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Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour and Use of Information Resources by Mba Students at a Nigerian University (Pp. 250-264)

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Abstract

This paper assesses information needs and information seeking behaviour and use of Information resources by MBA students at the Obafemi Awolowo University (O.A.U) of Nigeria. The study analyzed empirical data collected on the information requirements of MBA students. The findings showed that electronic materials are on a substantial increase cited as references on their thesis, although journals, library books, text books and conferences were also main information sources used. However, student complained on the energy and time wasted in accessing relevant information needed for their coursework and research within the stipulated period. They posited that they needed training and guidance of library attendant on how to use library database resources and their services for more efficiency as well as constitute a user group of library services distinct from the faculty model.

Introduction

The assessment of information needs and information seeking behaviour and use of information resources by graduate student especially the MBA is vital in supporting them to access and use information resources requisite for ideal

work performance. Knowledge generated by user studies can help to develop information systems and information services to meet their information needs effectively.

Universities around the world are very particular of graduate products of their various business schools. MBA students are specifically mould into a world class managers' capable of turning around the management of their various organizations in competing for the future favourably and invariably contribute positively to the economic growth of their host country. The O.A.U is among the first generation universities established in Nigeria in the early sixties that have engaged in producing internationally trained managers through their MBA programme. The academic work for the MBA students at this University is in no doubt very cumbersome as students has to keep their finger tips on information pertinent to their course work both of past and current issues in the field of management and economic sector. They are expected to be able to forecast, analyse and speculate possible outcomes over a range of policy issues, strategic planning and decision making within their industry, country and international boundaries because of globalization effect. Thus, they require lots of information and resources mix to enhance their intellectual capacity thinking to help meet and cope with the challenges they are to face in the course of their scholar activities. Information is therefore a very crucial tool for MBA students, and how they acquire and use the information are key determinants of their performance.

For academic libraries to adequately address the information needs of its students, they need to know more about the information that students use and value and what influences their information searching, obtaining and use. To address these questions, it is pertinent to investigate graduate MBA students' information seeking behaviour as they engage in their scholarly activities, the internet, the academic library, colleagues and other influences.

Problem of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine MBA students' information needs, seeking behaviour and their use of information to sustain their process of inquest and scholarly activities. More specifically this study was designed to investigate the following questions.

- What are the information needs of MBA graduate students?
- How do MBA students seek and obtain information?

- What information sources do MBA students value, and where do they find them?
- What other factors influence MBA students information seeking behaviour?

Significance of the Study

According to Agbonlahor (2005) a number of factors such as ease of use of system, and users' beliefs, perceptions and training, have been cited as contributing to user acceptance and effective usage of a computer – based information systems. It therefore becomes pertinent that adequate knowledge about the information needs and seeking behaviour of this users' group is vital for developing library collections, services and facilities to meet their information needs effectively, which this study have succeeded in clarifying.

Literature Review

Various studies have documented the information needs, information seeking behaviour and the relationship between information use and work performance. Within the library and information science, information has been defined as “any stimulus that reduces uncertainty” (Krikelas, 1983 p. 6). While within the context of user studies, information has been used “to denote factual data or advice or opinion, a physical object, such as a book or journal, or the channel through which a message is conveyed, for example, oral or written communication” (Rhode, 1986, p. 50-51). Accordingly, different ‘popular or disciplinary’ definitions of information are inevitable because the definition of the concept may well depend on the particular context or purpose for which it is identified and used, (Olatokun and Tiamiyu, 2005, p. 1).

