

Relationship between the use of microblogging sites and information needs of employees of licensed telecommunications operators in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigated the use of microblogging in relation to information needs of middle line managers in Nigerian telecommunication industries with focus on Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Providers namely; Globalcom Ltd, MTN (Nig.) Ltd, Airtel, and 9Mobile. The aim of the study is to identify possible barriers and risks that are associated with the use of microblogging in the course of meeting information needs of the respondents. 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. The total population was estimated to be 235 as at the time of this study and copies of a questionnaire were administered on the available staff. Descriptive survey research design was used and questionnaire was employed as research instrument. Copies of the questionnaire were administered using total enumeration techniques. Major findings revealed that “possible collaboration” and “enhancing job performance” were among the information needs of the respondents. However, the use microblogging sites (barriers $B=0.062$, $t=1.02$, $p=0.31>0.05$; and risks $B=-0.047$, $t=-0.788$, $p=0.43>0.05$) do not contribute significantly to information needs of the respondents.

Against the background of the findings, the study recommends that organizations should employ training and retraining as a tool for sensitizing employees in the workplace on the potential benefits of using microblogging sites to meet their information needs. It also recommends that organizational policy be put in place that will continuously guide the use of microblogging with a view to eliminate possible risks and removing the associated barriers of using it in the workplace.

KEYWORDS: Information needs, Microblogging, Social media, Global System for Mobile Communication

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive environment information has become the life blood that is being constantly needed by individual, organization and government in order to succeed. Thus, the study of information needs of diverse groups has become very necessary to enable the library to perform its statutory function of providing information for the public. Directly therefore, when information is being provided, it translates to meeting information needs of certain people or group of people. Information needs is highly dynamic and this notion had prompted Egberongbe and Adewuyi (2021) to declare that "information needs varies from time to time and can therefore be said as being situational, guided by cultural and ethnic factor". In a similar view, Chanda (2021), stressing the relevance of users' information needs opined that studies of information needs are to promote the use of information. The way information is being packaged, sought, stored and even disseminated had been greatly influenced by the advent of social media, made possible by the internet.

The advent of social media vis-à-vis, blogging and microblogging sites had given brilliant opportunities for rapid dissemination of information and even at a cheaper cost without geographical or cultural boundary limitations. Ebner et al (2010) revealed that microblogging is one of the latest Web 2.0 technologies. Drawing the basic difference between blogging and microblogging, Yu and Mendi (2018) stated that a blogging site is not intended to keep users and their friends updated in terms of day-to-day activities, rather microblogging sites are considerably more active, with updates posted on a minute-by-minute basis. The duo therefore concluded that the underlying philosophies of blogging and microblogging sites are distinct even though both offer social networking services. However, as helpful and advantageous microblogging sites are to rapid dissemination of information and other materials associated with its shortcomings and these are known as barriers and risks.

Factors that may affect the use of microblogging sites may include barriers and risks. Although loosely speaking, barriers and risks may appear to be closely related, in the real sense of it there are distinct differences between the two. Barriers are any hindrances or limitations such as lack of awareness of available microblogging sites for use or lack of basic skills to use, such sites on the part of potential users; whereas risks are typically seen as environmental constituted factors that

are associated with using microblogging sites and that ranges from health to environmental factors such as social, politics or the prevailing economic situation in a particular area. While barrier is a dependent of the individual awareness and skills, risks on the other hand is being control by the government. Examples of social media platforms that have made microblogging sites use possible are Twitter, You Tube, Yammer, Plurk, Google Buzz,Linkedin.

[Microblogging and information needs as concepts can be said to have similarity in the sense that the two constructs are geared towards generation and acquisition of information which can be used for decision making. It is against this backdrop that this study is being embarked upon to investigate the relationship between microblogging and information needs.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study sets out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To find out information needs of the studied respondents.
2. To determine barriers to the use of microblogging sites in relation to information needs of the studied respondents.
3. To determine risks associated with the use of microblogging sites in relation to information needs of the studied respondents.

HYPOTHESES

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between barriers of using microblogging and information needs of the respondents.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between risks of using microblogging and information needs of the respondents.

