

Factors influencing the use of social media by academic librarians in Zimbabwe: a UTAUT model analysis

Academic
librarians in
Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to examine the use of social media by academic librarians at universities in Zimbabwe with particular focus on the application of the four key constructs of the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology model. This study assesses the degree to which academic librarians in Zimbabwe believe that using social media enhances service delivery, the extent to which academic librarians perceive social media as easy to use, the influence of peers on social media use among academic librarians and the extent to which facilitating conditions influence social media use.

Design/methodology/approach – A pragmatist worldview in which both quantitative and qualitative methods were adopted, this multiple case study used face-to-face interviews, self-administered questionnaires and content analysis for collecting data.

Findings – Academic librarians in Zimbabwe perceive social media tools to be useful and easy to use in the provision of services. Social influence had a moderate effect on academic librarians' use of social media for service delivery at universities in Zimbabwe, but they feel that their supervisors do not provide enough help for them to use social media.

Originality/value – To the best of the authors' knowledge, no similar study has been done previously in Zimbabwe. This multiple case study presents useful findings on the acceptance and use of social media by academic librarians in Zimbabwe.

Keywords Zimbabwe, UTAUT, Social media, Technology acceptance, University libraries, Academic librarians

Paper type Research paper

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Introduction

The use of social media has become widespread across various sectors of society, and academic libraries are not an exception. [Oche \(2022\)](#) notes that social media present an opportunity for libraries to provide user-centric innovative services. Social media refers to “Internet-based applications and websites that promote the sharing of user-generated content, communication and participation on a large scale” ([Cooper, 2016](#)). Social media tools enable online communication, networking and collaboration ([Rao *et al.*, 2019](#); [Friedland, 2013](#)). [Chisenga and Chande-Mallya \(2012\)](#) describe social media as collaborative online applications that enable participation, connectivity, user-generated content, sharing of information and collaboration amongst a community of users. Social media enable users to interact online ([Koukaras, *et al.*, 2020](#); [Poore, 2014](#); [Dewing, 2012](#)). The online interaction allows users to generate, share and/or update content ([Dewing, 2012](#)).

The use of social media in academic libraries has been trending since the dawn of the new millennium ([Shah and Khan, 2019](#)). There has been a swift uptake of social media especially by the younger generation due to the increasing affordability of information and communication technology (ICT) devices ([Dewing, 2012](#)). Academic librarians have taken advantage of social media to easily interact with library patrons ([Chisenga and Chande-Mallya, 2012](#); [Makori, 2012](#); [Harinarayana and Raju, 2010](#); [Gmiterek, 2021](#)). However, there is growing debate about the proliferation, usefulness, ease of use and availability of necessary support to use social media in academic libraries. [Kemp \(2020\)](#) reports that there were 980,000 social media users as of January 2020, a statistic that denotes a social media penetration of 6.6% of the Zimbabwean population ([Kemp, 2020](#)).

Use of social media tools in libraries is still a relatively new area of study; [Magoi *et al.* \(2019\)](#) report that very few studies provide hard evidence on the usefulness of social media and the challenges associated with the use of social media by academic librarians in developing countries. Regardless of the potential benefits of social media to society at large and academic libraries in particular, there remains a challenge with access in some instances where some institutions of higher learning restrict or block the use of social networking sites citing network congestion or bandwidth overload ([Baro *et al.*, 2013](#)). Some studies, such as [Matingwina \(2014\)](#), [Lwoga \(2013\)](#) and [Makori \(2012\)](#), suggest that university libraries in Africa, Zimbabwe included, are still at their infancy regarding use of Web 2.0 tools. These developments suggest low exploitation of the potential of social media in Zimbabwean university libraries despite their critical role in enhancing library and information services delivery.

The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of organisational factors and personal characteristics on the use of social media in academic libraries in Zimbabwe. The following research questions guided the study:

- RQ1. To what extent do academic librarians in Zimbabwe believe that using social media enhances service delivery?
- RQ2. To what extent do academic librarians in Zimbabwe perceive available social media tools are easy to use for service delivery?
- RQ3. To what extent do peers influence academic librarians in Zimbabwe to use social media?
- RQ4. To what extent do facilitating conditions influence social media use by academic librarians in Zimbabwe?