The term information needs has also been used in a variety of ways. According to Ehikhamenor (1990), information need could be referred to as the extent to which information is required to solve problems, as well as the degree of expressed satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the information. According to Chin-Chih and Hernon (1982), they posited that information need arise whenever individuals find themselves in a situation requiring knowledge to deal with the situation as they deem fit. Wilson (2000) opined that information needs are influenced by a variety of factors such as the range of information sources available, the uses to which the information will be put, the background, motivation, professional orientation and individual characteristics of the user. While other factors according to Nwagwu and Oshiname (2009), are the socio-political, economic, legal and regulatory

systems surrounding the users, as well as the consequences of information use. Also, very vital to note is the quality of information sources that are available to the users because of its originality. Information sources that could provide relevant, useful, specific and accurate information that could help users solve their problems are bound to be efficient.

Information seeking behaviour which results from the recognition of some need is defined by Krikelas (1983, p. 6-7) "as any activity of an individual that is undertaken to identify a message that satisfies a perceived need. Thus, information seeking begins when someone perceives that the current state of possessed knowledge is less than that needed to deal with the problem at stake. Coherence with Wilson definition, Pettigrew et al (2001) define information behaviour as the study of how people need, seek, give and use information in different contexts, including the workplace and everyday living. In the context of this study, we use information behaviour as it applies to graduate MBA students as they seek, search for, and use information to support their scholarly exercise.

Existing literature on information seeking behaviour that focused on graduate students of universities, corroborate in various studies show that internet and libraries online resources play substantial role in students information seeking. In a related study, findings showed that access to libraries plunge with length of stay in search of materials. The authors made recommendations for improving education about library services and information literacy skills.

Meanwhile, prior studies carried out on graduate students and undergraduates from universities on how the internet affects their scholarly work and the significance it might have on campus libraries (Friedland, 2002). This study examined such issues as what information resources support scholarly work, how users find information and what problems are encountered. Other studies examined relating to student perception about the information on the internet, in the library, in print, how they access the information; and what they value.

Information use is a fundamental concept, which includes the construction of new knowledge and new meanings, the transformative act of shaping decisions and influencing others, and the movement and exchange of information with colleagues Chun wei choo et al (2008), information use come to mind when information acquired by a person to satisfy an information need is actually put into use.

Methodology

The study examined the information needs and information seeking behaviour and use of graduate MBA students of the O. A.U, Ife, Western Nigeria. The primary method of data collection is a questionnaire survey that was applied to 210 MBA students. The questionnaire contains sections on information needs, information behaviours and values, access to and use of information sources, preferred channels of information, perception of relevance of information, factors influencing the preferred choice of information sources, problems encountered when seeking for information and student suggestions for improving their access to information were collected from the subject. At the end, a total of 170 completed copies were retrieved, representing a response rate of 80.9%. Each completed questionnaire retrieved were sorted and cleaned up, and the data were imported into EPI-INFO software package for statistical analysis. The researcher also had the opportunity to interview a few outgoing MBA graduate students whom are still putting finishing touches on their research project who could spare some time. The main problem encountered in carrying out this study was the difficulty in securing participation of these students at the initial stage until there was intervention from above, as they complained by being too busy with academic workload at the time of the survey.

Results

Demographic characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1, indicating that (69.4%) representing 118 out of the total number of 170 participants are male. This also confirmed gender inequality in higher education enrolment when compared with opposite sex. Table 1 show further that some of the respondents reported possessing Masters (6.5%) and doctorate (1.2%) degrees.

Types of information needed by the graduate MBA students

The students were asked to state the types of information they needed to carry out their scholarly activities. A wide range of information listed in table 2 shows that information types was reported needed by at least 50.0% of the students.

Information related on government policies by MBA graduate students (99.5%), Business/management (99.8%), financial/economic (99.4%), strategic/operational planning (98.5%), results of scientific research (99.0%), and corporate developmental information (99.0%) topped the list. The other

types of information needed included legal (92.2%), general information (90.8%), global information (93.4%), social activities (96.1%), while information about Government/political activities (89.5%) come last in graduate MBA students information priorities.