Ho3: There will be no significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Information needs

Efforts had been extensively made by previous researchers to investigate information needs and information seeking behavior of diverse user groups with a view to understand their psychological, educational, social and cultural backgrounds to enable library managements serve the library clientele more effectively. In their own contribution, Das and Mandal (2021) opined that satisfying information needs plays a vital role in shaping human thinking, attitudes, behaviours, communication and teaching process. The quest for information seeking is dependent of information needs with a view to enhance one's decision making capability and productivity. Provision of information to diverse people is the prerogative task of information workers such as librarians, information scientists, documentalists. Therefore, the study of information needs vis-à-vis information users' psychological and educational background can be seen as mechanisms to enable information workers perform optimally.

Haco-Obasi et al (2021) investigated information needs and seeking behaviour of police officers in the Three Geopolitical Zones of Imo State, Nigeria using the descriptive statistics of close-ended questionnaire structure for data collection, analyzed with one sample proportion right-tailed test for quantitative data and interview for qualitative data. The study revealed information needs of the respondents to include information on crises and crime areas within the state, information on the location of criminals and that information on the arrest of culprits are essential and needed except information on games and social life.

Blogging and Microblogging as new phenomena

The dynamic information waves had given birth to new phenomena known and addressed as "blogging" and "microblogging", respectively. Literature revealed that the term "blog" came from "web log". It is known to be an online journal for displaying information. Over time, web logs became known and addressed as "blogs". Blogs are part of the current changes in journalism and marketing. However, it needs to be added that it is not only in journalism and marketing that blogs

have become famous as it has been equally extended to the educational sector by which lecturers employ them to engage in teaching, while students employ them as learning kits. Blogs have been judged to be a growth of social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Yammer, Instagram, Tumblr and usually contain informational posts on specific topics made known by an individual or group of people.

On the other hand, microblogging is a form of blogging combined with instant messaging wherein the messages are restricted to specific character counts. Microblogging refers to short messages or posts shared with an audience online through microblogging sites and platforms, such as Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Yammer, Pinterest, Flickr and Facebook. These sites and platforms allow one to write, post, share pictures, upload video and clips. Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are the best known and usable microblogging platforms. Both education sectors and business organizations have been engaging each of the microblogging sites and platforms for specific purposes such as enhancing visibility, educational, increasing marketing and sales strategy. The differencebetween.net revealed that some organizations do have private microblogging systems which are often referred to as “enterprise microblogging” for internal use only. Thus, microblogs are short and frequent posts that are shared via social media platforms and they usually attract quick responses from online audience.

Shah and Cox (2015) studied the use and risks of microblogging in organizational and educational settings with an aim to clarify the relationship between the two settings in terms of using microblogging. The practical implication of their research is said to be useful guide for other researchers to explore issues around microblogging in different settings. In an earlier study by Heverin and Zach (2010) as cited by Tully (2013) discovered that 97 percent tweets contained information-related content with the vast majority containing information-sharing materials. Tully (2013) was therefore prompted to declare that the global spread of Facebook and Twitter has made sharing information via social networking sites a common practice. An investigation by Guo, Goh, Ilangovan and Jiao (2012) reported that preference for other technology, privacy concern and time constraints are among the reasons contributing to the non-use and abandonment of microblogging sites.

Barriers and risks of using microblogging sites

Barriers and risks are closely related. The two are impediments to any potential action. *The Oxford Dictionary* (<https://www.lexico.com/definition/barrier>) defines barrier as an **obstacle that prevents movement or access**. Another definition defines it as “a circumstance or obstacle that keeps people or things apart or prevents communication or progress”. From the foregoing, barriers in the use of microblogging sites could be said to connote any factor that creates limitation, fear or threat in wanting to use it for any purpose. Such barrier could be economical, political, environmental, cultural, natural or artificial. On the other hand, potential risks that are associated with the use of microblogging sites may include factors such as health, social, politics or economic. Some of the risks that are associated with the use microblogging sites as identified by previous researches such as Grit (2009), Lenhart, Purcell, Smith and Zickuhr (2010), Case and King (2010) cited by Shah and Cox (2015), include difficulty/unfamiliarity in using microblogging sites, distraction, privacy of the user, security concern and length restriction. Barrier could be seen as any hindrance or limitation against any action, while difficulty/unfamiliarity with using microblogging sites could be regarded as constituting risk of using microblogging sites (Grit, 2009; Lenhart, Purcell, Smith and Zickuhr, 2010, cited in Shah and Cox, 2015). This could be so if an individual has little or no knowledge about the awareness or usage of any tools, he or she would be finding it difficult to make use of such facility or tool, no matter how robust or advantageous such facility or tool could be. Training and retraining of staff as a way of creating awareness and usage of such facility or tool therefore becomes imperative to remove the risk of difficulty/unfamiliarity.