Literature review

Social media may be categorised in different ways; five types of social media provided by [Kronqvist-Berg \(2014\)](#) and [Poore \(2014\)](#) are used in this study. Firstly, are Web logs which are popularly known as blogs. The pages of these online journals or diaries are usually displayed in descending chronological order ([Kronqvist-Berg, 2014](#); [Poore, 2014](#); [Dewing, 2012](#); [Harinarayana and Raju, 2010](#)). WordPress, Tumblr and Blogger are typical examples of Web logs. Secondly, are Wikis, for example, Wikipedia, which are collaborative websites which anyone can access and edit depending on how it is set up ([Poore, 2014](#); [Baro *et al.*, 2013](#); [Dewing, 2012](#); [Singh and Gill, 2013](#)). Thirdly, are social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn; these are internet-based platforms that enable users to connect, build relations and share events, photos, videos, links, activities and news ([Poore, 2014](#)). Fourthly, are microblogging sites, for example, Twitter. Microblogging sites are internet-based services that allow users to have public profiles where they broadcast short messages; the messages are publicly aggregated together across users although the users have a choice on whose messages to receive without necessarily deciding on who can receive theirs ([Fuchs, 2014](#)). Fifthly, are content-sharing sites that allow users to post photographs and videos online. Examples of content-sharing sites are YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, Photobucket and Flickr ([Dewing, 2012](#); [Harinarayana and Raju, 2010](#); [O'Reilly, 2005](#)).

Social media tools enable librarians to improve their job performance and job productivity and accomplish tasks faster. [Kumar \(2015\)](#) points out that content-sharing tools such as Flickr, YouTube, Second Life and Wikipedia have been useful as academic librarians for sharing photos, streaming e-learning videos and hosting library websites, respectively. [Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara \(2016\)](#) give an example of selective dissemination of information which has been made possible using social media tools. [Manca \(2020\)](#) and [Kumar \(2015\)](#) acknowledge the usefulness of social media applications in knowledge organisation using tools such as Delicious, Connotea and LibraryThing. [Pashootanizadeh and Rafie \(2020\)](#) agree with [Koukaras *et al.* \(2020, p. 295\)](#) who point out that “social media can be used for connecting, communication and interaction”. [Kumar \(2015, p. 105\)](#) points out that “social media strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of existing communication channels”. The ability of academic librarians to attend to some library patrons in remote locations using social media saved much time for library patrons, who in the past, would have had to visit the library physically ([Anwar and Zhiwei, 2019](#); [Rachman and Putri, 2018](#)).

Ease of use influences academic librarians' behavioural intention and use of social media ([Williams, 2020](#)). A study by [Arif and Mahmood \(2012\)](#) reveals that librarians believe that social media tools are easy to use as evidenced by the use of Web 2.0 technologies by the librarians in their professional work. [Dougan \(2014\)](#) report that academic librarians felt that YouTube was one of the relatively easy to use and convenient social media applications. On the contrary, studies by [Khan and Bhatti \(2012\)](#) and [Hosseini and Hashempour \(2012\)](#) identify lack of knowledge and inadequate training opportunities among the problems that hinder use of social media tools. [Ternenge \(2019\)](#), [Agyekum *et al.* \(2016\)](#), [Mosha *et al.* \(2015\)](#) and [Maisiri *et al.* \(2015\)](#) indicate that academic librarians' lack of requisite knowledge and confidence on how to use social media tools can be a stumbling block to social media use. There is need for academic librarians to undertake training on the effective use of social media especially in the context of their work ([Ternenge, 2019](#)). [Khan and Bhatti \(2012\)](#) note that the use of social media tools is hindered by inadequate training opportunities for librarians, while a study by [Arif and Mahmood \(2012\)](#) reveals that Pakistani academic librarians lament the lack of computer literacy and low social media knowledge as the major hindrances to social media use.

A study by [Gruzd *et al.* \(2012, p. 2347\)](#) on the use of social media tools by professionals in the information technology-related disciplines suggests that most of the professionals decided to take up social media tools because their peers had recommended them. However, findings from the same study show that supervisors did not have much influence on the uptake of social media tools by subordinates. [Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara \(2016\)](#) lament the lack of management support as it significantly contributed to non-use of social media tools among academic librarians in Nigeria. [Williams \(2020\)](#) makes similar observations about a lack of management support deterring effective social media adoption in Belgian and South African university libraries. [Mishra \(2008\)](#) strongly recommends that management commits to the adoption of social media applications and at the same time also becomes the front runners in the use of social media tools.

While librarians may be prepared to use social media for service delivery, it is important to have a social media policy to guide the use thereof. A social media policy provides a working definition of what social media is, and it may also specify those social media tools that an organisation officially recognises for use by its staff and stakeholders ([Kroski, 2009](#)). [Chitumbo and Chewe \(2015\)](#), [Mabwezara and Zinn \(2016\)](#), [Abok and Kwanya \(2016\)](#) and [Maisiri *et al.* \(2015\)](#) report that lack of a clear policy on social media tools at implementation stage deterred academic librarians from deploying social media tools at selected academic libraries in Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Kenya.