Incidence of Probing for Information

Again, MBA graduate students were asked how often they probe for each of the information types. Table 3 shows that among the information types needed each time, the following in the order of priorities rank higher among the list included information related to Business/Management (93.7%), financial/economic information (91.5%), strategic/operational planning (90.8%), while general information types topped the information types that were probed only occasionally.

Awareness of Information Sources in the University Environment

Graduate MBA students were asked whether they were aware of the following information sources that existed in the University environment: library, internet services, management journals, information centres, workshops/seminars/conferences, university own educational radio, television. A total of 99.95 of the students indicated awareness of the library, whilst 96.8% and 82.5% indicated awareness on internet and information centres, respectively. Only 385 indicated awareness of workshops/seminars/conferences, whilst less than 7% and 55 respectively are aware of television and radio. Meanwhile less than 2% is aware of the school management journal.

Student Appraisal of the Significance of Information Sources

Students were asked to indicate the extent to which the information sources are significant to their work. Table 4 show the remark levels of significance of the sources. Among the sources remarked to be very significant by more than 90.5% of the MBA students were: Lecturers (92.8%), Internet (99.9%), Management journal (98.5%), library facilities (96%) and Textbooks (99.5%).

CD-ROM topped the list of the sources that were just significant (35.3%) followed by newspapers (28.9%). Fewer than 70% of the MBA students considered information centres, newspapers, radio, television, bibliographies and CD-ROM to be significant to course work.

Easy of Access and Use of Information Sources

The MBA students were also asked of their experience in the course of trying to access and use of the information sources available in the University environment. Over 90% of the student expressed dissatisfaction opinion with the library service. They complained of lack of understanding of how to use their facilities in accessing their choice materials.

Furthermore, they complained of the way the book shelves were partitioned with wire - gauge, thereby denying direct contact to bookshelves in search for relevant materials. And in a situation where you see a material through the barrier wire and demand for access from the library attendant is usually being turn down. Over 95% of the student complained that two third of the available time they could sphere to use the library are wasted on the platter of searching for material through bibliography. They posited that the library is now becoming only a conducive centre of reading own materials. In the case of internet sources, the students agreed that there are pocket of cyber-café within the university environment, nevertheless, its availability is a far cry from their demand to this source. Access has become a herculean task as students has to queue or book for night browsing which does not guarantee better access and use courtesy epileptic power supply.

Also, the intermitted network failure associated with the use of internet sources is also a challenge. For the management journals that are available at the faculty level, is not readily accessible as lecturers hold on to them often without considering the need of these materials by the students.

Choice of Information Sources

Students' opinions data regarding factors that influence the choice of information sources are summarized in table 5.

The table shows that a majority of them (72.4%) mentioned availability, slightly followed by accessibility (69.4%), while reliability (66.5%) and relevance (60.0%) trails behind respectively. Meanwhile, affordability (43.5%) indicate the least factor consider the MBA students in choice of information sources.

Barriers and Challenges Encountered by MBA Students when Seeking Information

The students were asked to state whether they sometimes encounter problems when searching for information.

The widely held view (73.5%) assenting to the difficulty in accessing both print and on-line materials relevant for their academic work, while lack of accessibility of sources in general (64.7%) follow suit. In addition (58.2%) mentioned lack of time and (54.1%) declare inadequate current information materials (See table 6).

MBA Students' Suggestion for Improving their Access to Information

Also, students were asked to recommend suggestion for improving their access to information. Table 7 shows that students preferred most was the establishment of information centres/libraries (94.1%) that will adequately cater for business/management students, followed by provision of computer with internet access (91.8%) in each faculty and at hall of residence for easy access and use. Others are reduction in cost of obtaining information (84.7%), assisting students to have access to foreign journals and books (82.9%), making information sources readily available (82.4) and departmental seminars (80.6%).