Other associated risks with the use of microblogging sites include distraction and security. In another contribution, Gordon (2020) has enumerated five ways that social media affects teens as; mental health, depression, anxiety, sleep deprivation and envy. To reduce these potential risks that are often associated with using microblogging sites, Lee and Warren (2010) had suggested that organizational policy and training can be adopted in this direction with a view to regulate and educate on the use of microblogging sites by employees. Similarly, the raisingchildren.net offered quite some preventive measures of reducing the potential risks associated with using microblogging sites as, not sharing personal information like phone numbers, location and date of birth with strangers online or unfamiliar people, not adding personal details like phone numbers or date of birth to private profiles, regularly check privacy and location settings, especially on mobile phones, keep passwords and log-in details private and not share these with friends, log out after using public computers and disable features like posting to multiple social media sites at once

METHODOLOGY

The study involved a quantitative survey conducted on the existing four major GSM companies based in Lagos, Nigeria. Data was gathered using a structured questionnaire, having five segment and each item was scored on a three (3) point scale Strongly Disagree =1, Disagree =2, Agree =3, 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 a 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.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Figure 1: Information needs of middle line managers in Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Providers

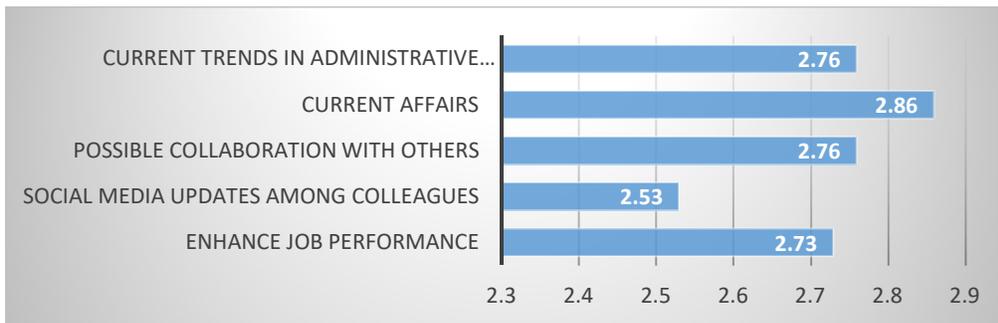


Figure 1 above reveals information needs of the respondents. The quest for “current affairs” has the highest mean score of 2.86 among the information needs and this was followed by “current trends in administrative practices” and “possible collaboration with others” with the mean score of 2.76, respectively. However, it is surprising that the quest for “social media updates among colleagues” has the lowest mean score of 2.53. With this report, it can be inferred that middle managers in Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Providers seems to be more concerned about issues on current affairs, best practices in their profession and collaboration with others. The implication of this is that their information needs may likely improve their job performance.

Table 1: Barriers of using microblogging sites among Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Providers

		Indifferent	Disagree	Agree	Mean	St.dev.	Rank
1	Lack of time as a result of heavy workload	8(7.9%)	37(36.6%)	56(55.4%)	2.48	0.64	1
2	Lack of support from the management of our organization	11(10.9%)	34(33.7%)	56(55.4%)	2.45	0.69	2
3	Problem of unnecessary information overload	12(11.9%)	44(43.6%)	45(44.6%)	2.33	0.68	3
4	Credibility of the source of information	16(15.8%)	39(38.6%)	46(45.5%)	2.30	0.73	4
5	Proficiency in communication of the sender	19(18.8%)	34(33.7%)	48(47.5%)	2.29	0.77	5
6	Lack of technical support	15(14.9%)	48(47.5%)	38(37.6%)	2.23	0.69	6
7	Lack of required training	20(19.8%)	50(49.5%)	31(30.7%)	2.11	0.71	7
8	I cannot see any importance of microblogging sites	22(21.8%)	49(48.5%)	30(29.7%)	2.08	0.72	8
		Grand mean			2.22	0.72	

Table 1 reveals respondents response in terms of barriers to the use of microblogging sites among the Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Providers. Most of the respondents 56(55.4%) agreed that lack of time as a result of heavy workload (Mean=2.48>2.00) hindered the use of microblogging sites, while 56(55.4%) of them admitted that lack of support from the management of our organisation (Mean=2.45>2.00) was among the barriers confronting the use of microblogging sites. Other reasons given are problem of unnecessary information overload (Mean=2.33>2.00), Credibility of the source of information (Mean=2.30>2.00), Proficiency in communication of the sender (Mean=2.29>2.00) and lack of technical support (Mean=2.23>2.00) and Lack of required training (Mean=2.11>2.00) were some of the barriers to effective use of microblogging sites.