Similarly, poor technological infrastructure, and particularly slow speed of the internet especially in developing countries, has often frustrated social media users especially academic librarians who use social media as a tool for service delivery ([Rachman and Putri, 2018](#); [Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara, 2016](#); [Ahenkorah-Marfo and Akussah, 2016](#); [Kumar, 2015](#); [Mosha *et al.*, 2015](#); [Khan and Bhatti, 2012](#)). In Kenya, a study by [Abok and Kwanya \(2016\)](#) buttresses findings presented by [Williams *et al.* \(2019\)](#) and [Chitumbo and Chewe \(2015\)](#) who report that limited internet access points, poor internet connectivity and limited bandwidth had a negative effect on social media usage at selected university libraries. [Agyekum *et al.* \(2016\)](#) share a similar view; their study reveals that lack of internet connectivity or network failure significantly contributed towards non-use of social media tools in academic libraries. [Agyekum *et al.* \(2016\)](#) also suggest that non-availability of computers may negatively affect social media usage. A study by [Mabwezara and Zinn \(2016\)](#) confirms that limited availability of ICT infrastructure in some South African and Zimbabwean university libraries is a hindrance to increased usage of social media applications. The same situation prevailed in Zambian university libraries as reported by [Chitumbo and Chewe \(2015\)](#). Unstable power supply is also cited as a contributory factor to low usage of social media by academic libraries ([Agyekum *et al.*, 2016](#); [Ahenkorah-Marfo and Akussah, 2016](#); [Kumar, 2015](#); [Khan and Bhatti, 2012](#); [Mosha *et al.*, 2015](#); [Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara, 2016](#)).

Just like other technologies, social media adoption and use is situational, and a number of theories are available on the subject. The unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) by [Venkatesh *et al.* \(2003\)](#) guided the study. The theory is a review and merging of eight previous models, namely, theory of reasoned action, technology acceptance model (TAM), motivational model, theory of planned behaviour (TPB), a model combining TAM and TPB model of personal computer utilisation, innovation diffusion theory as well as the social cognitive theory ([Bozan *et al.*, 2016](#); [Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003](#)). [Venkatesh *et al.* \(2003\)](#) suggest that people's adoption of technology is directly dependent on four key constructs, namely, performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions. [Figure 1](#) below is a diagrammatic presentation of the theory.

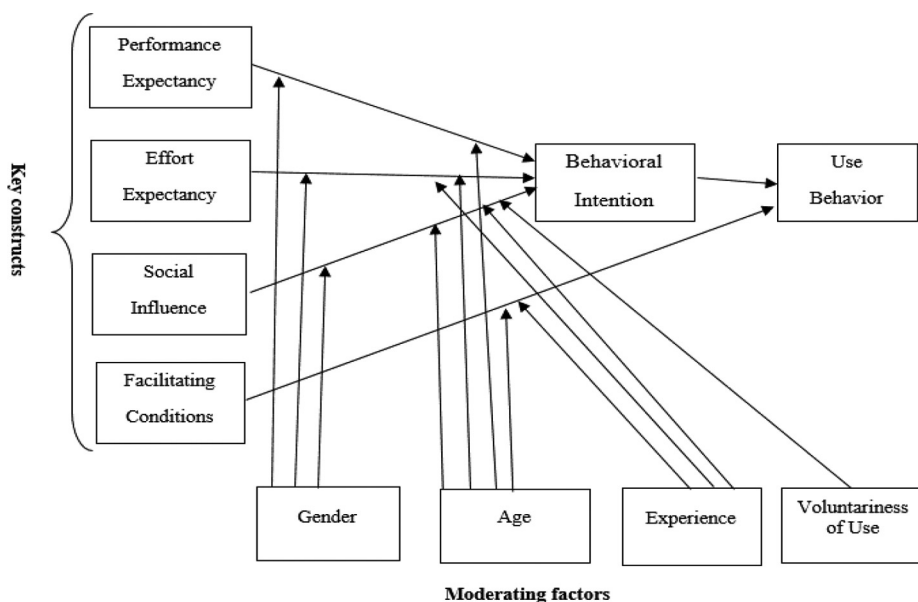


Figure 1.
UTAUT model

Source: Venkatesh *et al.* (2003, p. 447)

Performance expectancy is the degree to which an individual believes that using the system will help him or her attain gains in job performance (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003). For purposes of this study, performance expectancy or perceived usefulness relates to how academic librarians in Zimbabwean universities view various social media as tools that help them to perform better at their jobs. Venkatesh *et al.* (2003) define effort expectancy as the degree of ease associated with the use of the system. In this study, effort expectancy or perceived ease of use relates to how social media tools at the disposal of academic librarians are easy to use. Facilitating conditions refer to the degree to which an individual believes that organisational and technical infrastructure exists to support use of the system (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003). In the context of this study, facilitating conditions refer to those factors the university library promotes or discourages in the use of social media by academic librarians. Some facilitating conditions could be obligatory; for instance, it may be policy regarding the use of social media. Venkatesh *et al.* (2003) define social influence as the degree to which other people influence an individual to use the new system. Influence of supervisors, professional associations, colleagues and peers of academic librarians and library patrons may be regarded as social influence. Social influence may also be referred to as peer influence.

