

SOCIAL MEDIA SPACE PRESENCE: A REVIEW OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA SPACE.

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Abstract

Social media is used across a variety of organizations including Higher Education Institutions. This study examined the use of social media by universities in Nigeria. A review of websites from selected Nigerian universities was conducted using the National University Commission website. A table was generated indicating the various social media available in the sampled institutions, their status, number of likes, population of the institution and total number of likes for all social media. This analysis found that low levels of social media usage by Nigerian universities and students. Recommendations are made on how Nigerian universities can improve their use of social media space.

Keywords: Social Media Space, Social Media, likes, Nigerian universities, Social Media Presence.

Introduction

Divers usage with advantages of Social Media (SM) applications make them relevant not only for large scale business activities but also open the doors of opportunity for education, research and development and other academic field at a low cost and in increased level of efficiency (Gupta, Gautam & Khare 2014). Gilroy (2009) indicated that colleges are boosting their presence on Social Media sites such as YouTube also that higher education has no choice than to adopt Social Media. Failure to enlist these technologies will force alumni and/or student to create alternative and unregulated sites and thus the university risks losing complete control of their brand online. Branding is an important reason for university to have online presence.

Social networking or online communities created by schools as part of their online presence can bring together potential students with students who are already enrolled (i.e University Ambassadors) or with peers looking for similar information and help. Such engagement seems to be a very effective way of persuading the contemporary consumers (Constantinides & ZinckStagno 2012). Yu et'al (2010) found that increased presence of SM in higher education setting is essential if universities are to (re)connect with these students. For example, Social networking sites are now being used by universities as alternative space wherein students can adapt to the university lifestyle through interacting online with peers and faculty. Selwyn (2012), many universities now maintain profiles and groups on social networking sites such as facebook.

Against the above background this study intends to find out the following objectives among Nigerian universities:

- To determine the available SM platforms among Nigerian Universities.
- To determine specific SM platform(s) available in each university.
- To determine the average number of platform for each university.
- To determine how many likes does each SM platform in each university has.
- To determine the total number of likes on the various SM platforms of each university.

Literature Review

What is Social Media?

There are many definitions of Social Media but for the purpose of this work a few definitions will be considered. Saffk and Brake (2009) observed that SM refers to activities, practices and behaviours among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge and opinions using

conversational media. The Universal (MCCan report 2008) refers to Social Media as online application platforms and media which aim to facilitate interaction, collaboration and sharing of content. Davis III, C.H.F; Deil-Amen, R; Riss-Anguilar, C. and Canche, M.S.G. (2012), Social Media Technology (SMT) refers to web-based and mobile applications that allows individuals and organisations to create, engage and share new user-generated or existing content, in digital environment through multi-way communication.

Why Social Media Space Presence?

Higher Education Institution (HEI) has established that Social Media is an effective conduit to reach students and other stakeholders, particularly when the recipients are heavily engaged in other social network activities (Merill, 2011). Tucker (2011) found that using Social Media in Vanderbilt University in the USA especially facebook and twitter; students who lived off campus can be reached more effectively increasing awareness of university events. Another reason put forth by (Kuzma& Wright 2013) was that Higher Education Institution are also realising the cost effectiveness of this approach (Social Media presence) over more traditional methods such as international travel and print advertisement.

Shinn (2011) advised that smaller schools with limited advertising budget can use Social Media to better compete with better-funded institutions. Online marketing through Social Media offers a cost-effective alternative at a time when many universities cannot rely so heavily on public funding. They are under pressure to adopt creative ways to control costs while still maintaining a high level of service (Mandelson 2001).

Higher Education and Social Media Marketing

Reuben (2012), Mahaney (2012) had highlighted some common SM platforms that can be used by Higher Education Institution, which include Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, Del.icio.us, YouTube, Flickr, LinkedIn, Wordpress and Blog. Barefoot and Szabo (2010), defines it as using a channel to promote your company and its products. Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) in their study of Higher Education marketing in UK claimed that a centrally important principle of marketing is that all marketing activities should be geared towards the customer's want. For this generation, Social Media Technology (SMT) is a primary means of communication and information seeking and possibly a central component of their identity and community building (Davis et al 2012). For this fact universities need to move along this trend to be able to get connected adequately with students. Mahaney (2012) In order to reach out to prospective and current students, colleges go to where they all dwell: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The best marketing is the most memorable and available.

Jarbur and Agren (2013) work showed that to be successful, it is no longer a viable strategy for the universities to determine what the students want. There should be a shift from being production focus to customer focus. Corroborating this, is the work of (Mark 2013) which stated that why students should be seen as customers; that with the increasing competitions students are making sure that they get the best value for money and universities are therefore adopting a customer focus to be able to give them what they want. The customer focus today for any Higher Education Institution should be the Social Media space where the students are.

