
Social Media: A Knowledge Sharing Strategy at Kirinyaga University Library

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Abstract

Social media platforms have transformed into tools that allow for interactive participation. These tools that have changed methods of communication include YouTube, My Space, LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. Many organizations have adopted various types of social media platforms as a means of sharing knowledge among its stakeholders. Several organizations in their vision to competitive and productive are adopting strategies of communication that enable both external and internal partnership. The emerging opportunities are provided by social media when knowledge is shared through them, enabling effective and efficient dissemination of knowledge by members of that organization. Academic libraries being among organizations influenced by technology and technological changes, have not been left behind. Academic libraries have in the 21st century adopted social media platforms as a means of sharing knowledge with its clientele. This paper investigated social media as a knowledge sharing strategy that has been adopted by Kirinyaga University library, identified specific social media platforms that were used in sharing knowledge, benefits of social media platforms in knowledge sharing, and challenges faced in sharing knowledge. Descriptive research design was adopted. The study targeted students and library staff resulting in a sample of 169. Data was collected using questionnaires. The study found that the participants were using Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp to share library related knowledge. Social media was quicker in sharing information, convenient and faster. Some of the challenges they faced in sharing knowledge using social media were poor connectivity and low bandwidth. The study concluded that use of social media was a strategy academic libraries could use in sharing knowledge. The study recommends that academic libraries explore additional emerging and popular social media platforms that appeal to the users and offer more opportunities for sharing knowledge.

Keywords: *Knowledge Sharing, Social Media, Academic Libraries.*

Introduction/Background

The experience of social media cannot go unnoticed (Nielsen & Razmerita, 2014).

Methods of communication have been changed by social media platforms like YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. Organizations are adopting concepts of social media as a means of reshaping how knowledge is shared. According to Nelson (2015), various organizations have become competitive and productive by embracing communication strategies that increase the sharing of knowledge. Social media therefore provides the sharing of knowledge through platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Wikis hence enabling knowledge dissemination amongst users and library employees. Social media platforms therefore harness new opportunities within the organization by enabling the existing knowledge within the organizations to be shared. Some of the benefits provide by use of social media within an organization include enhanced services, increased income and reduction of business operations (Nielsen & Razmerita, 2014).

Knowledge sharing is a key aspect in the management of knowledge within institutions (Harden, 2012). It has become important in enabling the organization to convert an individual employee's knowledge into the knowledge of an organization. According to Brcic and Mihelic (2015), knowledge sharing results in knowledge generation, development of beliefs and problem solving. This knowledge in particular can be attributed to information on products, services and experience of clients. According to Chand and Chuang (2011), quality of sharing knowledge was being enhanced

by social interactions. Gruber et al. (2015) opined that when academic libraries increased their presence on social media, communication and sharing of knowledge also increased within their social media platforms.

Academic libraries like other institutions have adopted social media platforms in different facets of their operations. The advent of social media and its relationship with academic library community has dynamically changed access and sharing information. Social media has emerged as a medium of communication with the use of internet leading to embracing of social communication within academic libraries. The various types of social media platforms that have found their use in academic libraries include Flickr, Digg, Mash Up, Wikis, Facebook and Twitter among others (Xie & Stevenson, 2014).

Materials and Methods

The study adopted descriptive research design. It allowed for the untampered studying of the participants in their natural environment. Kirinyaga University library was selected in this study, because it already utilizes social media platforms as a strategy in sharing knowledge. The study settled on a sample of 169 students and library staff. Self-administered questionnaire were used to acquire relevant data from participants. A statistical software SPSS v23 was used to analyze the collected data.

Results

The study attained a response rate of 83%. This being responses from 140 participants from the sampled 169. This sample size was therefore considered acceptable and credible considering recommendations Bailey (2010). The results showed male (60), while 40% were female respondents. The participants (45%) were mainly youthful (between 18-25 years) and most of them (40%) pursuing diploma courses. This was important for the study because this category of participants is considered to be high users of social media platforms for different purposes (Jolles & Crone, 2012). The demographic information for the participants is captured in Table 1.

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Information

Demographic Information	% (n)
Gender	
Male	60% (84)
Female	40% (56)
Age	
18-25 years	47% (66)
26-33 years	18% (25)
34-41 years	21% (29)
42 years and above	14% (20)
Education Level	
Certificate	29% (41)
Diploma	40% (56)

Undergraduate degree 31% (43)

Social Media Platforms used in Sharing Knowledge in Academic Libraries The participants were asked about the social media platforms they were using to access and share knowledge within Kirinyaga University library. The findings are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Social Media Strategies

Social Media Platforms	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	63	45
Twitter	28	20
WhatsApp	49	35

Most of the participants indicated that Facebook (69%) was the social media platform used in sharing knowledge, 49% choose WhatsApp and 28% indicated Twitter. This shows that there were more than one social media strategy that were being used to share knowledge at Kirinyaga University library. Facebook platform was the most used social media strategy

Benefits of Using Social Media Platforms as a Strategy of Sharing Knowledge The participants were asked to state the benefits of using social media platforms as a strategy of sharing knowledge at Kirinyaga University library. The findings are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Benefits of using Social Media Platforms in Sharing Knowledge

Benefits	Frequency	Percentage
Quicker way of sharing knowledge	63	45
Easier knowledge sharing strategy	45	32
It is a convenient way of knowledge sharing	32	23

Most of the participants (45%) indicated that using social media as a strategy was a quicker way of sharing knowledge, 32% indicated it was an easier knowledge sharing strategy, while 23% stated that it was a convenient way of sharing knowledge. The results showed that social media was a strategy that was being utilized by the participants because of the benefits it came with.

Challenges of Using Social Media as a Strategy of Sharing Knowledge

The participants were asked about the challenges they were facing in sharing knowledge using social media. The findings are presented in Table 4 below.

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Poor connectivity to the internet	84	60
Low bandwidth	56	40

Most of the participants (60%) indicated that they were experiencing challenges of poor internet connectivity, while 40% indicated they were experiencing low bandwidth as a challenge of using social media as a strategy of sharing knowledge. The results implies that the strategy of using social media Kirinyaga University library as a means of sharing knowledge was being hampered by poor internet connectivity and low bandwidth.

Conclusion and Recommendations.

The study concluded that use of social media was a strategy academic libraries could use in sharing knowledge regarding the library services. Kirinyaga University library was benefiting from using social media as a strategy for sharing knowledge. It is recommended that academic libraries need to explore additional emerging and popular social media platforms that appeal to the users and offer more opportunities for sharing knowledge. Corrective measure of upgrading the Universities bandwidth were also necessary.

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