As Figure 1 shows, the theory has other constructs, which Venkatesh *et al.* (2003) describe as moderators. The current study focused on the influence UTAUT's key constructs on the use of social media by academic librarians in Zimbabwean university libraries.

Venkatesh *et al.* (2003) predict that organisational and technical infrastructure to support use of the system can influence the system's adoption and use. Edumadze and Demuyakor (2022) report that Ghanaian universities have noted the importance of new media technologies and are investing in infrastructure to enable staff to properly use social media. Akporhonor and Olise (2015, p. 6) decry Nigerian universities' lack of commitment towards

supporting the adoption of social media tools by academic librarians. Williams (2020), Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara (2016), Kumar (2015) and Khan and Bhatti (2012) reported that inadequate funding for libraries had prevented some academic libraries from deploying certain social media tools especially those that would require funds to do so. Mosha *et al.* (2015) submit that the high cost of internet connectivity also contributes towards low usage of social media tools.

Methods and materials

The study was carried out in 13 university libraries in Zimbabwe. All participating libraries are members of the Zimbabwe University Libraries Consortium (ZULC). Pragmatism, a worldview in which both quantitative and qualitative methods were used, was adopted for the study. Pragmatism is a paradigm that is concerned with “what works” and “solutions to problems” (Creswell, 2014). Using the mixed methods research approach enabled the researchers to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, which in turn allowed appreciation of the multiple perspectives of the phenomena under study.

A multiple case study design was adopted for the study. Miles *et al.* (2014, p. 28) define a case as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context”. Yin (2014) and Ramchander (2018) describe a case study as an in-depth study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real-world context. The purpose of a case study is to collect data from individuals within their settings and to gain insight into their attitudes, behaviour and views (Ramchander, 2018). A multiple case study is organised around two or more cases (Yin, 2014). A multiple case study is when a researcher explores differences within and between cases with the intention of replicating findings across cases and drawing conclusions (Vohra, 2014; Baxter and Jack, 2008).

Thirteen university libraries under the ZULC participated in the study. The target population for the study was 93 professional university library personnel from the 13 participating libraries. The term “professional librarian” refers to library staff holding at least a first degree in Library and Information Science (Ibegbulam and Eze, 2016) and occupying professional levels one–three of the Zimbabwe National Qualifications Framework, namely, the positions of university library director, deputy director, sub-librarian, assistant librarian and systems librarian (Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development, 2018). The target population of the study was 93 participants. These included 22 library directors and their deputies, 11 systems librarians and 60 sub and assistant librarians. Of these, 86 comprising 18 university library directors and deputies, 11 systems librarians and 55 sub and assistant librarians participated in the study. This indicated a 92.5% response rate out of the expected 93 participants.

Data for the study were collected using face-to-face interviews, self-administered questionnaires and content analysis. There were 29 participants comprising of 9 library directors, 9 deputy library directors and 11 systems librarians who were interviewed. There were 55 academic librarians comprising of 9 sub-librarians and 46 assistant librarians who completed the self-administered questionnaires. Content analysis was done to gather data from social media platforms used by the academic libraries. Social media posts of university libraries under study were analysed to find out how library staff at these institutions interacted on social media.

Statistical analysis of quantitative data to indicate frequencies, weighted mean scores, percentage frequencies and standard deviations was done using international business machines corporation statistical package for the social sciences and Microsoft Excel software. NVivo software was used for qualitative data analysis.

Results and discussion of findings

Extent to which academic librarians in Zimbabwe believe that using social media enhances service delivery

The study findings show that academic librarians in Zimbabwe agree that they find social media tools useful as it enables them to quickly accomplish tasks they are responsible for, increases job productivity and enhances job productivity and effectiveness. Academic librarians in Zimbabwe confirmed that they perceived social media tools to be useful in the provision of services at their libraries. Results in [Table 1](#) below show that most questionnaire respondents found social media useful in their jobs ($\bar{x} = 3.20$). Using social media tools to enhance effectiveness on the job had the lowest mean score ($\bar{x} = 2.75$). Questionnaire respondents perceived that social media made their jobs easier ($\bar{x} = 2.95$), used social media in their jobs to accomplish tasks quickly ($\bar{x} = 3.16$) and to increase productivity ($\bar{x} = 2.95$).