Table 2: Risks associated with using microblogging sites among Nigerian Mobile Communication (GSM) Providers

		Indifferent	Disagree	Agree	Mean	St. dev.	Rank
1	Unnecessary distraction from performing cores duties	8(7.9%)	26(25.7%)	67(66.3%)	2.58	0.64	1
2	Using microblogging consume time	11(10.9%)	23(22.8%)	67(66.3%)	2.55	0.69	2
3	Exposing the organizational to negative comments from the public	17(16.8%)	28(27.7%)	28(27.7%)	2.39	0.76	3
4	Insecurity of revealing employees' personal information	20(19.8%)	23(22.8%)	58(57.4%)	2.38	0.79	4
5	Possible damaging of organizational reputation from competitors	18(17.8%)	28(27.7%)	55(54.5%)	2.37	0.77	5
6	Insecurity of revealing organizational information	20(19.8%)	25(24.8%)	56(55.4%)	2.36	0.80	6
		Grand mean			2.41	0.76	

Table 2 reveals that most of the respondents 67(66.3%) agreed that unnecessary distraction from performing core duties (Mean=2.58>2.00), time consuming (Mean=2.55>2.00), respectively were among the identified risks of using microblogging sites. Other reasons given are Insecurity of revealing employees' personal information 58(57.4%) insecurity of revealing organizational information 55(54.5%) (with the Mean=2.36>2.00) are some of the risks associated with using micro blogging. Other risks associated with microblogging sites are possible damaging of organizational reputation from competitors (Mean=2.37>2.00) and exposing the organization to negative comments from the public (Mean=2.39>2.00).

Test of Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between barriers of using microblogging sites and information needs in Nigeria Global System for Mobile Communication sector

Table 3: Relationship between barriers of using microblogging sites and information needs

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Barriers of using microblogging sites	101	18.25	2.980.08	0.45		Not Significant
Information needs	101	13.65	1.70			

Table 3 reveals that the r calculated of 0.08 or 8% ($p=0.45>0.05$) showing the degree of relationship between barriers of using microblogging sites and information needs. This implies that there is a positive and not significant relationship between barrier of using microblogging sites and information needs. The null hypothesis is thus accepted.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between risks of using microblogging sites and information needs in Nigeria Global System for Mobile Communication sector

Table 4: Relationship between risks of using microblogging sites and information needs

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Risks of using microblogging sites	101	14.62	3.02	-0.05	0.64	Not Significant
Information needs	101	13.65	1.70			

Table 4 reveals that the r calculated of -0.05 or 5% ($p=0.64>0.05$) showing the degree of relationship between risks of microblogging sites and information needs. This implies that there is a negative and not significant relationship between risk of using microblogging sites and information needs. The null hypothesis is accepted.

Ho3: There will be no significant barriers and risks of using microblogging sites on information needs in Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) sector.

Table 5: Multiple Regression Model of barriers and risks of use of microblogging sites with information needs

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.113 ^a	.013	-.007	1.70595	2.052

a. Predictors: (Constant), risk, barrier

b. Dependent Variable: information_need

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.666	2	1.833	.630	.535 ^b
	Residual	285.205	98	2.910		
	Total	288.871	100			

a. Dependent Variable: information needs

b. Predictors: (Constant), risk, barrier

Table 5 indicates that coefficient of determination (Adjusted R²) = 0.02, which gives proportion of variance (Adjusted R² x 100) = 0.01%. This implies that the independent variables, barriers and risks of a use of microblogging sites, accounted for 1% of the variance in the dependent variable information needs. Hence, the joint effect of risks and barriers of use of microblogging sites is not significant on the information needs of the studied population (F=0.63; df= (2; 100); not significant value p = 0.535>0.05).