Constantinides and ZinckStagno (2011) put it forth that Social Media is a good way of reaching out to prospective students because there are gaps between the information prospective students want and what can be found on the universities traditional communication channels. They suggested that universities should try to get influential individuals and brand advocates to speak out on Social Media which should help universities to see the benefit of using these channels. Kuzma and Wright (2013), Mahaney (2012) suggested that some universities are not taking full advantage of the global reach that these Social Media sites have with potential students, thus ignoring a prime marketing channel. Using Social Media by universities to recruit student has shown by research that it is a potential instrument when used by HEI (Helgesen 2008, Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka 2006).

Use of SM in Higher Education

Some admission offices (of Higher Institution) have begun to use students blog to showcase

current students experiences as a recruitment tool for prospective students (Harris 2008, Mattson & Barnes 2009, Rudolph 2007, Tucciarore 2009, Violino 2009, Wandel 2008,). This has been described as an effective public relations strategy because it is appealing to millennial generation students (18-29 years of age) for whom personal authentic and real time engagement with their institution has become more of an expectation (Rudolph 2007).

Willburn (2008) twitter has provided an opportunity for institutions to create live up-to-the minute notices of commencement programmes, home coming events, class reunions and live chat, while (Swartzger 2007) added as well as emergency alerts. Colleges and universities that have tried to create presence in social spaces have utilised pod casts, video blogs and webcasts to share the works of students, faculty, visiting scholars and alumni with the broader world. Also in online courses tweeting has found it place prominently as discussion medium for faculty and students (Dunlap & Lowenthal 2009). Thus use of social networking sites can offer Higher Education Institution an effective method of recruiting international students.

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, Nigerian universities websites were browsed to know the various platforms that are available. The National University Commission site was also searched to determine the total number of universities accredited in Nigeria as at February 15th 2015; the time of this research and also to get website address for all the sampled institutions. Also www.41cu.org/nigerian-universities.html was also searched for the available population of each institution and SM platforms available.

Sampling Technique

Stratified and random sampling techniques were adopted. The universities in Nigeria were first stratified on the basis of ownership in terms of Federal-owned universities, State-owned universities and private-owned universities. Also stratified was the year of commencement of these universities to ensure that all the selected universities do not fall within the same generation for all the strata. From each of the strata, institutions were randomly selected to make up the total required no for each stratum.

Sampling Population and Sample Size

As at the time of doing this research, there were a total of 119 approved universities (NUC website) distributed as 39 federal-owned universities, 40 state-owned universities and 50 privately-owned universities. 20% of each of these strata was chosen to represent the group, 8 federal-owned, 8 state-owned and 10 privately owned making a total of 26 universities.

Results

The table below reflects the result of the search on the websites of the sampled universities.

S/N	Universities	Population	Year of est.	Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn	Youtube	Flicker	Others	Total No	
										SM	Followers
1	<u>AbubakarTafawaBalewaUni.Bauchi</u>		1988							0	0
2	<u>Ahmadu Bello Uni. Zaria</u>	25,000 - 29,999	1962	NA	NA	795 NL	NA			1	795
3	<u>Bayero Uni., Kano</u>	7,000 - 7,999	1975							0	0
4	<u>Fed. Uni. of Tech., Akure</u>	20,000 - 24,999	1981	33,783	3,718		74			3	37,575
5	<u>Fed. Uni of Tech., Minna</u>		1982	NA	NA		NA			0	0
6	<u>Fed. Uni. of Tech., Owerri</u>		1980	12,854	1,885					2	14,739
7	<u>Fed. Uni., Otuoke</u>	250 - 499	2011	3,498	5				Google+ NA, BLOG ACTIVE	3	3,503
8	<u>Fed. Uni., Oye-Ekiti</u>	1000-1999	2011	11,531	1,259		NA			2	12,790
9	<u>Abia State Uni., Uturu</u>	20,000 - 24,000	1980	NA	NA				Google+ NA	0	0
10	<u>Ambrose Alli Uni., Ekpoma</u>		1980	NA	NA				Google+ NA	0	0
11	<u>Bauchi State Uni., Gadau</u>		2011							0	0
12	<u>Benue State Uni., Makurdi</u>		1992			33				1	33
13	<u>Cross River Uni. of Sci. &Tech., Calabar</u>	10,000 - 14,999	2001	1,819	NA	NA	NA		Instagram NA	1	1,819
14	<u>Ekiti State Uni., Ado Ekiti</u>	35,000 - 39,000	1982	8, 913 NL						1	8,913