University library directors, their deputies and systems librarians who were interviewed equally agreed with questionnaire respondents. All systems, library directors and deputy library directors interviewed concurred that social media were useful for library service provision. One library director remarked that her subordinates regarded social media to be “quite crucial [...] especially for the reader services staff”. Another library director concurred and said, “social media [tools] are a necessary part of the job” as they are beneficially used for communication, marketing and engaging the user community. Similarly, one deputy library director reported that library personnel “understood the values of social media” and they viewed social media tools as “an easier way of conveying messages”. One of the systems librarians interviewed confirmed that social media tools were an easy way to communicate, and library personnel were motivated to use them. Another systems librarian echoed similar sentiments; they said that social media tools “easily keep patrons up to date” because posting was very easy and did not require any sophisticated expertise. One of the deputy library directors particularly pointed out the usefulness of social media tools among library management staff. He said, “Management feels social media takes them closer to the clients”, while a peer at another university library concurred as they pointed out that library personnel found social media useful particularly for providing reference, marketing and research support services. Content analysis conducted on the academic libraries’ social media platforms showed that libraries registered their presence on blogs, content communities and social networking sites whose usefulness was confirmed by the use of these platforms for hosting library orientation videos, tutorials and guides, communicating notices, news and events. The findings show that 13 university libraries had YouTube channels, 12 university libraries had Facebook accounts, seven libraries had departmental Twitter handles, while Pinterest and Flickr were used by one library apiece.

One university library director expressed satisfaction with the use of social media tools by library personnel at their university and pointed out that “service delivery has been improved especially on the use of electronic resources”. Another library director concurred as she said social media tools “help to disseminate information [...] can reach patrons on and off campus” and attending to queries was instantaneous. A systems librarian at one of the university libraries agreed and pointed out that the use of social media platforms was “fast to disseminate information [...]” and “an easy way to disseminate information”. Another systems librarian singled out Mendeley as a social media tool that had significantly helped librarians at his university to effectively train patrons on reference management, group collaborations and research data management. System librarians, library directors and their deputies at five of the participating university libraries singled out YouTube as an

Table 1.
 Librarians' performance expectancy on the use of social media ($N = 55$)

Variable/Construct	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Not sure (0)	Agree (3)	Strongly agree (4)	Mean	SD
Given the resources, opportunities and knowledge it takes to use social media, it would be easy for me to use social media applications	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	36 (65.5%)	19 (34.5%)	3.35	0.482
I have the knowledge necessary to use social media	0 (0%)	1 (1.8%)	8 (14.5%)	31 (56.4%)	15 (27.3%)	2.82	1.263
I have the resources necessary to use social media	0 (0%)	11 (20%)	4 (7.3%)	30 (54.5%)	10 (18.2%)	2.76	1.999
I have control over using social media	0 (0%)	8 (14.5%)	13 (23.6%)	24 (43.6%)	10 (18.2%)	2.33	1.428
Specialised instruction concerning social media is available to me	1 (1.8%)	30 (54.5%)	5 (9.1%)	16 (29.1%)	3 (5.5%)	2.20	1.931
Guidance is available to me in the selection of social media applications to use	1 (1.8%)	16 (29.1%)	11 (20%)	26 (47.3%)	1 (1.8%)	2.09	1.175
A specific person or group is available for assistance with social media difficulties	2 (3.6%)	22 (40%)	9 (16.4%)	21 (38.2%)	1 (1.8%)	2.05	1.079
The social media applications are not compatible with other applications I use	3 (5.5%)	21 (38.2%)	18 (32.7%)	11 (20%)	2 (3.6%)	1.56	1.244

excellent tool for facilitating library orientation. One of the deputy library directors mentioned that social media tools had enhanced job effectiveness especially in the reader services section by “fostering quick decision making for issues to do with client services mostly”.

These results agree with the proposition made by [Venkatesh et al. \(2003\)](#) that if individuals find a system useful, they will use it. Considering that academic librarians in Zimbabwe find social media useful, it is important for universities in Zimbabwe to invest more resources that enable effective usage of social media. Internet bandwidth and Wi-Fi upgrading, purchasing of new computers, equipping librarians with necessary skills to exploit social media and supportive social media policies are, therefore, essential. Raising awareness and competency on the use of social media tools by library patrons are also obligatory to complement librarians’ efforts and the investments made towards social media use in the university libraries.

Extent to which academic librarians in Zimbabwe perceive available social media tools as easy to use for service delivery

Findings from the study confirm that the academic librarians in Zimbabwe find social media tools easy to use. Results in [Table 2](#) show that respondents found it easy to learn how to use social media ($\bar{x} = 3.53$); using social media was easy ($\bar{x} = 3.45$), and it was easy for the academic librarians to become skilful at using social media ($\bar{x} = 3.27$). Similarly, the academic librarians also found social media flexible to interact with ($\bar{x} = 3.24$), clear and understandable ($\bar{x} = 3.24$).

Interviewees echoed similar sentiments as those expressed by questionnaire respondents. One of the library directors pointed out that the “use of social media has been on the increase [. . .]” and a systems librarian at the same institution attributed adoption of social media tools to ease of use for disseminating information to patrons. A fellow systems librarian gave tribute to training provided by library schools for the social media tools competency demonstrated by the academic librarians, hence “the technical ability and enjoy using the tools” as described by one of the systems librarians. However, one systems librarian expressed reservations regarding the librarians’ skills on how to use social media for service delivery. He said that lack of appropriate skills in using social media “hinders some users”, and he had to provide training to address this deficiency.