Table 6 : Relative Contribution of the Independent Multiple Regression Model risks and barriers of use of microblogging sites with information needs

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	T	Sig.	Remark
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta			
1	(Constant)	13.211	1.169		11.297	.000	
	Barriers	.062	.061	.109	1.020	.310	Not significant
	Risks	-.047	.060	-.084	-.788	.433	Not significant

a. Dependent Variable: information needs

Table 6 shows the relative contribution of independent variables (barriers and risks of using microblogging sites) to dependent variable (information needs) of GSM. Evidence from the data revealed that barrier: $B=0.062$, $t=1.02$, $p=0.31 > 0.05$; and risk $B=-0.047$, $t=-0.788$, $p=0.43 > 0.05$; do not contribute significantly to information needs of GSM sector.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study is an attempt to investigate barriers and risks that are associated with the use of microblogging sites, to meet the information needs of middle line managers in Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Sector. Major findings revealed that, the quest for “current affairs” has the highest mean score of 2.86 among the information needs and this was followed by “current trends in administrative practices” and “possible collaboration with others” with the mean score of 2.76, respectively. However, it is surprising that the quest for “social media updates among colleagues” has the lowest mean score of 2.53. With this report, it can be inferred that middle managers in Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Providers seems to be more concerned about issues on current affairs, best practices in their profession and collaboration with others. The implication of this is that their information needs may likely improve their job performance.

The study also established some of the barriers to the use microblogging sites to include “lack of time as a result of heavy workload” having the highest mean score of (Mean=2.48 > 2.00), and followed by lack of support from the management of our organization with the mean score of (Mean=2.45 > 2.00). The least on the list of the barriers to the use of microblogging sites for the

respondents' information needs is "credibility of the source of information" with the mean score of (Mean=2.30>2.00). This is a novel finding which can be used for further studies.

On the associated risks to the use of microblogging sites by the middle line managers of Nigerian Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Sector, the study revealed that most of the respondents agreed that "unnecessary distraction from performing core duties" has the highest mean score of (Mean=2.58>2.00), slightly followed with "time consuming" factor. Other risks associated with microblogging are possible damaging of "organizational reputation from competitors" (Mean=2.37>2.00) and exposing the "organization to negative comments from the public" (Mean=2.39>2.00). This finding was similar with the finding of previous researches by Grit (2009), Lenhart, Purcell, Smith and Zickuhr (2010), Case and King (2010) cited by Shah and Cox (2015), whose finding revealed that difficulty/unfamiliarity in using microblogging sites, distraction, privacy of the user, security concern and length restriction were among the barriers of using microblogging sites.

The test of hypothesis revealed the r calculated of 0.08 or 8% ($p=0.45>0.05$) showing the degree of relationship between barriers of using microblogging sites and information needs. This implies that there is a positive and not significant relationship between barriers of using microblogging sites and information needs. The null hypothesis is thus accepted. This implied that barriers do not influence the use of microblogging sites in meeting the information needs of the respondents. Also, the r calculated of -0.05 or 5% ($p=0.64>0.05$) showing the degree of relationship between barrier of risk of micro blogging and information need. This implies that there is a negative and not significant relationship between risk of using micro blogging and information need. The null hypothesis is equally accepted.

The coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2) = 0.02, which gives proportion of variance (Adjusted $R^2 \times 100$) = 0.01% implies that the independent variables risk and barrier of a use of micro blogging, accounted for 1% of the variance in the dependent variable information need. Hence, the joint effect risk and barrier of use of micro blogging is not significant on the information need of GSM ($F=0.63$; $df= (2; 100)$; not significant value $p = 0.535>0.05$).

In a nutshell, evidence from the data revealed that barrier: $B=0.062$, $t=1.02$, $p=0.31>0.05$; and risks $B=-0.047$, $t=-0.788$, $p=0.43>0.05$; do not contribute significantly to information needs of GSM sector.

CONCLUSION

The study has attempted to investigate the relationship between information needs of middle line managers in Nigerian telecommunication industries with focus on Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) Providers namely; Globalcom Ltd, MTN (Nig.) Ltd, Airtel, and 9Mobile. Microblogging sites were clearly shown to be a dominant factor to building valuable interactions and networks required to build successful socio-cultural and technological businesses in organizations. However, on the heels of potential successes identified are imminent challenges and threats encountered in the use of microblogs as typical of all innovations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Against the background of the findings, the study recommends that

1. Organizations should employ training and retraining as a tool for sensitizing employees in the workplace on the potential benefits of using microblogging sites to meet their information needs.
2. In the same vein, the study recommends the need to put in place organizational policy to guide the usage of microblogging sites in organisations, with a view to eliminate possible risks and to remove associated barriers of using microblogging sites in the workplace. Addressing the associated threats in the final analysis will no doubt go a long way to curb barriers and the risks in the use of microblogging in organisations.

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