15	Enugu State Uni. of Sci. and Tech., Enugu			1981	NA	NA	NA	NA			0	0
16	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida UnI., Lapai			2005	3,010 NL	202 NL		NA	Active NL		3	3,212
17	Achievers Uni., Owo	500 - 999		2008	821 NL	22 NL					2	843
18	Adeleke Uni., Ede			2011	7	158		NA		whatsapp	3	165
19	Afe Babalola Uni., Ado-Ekiti			2009	3,012	195	NA	6			3	3,213
20	Babcock Uni., Ilesha-Remo	5,000 - 5,999		1999	4,868	304	NA				2	5,172
21	Baze Uni., Abuja			2011	923	480		15		Google+ NA	3	1,418
22	Bells Uni. of Tech., Ota	1,000 - 1,999		2005	NA	NA	214 NL	NA			1	214
23	Bingham Uni., Auta Balifi	500 - 999		2005							0	0
24	Bowen Uni., Iwo	5,000 - 5,999		2001	377	Linked to a different account	NA	NA	NA	Google+, pinterest, picasa, myspace, dig, skype, vimeo, del.icio.us, NA	1	377
25	Covenant Uni., Ota	6,000 - 6,999		2002	32,642	1,259		42		Google+ (57), news feed	5	34,000
26	Elizade Uni., Ilara-Mokin	250 - 499		2012	3,321	299		22			3	3,642
TOTAL					NA (6) A (15)	NA (7) A (12)	NA (5) A (3)	NA (9) A (5)	NA (1) A (1)			

**A – Active **NL – Not Linked with the institution website **NA – Not Active

 Federal Universities  State Universities  Private Universities

Discussion

Common Social Media Platform

From the analysis above the social media platform common to Nigerian universities are Facebook and Twitter. YouTube, LinkedIn, Google+, Whatsapp, blog, and flicker are just used by one or two institutions. Other platforms present in few universities are Instagram, Myspace, Newsfeed, Vimeo, Del.icio.us, Skype, and Picassa; most of this last group of platforms mentioned were mainly not active and they appear only on the site of a particular institution. With the limited number of Social Media platforms present, it shows that Nigerian universities are not moving enough along the current trend of Social Media as reported in the work of Davis et al (2012). Also while other Higher Education Institutions are already using Social Media as a marketing and international recruiting platform, Nigerian Universities are yet to adequately tap into this. The visibility of the Nigerian universities will also be limited as a result of low usage of different Social Media.

Prevalence of the Social Media among Universities

The table also reveals the prevalence of the Social Media platforms among all the universities sampled with active Facebook (FB) common to 15 institution (57.7 percent) while 6 institutions (23.1 percent) has FB logo on their website without being active while other 5 institutions (19.2 percent) do not have on their website at all. Twitter is the next most common platform with 12 institutions (46.2 percent), while 7 institutions (26.9 percent) have the logo on their website without being active, while 7 other institutions (26.9 percent) do not have the logo on their website. YouTube is next most common platform on universities websites with 5 institutions (19.2 percent) having it active, while 9 institutions (34.6 percent) have it on their website without being active, and 12 institutions (46.2 percent) do not have it at all on their websites.

LinkedIn is only common to 5 institutions (19.2 percent), having it active on their websites, while 3 other institutions (11.5 percent) have the logo on their websites without it being active and 18 other institutions do not have it at all on their websites. For flicker it is only 1 institution (3.8 percent) that has the logo active on their website, also 1 other institution (3.8 percent) has the logo on its website without it being active and 22 other institutions do not have it. One institution (3.8 percent) has Google+ active on their website, while other 5 other institutions (19.2 percent) have it on their websites but not active, the other 21 institutions do not have it on their website. Only one institution (3.8 percent) has an active blog account while the remaining 25 institutions do not even have it on their website at all. Other Social Media present among the institutions are Instagram, Myspace, Pinterest, Vimeo, Del.icio.us, Skype and Picasa.

This submission is contrary to Mahaney (2012) that colleges go to where students are to get them since the prevalence of Social Media platforms is very low. Also the Social Media used by universities in Nigeria are mainly Facebook and Twitter while others are near non-use by their percentage contrary to Reuben (2012) and Mahaney (2012) that Higher Education Institution uses Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, Del.icio.us, blog, WordPress, LinkedIn and Wikis.

Number of Active Platform per Institution

The number of active Social Media for each institution is determined and it is shown on the table with only 1 institution (3.8 percent) having 5 active different Social Media platforms, followed by 6 different institutions (23.1 percent) with 3 active Social Media platforms, 4 different institutions (15.4 percent) are having 2 active SM platform, for 1 active Social Media platform, it is only 6 different institutions (23.1 percent). Finally 8 remaining institutions (30.8 percent) do not have any active SM platform.

Number of Likes/Followers/Subscribers per SM

The table shows the number of likes for each SM in each institution, with Facebook, 2 institutions have above 30,000 followers with a population of 20,000-24,999 for one of the institution and the second institution population of 6,000-6,999, while other 2 institutions have above 10,000 followers with population of one of the institution not available while the second institution has population of 1,000-1999. For above 5,000 we have only one institution with a population of 5,000-5,999; for above 2,500, we have 5 institutions while above 1,000 is 1 institution and 4 other

institutions have less than 1,000 followers.