As predicted by [Venkatesh et al. \(2003\)](#), the degree of ease of use of a system influences use; the academic librarians in Zimbabwean university libraries find it easy to use social media tools and as such deploy the applications in the library routine activities. As [Table 2](#) shows, academic librarians in Zimbabwe are motivated to use social media because they find learning how to use it, easy. Using social media tools is generally easy, and it encourages librarians to become skilful at using the social media tools. Academic librarians in Zimbabwe also revealed that they find social media tools flexible to interact with as they are clear and understandable. Findings corroborate past studies by [Arif and Mahmood \(2012\)](#) and [Dougan \(2014\)](#) that academic librarians find social media easy to use.

However, findings are in stark contrast to findings from studies by [Khan and Bhatti \(2012\)](#), [Hosseini and Hashempour \(2012\)](#), [Agyekum et al. \(2016\)](#), [Mosha et al. \(2015\)](#) and [Maisiri et al. \(2015\)](#). These scholars lament lack of awareness, knowledge and skills to use social media applications making it difficult for librarians to use social media tools and, therefore, lower librarians’ confidence to use them. The present study, however, disputes these earlier reports as findings show that academic librarians find it easy to learn to use social media tools and become skilful in using the said applications. Academic librarians’

Table 2.
Influence of effort
expectancy on the
use of social media
($N = 55$)

Variable/Construct	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Not sure (0)	Agree (3)	Strongly agree (4)	Mean	SD
Learning to use social media is easy for me	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	26 (47.3%)	29 (52.7%)	3.53	0.504
I find social media easy to use	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	30 (54.5%)	25 (45.5%)	3.45	0.503
It is easy for me to become skilful at using social media	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.8%)	36 (65.5%)	18 (32.7%)	3.27	0.651
I find social media to be flexible to interact with	0 (0%)	1 (1.8%)	3 (5.5%)	28 (50.9%)	23 (41.8%)	3.24	0.942
My interaction with social media is clear and understandable	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (3.6%)	34 (61.8%)	19 (34.5%)	3.24	0.793
I find it easy to get social media to do what I want it to do	0 (0%)	1 (1.8%)	3 (5.5%)	31 (56.4%)	20 (36.4%)	3.18	0.925

interaction with social media tools is clear and understandable; as such, getting social media applications to carry out their duties is quite easy.

Findings from the current study suggest that academic librarians in Zimbabwe have inherent digital competencies acquired during formative years of librarianship at library schools or as part of on-the-job and self-training. A closer comparison of the current study's findings with the report by [Maisiri et al. \(2015\)](#) suggests a quick transition on the acquisition of skills to use social media tools over the past few years. This markedly corresponds with [Dewing's \(2012\)](#) report, which celebrates the proliferation of social media applications as having been swift.

Extent to which peers influence academic librarians in Zimbabwe to use social media

As [Venkatesh et al. \(2003\)](#) note, other people can influence an individual to use technology. Supervisors, professional associations, colleagues and library patrons may influence academic librarians' use of social media tools. Findings in [Table 3](#) suggest that social influence had a moderate effect on academic librarians' use of social media for service delivery at universities in Zimbabwe ($\bar{x} = 2.80$). While supervisors were supportive of the use of social media for service delivery ($\bar{x} = 2.53$), they did not provide enough help to the academic librarians to use social media ($\bar{x} = 2.13$). The responses also indicate that universities did not fully support the use of social media among librarians ($\bar{x} = 2.31$).

Study findings confirm the assertion that peers can influence an individual to use a system as proposed by [Venkatesh et al. \(2003\)](#). The results also correspond with claims by [Gruzd et al. \(2012\)](#) who reported that use of social media tools by professionals is often based on recommendations by peers. University library leadership in Zimbabwean universities need to identify early adopters and fervent users of social media tools among academic librarians at their institutions. These early adopters would be tasked to promote social media for service delivery at peer-to-peer level.

University library directors, their deputies and systems librarians interviewed confirmed that senior university library management positively influenced academic librarians to use social media tools in Zimbabwe. University library directors and their deputies expressed commitment to support their library staff to use social media to enhance job performance. One of the deputy library directors said they:

Assign staff with daily activities involving social media so that they perfect their skills in instances of skills deficiencies. The research department pick[s] on these and organises training.

Similarly, systems librarians competently provided technical support that enabled academic librarians to use the social media applications effectively for service delivery. Systems librarians interviewed acknowledged that they were immediately available to provide technical support to assistant librarians and sub-librarians in the use of social media. One systems librarian accentuated that staff at his library were "free to call for help" whenever the need arose. However, two library directors and one deputy library director pointed out that they were not intentionally taken steps to support academic librarians' use of social media tools except for the general training sessions on how to use information and communication technologies.

