needs of the middle managers in Global System for Mobile Communication in Nigeria. The study reveals further that there was no significant relationship even between the benefits of microblogging and information needs of the respondents. This is at variance with Adekanye's (2014) study which confirmed a positive relationship between information needs, seeking and use among the textile market women in Southern Nigeria.

From these findings, it can be concluded that even though the companies studied were the sole providers of microblogging tools, those tools have not in any way influenced the information needs of the respondents. This implies that they are mainly interested in providing the products for commercial consumption but did not encourage utilizing the products to meet managers' information needs as inferred by one of the staff in a follow-up conversation. This according to him was attributed to a number of factors such as having heavy work load and thereby having little or no time to engage in microblogging to address enhance their information needs. This argument is equally at variance with Latif Shabagahi and Cox (2015) in their study in which it was discovered that microblogging can be used internally to create awareness in the workplace.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study examined the relationship between purpose of usage, frequency of usage and benefits being derived from using microblogging by GSM companies in Nigeria. It was discovered that, although microblogging tools were being used by the respondents, the tools were not being adequately utilized since there was no significant relationship between purpose of usage and frequency of using microblogging and information needs. It is therefore recommended that Management of GSM companies in Nigeria need to organize periodical developmental programmes, workshops, seminars and conferences which may help in sensitizing the staff about the potential benefits of using microblogging tools as mechanism to improve their information needs that may aid their job productivity.

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