For twitter, only 1 institution has above 3,000 followers, while above 1,000 followers are 3 institutions and 8 institutions have less than 1,000 followers. For YouTube subscribers, the institution with the highest subscribers has just 74, followed by another institution with 42, with other institutions having 22, 15 and 6 subscribers. LinkedIn follower for institutions that have active platform is 795, 214 and 33 for the three institutions concerned.

Total Number of Likes/Followers/Subscribers per each Institution

The total number of likes for each institution was also computed as can be seen on the last column of the table with the highest institution recording 37,575 followed by 34,000 and 14, 739. The least likes were 33 followed by 165 and then 214. While 8 institutions do not have any platform and the range for the remaining 12 institutions is between 12,790 and 337. This work shows a contrary conclusion (because only 7 institution (26.9 percent) have total number of likes/followers that is appreciable when compared to the institution's population not to talk of other prospective students) when compared to the work of (Rudolph 2007) which described Social Media as an effective public relations strategy because it is appealing to millennial generation students (18-29 years of age) for whom personal authentic and real time engagement with their institution has become more of an expectation. Since the likes for the institutions are mainly low, it shows that their visibility is limited so also the marketing possibilities through SM, and international recruitment of students will definitely be very small or none at all.

Recommendations

From the findings and discussion above the following are some of the recommendations that can be inferred from this research for furtherance of knowledge in the area of Higher Education Institution and Social Media space presence

- Facebook is the most common with 15 institutions, then Twitter with 12 institutions, followed by YouTube which is 5 institutions. This shows that most of the Nigerian HEIs are not present on the popular Social Media platform. In this age of intense competition both for visibility, recruitment, collaboration, information dissemination and branding. Nigeria universities need to make themselves more present and relevant on the Social Media space.
- Looking at all the Social Media available in the sample, there is no single institution with an educationally designed Social Media technology like Blackboard, Desire2learn, e-learning Tools and Web CT. Nigerian universities need to work on this area and begin to take their teaching to Social Media space and at the same time use these media for educating the outside world
- Also as institutions of higher learning that is the seat of knowledge none of them has a customised Social Media platform that they are using. This can go as a project or invention for students in Information Communication Technology, Mass Communication or other related departments.
- The idea of having Social Media logo on the institutions website without being linked correctly or not active is not the best for universities as this can be discouraging to intending users. Universities should make sure that all the Social Media logo on their website are properly linked and active with good management in terms of recent and frequent posting to make it attractive to users,
- The numbers of likes recorded for most of the Social Media are small compared to the population of the institutions with the exception of Covenant University, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, federal University, Otuoke, Elizade University and federal University of Technology, Akure having total number of likes that is more than the institution's population. While others like Achievers University and Babcock University have total number of likes in the range of their population. The remaining institutions have lower number of Social Media likes relative to their population. It is recommended that the institutions may have to work on the publicity, postings, usage and promotion of their Social Media account while other research may go along the line of why such a small number of likes relative to population not to talk of expectations that intending students or friends of students in other institutions should be interested in what is going on in neighbouring or their friends institution.

- It was only Facebook that recorded a great number of likes compared to other media, this can be due to the fact that it is the leading Social Media among the Millennial. So Nigerian university can capitalise on this to get attention and publicity while they try to work on other Social Media that hold potentials also for their usage and users can get used to them with time. At the same time ardent users of those platforms can be wooed to become linked with the institution.
- The total number of active platform for each institution is relatively small with 8 institutions (30.8percent) having no platform and 6 other institutions (23percent) having only 1 platform. The universities in Nigeria need to employ Social Media in the publicity, marketing, branding, information dissemination and visibility in this information age. Any institution should be able to manage at least 4 to 6 Social Media as the bulk of their students or prospective students are on diverse platforms of Social Media. Further research can be done in the area of what these institutions are doing/posting on their Social Media.
- It is also discovered that private universities seem to have more platforms than the state and federal institutions; this is a challenge to state and federal institutions to work on this area in making their presence felt on the Social Media space. The high number of SM platforms among the private universities can be due to lack of fund and thereby exploring the potential of SM to leverage the richer federal and state institutions.

Conclusion

This work has revealed the present position of the Nigerian universities presence on the Social Media space, showing that it is relatively low when compared with their counterparts in other parts of the world. This could also mean that they are at a disadvantage with this present millennial age population who are the bulk of the people they have to deal with. There is a need to increase the Social Media presence of Nigerian Universities. The number of likes/followers/subscribers is also very small showing that Nigerian millennial generation cannot find a strong connection between Nigerian Higher Education Institution and Social Media.

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