As one of the library directors reiterated, "support and goodwill are there" to use social media, although there was a need for social media policies at the universities. One deputy library director acknowledged that policymakers at universities in Zimbabwe were supportive as they provided ideas on innovative ways to use social media in libraries. On the contrary, one of his peers at another university had a different view as he described senior management's support as present but "not good enough". Another university library

Table 3.
Effect of social
influence on the use
of social media
(*N* = 55)

Variable/Construct	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Not sure (0)	Agree (3)	Strongly agree (4)	Mean	SD
I use social media applications because of the proportion of peers who use them	0 (0%)	15 (27.3%)	2 (3.6%)	28 (50.9%)	10 (18.2%)	2.80	0.869
My supervisor is very supportive of the use of social media for my job	2 (3.6%)	7 (12.7%)	8 (14.5%)	29 (52.7%)	9 (16.4%)	2.53	1.245
In general, the university has supported the use of social media	0 (0%)	3 (5.5%)	14 (25.5%)	31 (56.4%)	7 (12.7%)	2.31	1.426
My supervisors have been helpful in the use of social media	2 (3.6%)	17 (30.9%)	10 (18.2%)	23 (41.8%)	3 (5.5%)	2.13	1.187

director agreed as she bemoaned lack of support and commitment by university policymakers whom she described as “not fully aware of the role of social media in learning”. She added that:

Our university is kind of slow in the adoption of technology [...] the uptake is slow [...] you work very hard to have technology accepted. It’s not as it should be.

Observations by academic librarians in studies by Mishra (2008) and [Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara \(2016\)](#) that leadership and organisational support for social media use were not enough recur in this study as just over half of the assistant librarians and sub-librarians feel that their supervisors are helpful in the use of social media applications. Although the library directors claim that they provide support on social media use, responses from assistant librarians and sub-librarians show that the support provided does not meet their expectations. Library directors are, therefore, expected to take a leading role in exploiting social media for enhanced job performance and service delivery. University library directors ought to engage their subordinates to establish their expectations and work towards meeting them.

Extent to which facilitating conditions influence social media use by academic librarians in Zimbabwe

Questionnaire respondents were asked to rate the degree of influence of these facilitating conditions on their use of social media. Findings displayed in [Table 4](#) confirm that if given necessary resources and opportunities, it would be easy for the academic librarians to use social media applications in service delivery ($\bar{x} = 3.35$). The academic librarians believe that they have the necessary knowledge to use social media ($\bar{x} = 2.82$). However, the academic librarians are worried by the non-availability of specialised instruction concerning social media available for use by the librarians ($\bar{x} = 2.20$) and personnel to specifically assist them with social media difficulties ($\bar{x} = 2.05$) and incompatibility of social media applications with other applications used by the librarians ($\bar{x} = 1.56$).

Findings from the study confirm [Venkatesh et al.’s \(2003\)](#) prediction that organisational and technical infrastructure influence the use of technology and in this case, social media. Most library directors and deputy library directors acknowledged that their libraries had been equipped with ICT infrastructure, although some library directors felt that the infrastructure was inadequate. One of the deputy library directors described internet connectivity at their library as “very stable and reliable”. The library directors felt that they were getting enough institutional support to use social media tools in the form of gadgets such as computers and mobile phones, good internet connectivity, supportive policies and permission to set up departmental social media accounts instead of depending on institutional accounts managed by the public relations departments. On the contrary, one library director described ICT situation at her library as “woefully inadequate”. One deputy library director reiterated that “we continue to require upgrades” of the bandwidth to match the increasing number of internet users, a position that was shared by most of the library directors and their deputies. In addition, power outages and non-availability of reliable back-up power also affected the use of social media at some of the university libraries.

The study also supports findings by [Akporthonor and Olise \(2015\)](#) who reported that some universities in Nigeria lack commitment towards supporting the adoption of social media by academic librarians. In this present study, some academic librarians in Zimbabwe lament lack of required resources and opportunities to facilitate effective use of social media tools as displayed in [Table 4](#). This striking similarity between Zimbabwean and Nigerian university libraries could be attributed to comparable prevailing professional practices in

Table 4.
Influence of
facilitating
conditions on social
media usage ($N = 55$)