The Main Findings

The results of this study indicate that the MBA graduate students' information needs and information seeking behaviour and use of information resources is influenced primarily by the demand on their course requirement, availability of information sources, easy of access and use, in addition to other students, colleagues and university library services. Traditionally, the universities and their libraries represented physical knowledge centres, which individuals will have to visit to receive the information they needed. At OAU library, staffs tends to take up the responsibility to search for materials requested for by the students, since they don't allow them to have direct access to the book shelves. Though the student recognize the need for more assistance in using the library and will like more opportunity for library instructions, however, they prefer human contact with the book shelves to search for materials as at when they need them rather than the library staff, which has not been yielding positive result. Fidzani (1998), Miriam et al. (2004) and Margie et al. (2006) in their study agreed of the decline in the use of library especially by graduate students. This corroborate with the findings of this study as students has retort to other sources that guarantee their liberty to search without hindrances.

The few outgoing MBA students that were interviewed complained that they could not locate the materials they were seeking at their library and all expressed a desire for the need to stir up interlibrary loan services. MBA

students use information from various sources for their scholar activities, the most consulted sources is the internet, management journals and textbooks. Availability seems to be the most important factor influencing choices of information while affordability stands to be the militating factors in the choice of information.

An interesting finding in this study was that, MBA students prefer to search the internet first, to acquaint themselves with the range of options that are available to guide them for the work at hand before seeking for other sources of information to leverage on. That is why the level of significance of internet source to these set of students (99.9%) was very high.

Summary and Conclusion

This study was designed to assess the information needs, seeking behaviour and use of information resources of MBA graduate students at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife western Nigeria. It focused on the following:

Awareness of information sources in the university environment by the MBA student; information sources use; the adequacy of sources; the incidence of use of the sources; use of information; seeking behaviour; and problem faced by the student in the course of seeking for information as well as their perception of improving the information related problems.

There is a huge awareness of the Library sources and some other information sources by the students in the university environment. But they are not getting as much as they would especially form the library and therefore suggested the establishment of library/information centre for the users' group like the law students' section in the library to adequately cater for them as well as reduction of the cost of assessing information sources. This they posit as a key strategies for improving their access to information. The information search by this users' group is predominantly dominated by their coursework activities. They considered lectures, internet, textbooks, journals, seminars/workshops/conferences as well as libraries and colleagues are more significant than information centres and research reports. The findings questioned the rationale of student access denial to bookshelves to browse for materials. For whatsoever reason, it is their responsibility to design flexible human interface with their customers as well as making sure those material are remained intact without any damage.

Recommendations

The findings of this study support the following recommendation for consideration by the O.A.U as well as other universities in general:

- Many information access initiative that graduate students especially MBA would make increasing use of an emerging information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, in particular the internet should proliferate within the university environment. This will enable easy access that can overcome barriers of time and place.
- The university library should embark on user educational programme to empower the students in the use of library competently. Also, the library needs to contact the faculty to develop appropriate collections and other new digital information services that will be of benefit to MBA students' needs. This will motivate them in the use of library and make them efficient on their coursework. Also, they need to allow each user group to have direct contact with the shelves for physical browsing of materials. This may lead them to serendipity that can be of benefit to them later on.
- There should be an arrangement between the academic library and the faculty member to assist the MBA students who wish to subscribe for materials with ease and at an affordable price. This will reduce the barrier of access among the students as they would be able to share information from such material with ease.

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Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Sex:		
Male	118	69.4
Female	52	30.6
Total	170	100
Highest Education:		
First Degree	152	89.4
Master	11	6.5
Ph.D	2	1.2
Others	5	2.9
No response	0	0
Total	170	100

Table 2: Types of information needed

Information type	Large	Little	Not at all	Non response
Information on policy issues relating to Business activities	98.5	1.0	0.5	0.0
Information on business/management	99.7	0.3	0.0	0.0
Financial/economic information	90.0	9.4	0.6	0.0
Information on Strategic/operational planning	88.3	10.2	0.5	1.0
Legal/information system	52.9	39.3	5.8	2.0
Research process/Results of scientific research	90.5	8.5	1.0	0.0
General information	70.2	20.2	8.2	1.0
Corporate development	96.8	2.2	0.5	0.5
Information about government/political activities	58.8	30.7	5.6	4.7
Global information	80.5	12.9	5.6	1.0
Information about social activities	56.9	39.2	2.4	1.5