Variable/Construct	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Not sure (0)	Agree (3)	Strongly agree (4)	Mean	SD
I would find social useful in my job	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (5.5%)	32 (58.2%)	20 (36.4%)	3.20	0.911
Using social media in my job would enable me to accomplish tasks more quickly	3 (5.5%)	0 (0%)	2 (3.6%)	32 (58.2%)	18 (32.7%)	3.16	0.834
Using social media would make it easier to do my job	1 (1.8%)	0 (0%)	6 (10.9%)	31 (56.4%)	17 (30.9%)	2.95	1.177
Using social media in my job would increase my productivity	0 (0%)	4 (7.3%)	4 (7.3%)	34 (61.8%)	13 (23.6%)	2.95	0.989
Using social media would improve my job performance	1 (1.8%)	3 (5.5%)	4 (7.3%)	35 (63.6%)	12 (21.8%)	2.91	1.005
Using social media would enhance my effectiveness on the job	0 (0%)	4 (7.3%)	8 (14.5%)	29 (52.7%)	14 (25.5%)	2.75	1.265

the two countries. As one library director reiterated, the information technology is “woefully inadequate”; hence, the study participants called on Zimbabwean universities to support social media use by equipping university libraries with additional gadgets to enable effective use of social media by academic librarians. Lack of funding, cited by [Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara \(2016\)](#), [Kumar \(2015\)](#) and [Khan and Bhatti \(2012\)](#), could be attributed to this challenge as results displayed in [Table 4](#) show that some academic librarians lack resources required to use social media tools.

Considering that the academic librarians in Zimbabwean universities express readiness to use social media applications and found social media useful, setting aside budgets to ensure that social media applications are successfully used in service delivery cannot be overstated. Availing financial resources for equipment, internet access, hiring additional staff and training staff and library patrons on effective use of social media are key enablers for enhanced use of social media tools in Zimbabwean university libraries.

The study confirms that the academic librarians in Zimbabwe have access to technical support on how to use social media applications. Both library directors and systems librarians have been playing leading roles in providing training on the use of social media tools by academic librarians. In the long run, this practice will put to rest concerns raised by [Khan and Bhatti \(2012\)](#), [Agyekum *et al.* \(2016\)](#), [Mosha *et al.* \(2015\)](#) and [Maisiri *et al.* \(2015\)](#) that social media applications are not optimally used due to lack of skills.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study confirmed that librarians in Zimbabwean universities perceive social media to be useful in their duties, that is enhancing effectiveness on the job, making the job easy to do, assisting in accomplishing tasks quickly and increasing productivity. Findings also show that academic librarians in Zimbabwe find it easy to learn how to use social media applications. The academic librarians confirmed that it is easy to become skilful at using social media applications. The academic librarians also found social media flexible to interact with, clear and understandable. Results from the study show that social influence has a moderate effect on librarians’ use of social media tools for service delivery in Zimbabwean universities. Although supervisors claim that they were supportive of the use of social media tools for service delivery, academic librarians disagreed and felt that their supervisors did not provide enough help on the use of social media applications. The academic librarians also lamented the lack of full support by their universities to use social media technology. The study confirms that academic librarians in Zimbabwean universities believe that they have the knowledge and skills required to use social media, and if given the necessary resources and opportunities, it would be easy for them to use social media applications for service delivery. Specialised instructions concerning social media tools available for use by librarians and personnel specifically to assist in easing difficulties are lacking. Incompatibility of social media applications with other applications used by librarians deters them from optimally using social media applications at their disposal.

Therefore, it is recommended that universities in Zimbabwe should invest more resources to facilitate effective use of social media tools. Internet bandwidth and Wi-Fi should be upgraded and additional computers must be acquired so that librarians can effectively exploit social media tools for service delivery. Library patrons must be properly equipped with knowledge and skills to use social media tools to match librarians’ skills and competencies. This is important considering that findings revealed that if given the necessary resources and opportunities, it would be easy for librarians to use social media applications in service delivery. University leadership, especially library directors, should increase their support towards the use of social media tools to meet the expectations of their

subordinates. University library directors are strongly encouraged to identify early adopters and fervent users of social media among librarians at their institutions and work with them to promote social media technology usage for service delivery at peer-to-peer level. Systems librarians should work towards enabling seamless integration of social media applications with other applications used by academic librarians. Finally, further research on the use of social media for service delivery in technical, teachers' and industrial college libraries is recommended. This would be useful in providing a comprehensive picture of social media usage across the academic library landscape in Zimbabwe.

Implications of the study

The research findings indicate that academic librarians in Zimbabwe find social media useful for service delivery. The academic librarians also positively identify social use with increased productivity, making their jobs and networking as colleagues easier to accomplish. Thus, it is imperative for universities to draw lessons from this study and invest in infrastructure that promotes the use of social media as tools for service delivery. The study revealed that academic librarians expected their supervisors to be more supportive towards the use of social media tools for service delivery. Thus, it is recommended that the capacity building programmes be availed to library management and university administrators so that they are better skilled to promote social media use to meet the expectations of academic librarians. The findings also revealed that academic librarians were not satisfied with the support provided by their universities in the use of social media; universities should take measures to promote use of social media by providing required infrastructure, training and incentives and instituting social media policies. Evidence from the study suggests that incompatibility of social media applications with other applications used by librarians deters optimum use of some social media applications. Steps should be taken to ensure that social media applications seamlessly interface with other technologies used in academic libraries. Software development in the areas of social media customisation and add-on applications, extensions or plug-ins that enhance social media's utility and interfacing with other applications is recommended.

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