Table 3: Incidence of Probing for Information

Types of Information	Always (%)	Occasionally (%)	Rarely (%)	Never (%)
Information on business/management	93.7	5.5	0.8	0.0
Information on financial/economic	91.5	6.5	1.5	0.5
Information on Strategic/operational planning	90.8	6.0	3.0	1.2
Corporate development	88.9	6.5	3.6	1.0
Information about government/political activities	86.7	10.0	3.3	0.0
Global information	84.5	13.5	2.0	0.0
Information on policy issues	81.1	9.5	8.9	0.5
Result of scientific research	80.6	14.9	4.3	0.5
Information about social activities	76.9	18.1	5.0	0.0
General information	66.7	20.8	10.5	2.0
Legal/information system	54.1	19.9	33.0	0.0

Table 4: MBA students' remark of the significance of sources of Information for their scholar activities

Sources of Information	Level of Significance			
	Very (%)	Just (%)	Fairly (%)	Not significant (%)
Lecturers	92.8	5.5	1.2	0.0
Internet	90.0	8.5	1.0	0.5
Textbooks	90.1	6.9	2.5	0.0
Management/journals	89.0	7.5	5.0	0.5
Magazine/other related journals	88.9	7.1	2.5	0.5
Seminar/workshops/conferences	85.9	8.0	5.5	0.0
Colleagues	80.2	14.8	4.5	0.5
Libraries facilities	81.5	8.8	5.2	0.5
Thesis	76.4	19.9	1.0	0.0
Dictionary/Encyclopaedias	70.7	25.4	1.5	0.5
Research report	69.2	20.8	8.5	1.0
Radio	65.6	24.9	7.5	0.5
Information centres	61.7	25.4	8.0	2.0
T.V	58.2	22.2	11.9	1.0
Newspaper	49.1	28.9	8.5	1.5
Bibliographies	44.8	23.7	4.5	1.0
CD-ROM	41.3	35.3	5.5	1.5

Table 5: Factors influencing the choice of information by MBA students

S/N	Factors	Frequency	%
1.	Availability of information sources	123	72.4
2.	Accessibility to the information sources	118	69.4
3.	Reliability of credibility of the information sources	113	66.5
4.	Relevance of the information to the problem at hand	102	60.0
5.	Currency of information sources	94	55.3
6.	Quality of information sources	93	54.7
7.	Adequacy of information sources	92	54.1
8.	Ability of sources to meet information	85	50.0
9.	Easy of use of information sources	80	47.1
	Affordability of the information sources	74	43.5

Table 6: Barriers and Challenges encountered when seeking for Information

S/N	Types of barriers and challenges encountered	Frequency	%
1.	Difficulty in accessing both print and online material	125	73.5
2.	Lack of accessibility of sources	110	64.7
3.	Lack of time	99	58.2
4.	Inadequate current information material	92	54.1
5.	Financial constraints	88	50.0
6.	Poor searching skills	70	41.2
7.	Lack of awareness about source of information	66	38.8
8.	Power failure	60	35.3
9.	Not being computer literate	32	18.8
10.	Non-availability of relevant information	7	4.1

Table 7: Students' suggestion for improving their access to information

S/N	Suggestions	Frequency	%
1.	Establishment of information centres/libraries that will adequately cater for students	160	94.1
2.	Provision of computer with internet access in the faculty and hall of residence	156	91.8
3.	Reducing cost of obtaining information	144	84.7
4.	Assisting students to have access to journal and books	141	82.9
5.	Making information sources readily available	140	82.4
6.	Departmental seminars	137	80.6