

# Information Professionals' Knowledge Sharing Practices in Social Media: A Study of Professionals in Developing Countries

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## ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the perception of informational professionals' knowledge sharing practices in social media platforms. The specific objectives of the study included learning professionals' perceptions and awareness of knowledge sharing using social media, understanding their opinions and beliefs, and gaining familiarity with and reasons for using these tools. Open & close ended web-based questions were sent out by email to the international training program (ITP) participants. Findings indicated that most of the respondents' were aware of using social media and that they used social media for knowledge sharing. Speed and ease of use, managing personal knowledge, easier communication with users and colleagues and powerful communication tool are the areas that motivated them to use it. It also stated some barriers like lack of support, familiarity, trust, unfiltered information and fear of providing information. The study was limited to the perceptual aspect of the issue, specifically from the individuals' opinions and sentiments.

## 1. Background and Introduction

In the knowledge-based society, knowledge is a critical organizational resource that provides a sustainable competitive advantage, and knowledge about activities, services, customers/users is an increasingly valuable resource that needs to be shared broadly throughout an organization (Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Grant, 1996). Organizations must consider how to transfer knowledge from experts who have it to novices who need to know. Libraries, like other organizations, can benefit from knowledge sharing. The basic goal of knowledge sharing within and outside libraries is to leverage the available knowledge that may help information professionals to carry out their tasks more effectively (Islam, Agarwal, & Ikeda, 2014a). As a part of knowledge management (KM), knowledge sharing is believed to be a panacea for knowledge creation, and an important activity to boost innovation, improve productivity, and increase understanding among information professionals. The advent of

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social media has brought new opportunities for knowledge sharing and has played a very significant role with patrons for decisions making (Kim & Abbas, 2010). The primary goal of knowledge sharing using social media is to leverage the available knowledge that may help academic librarians to carry out their tasks more efficiently and effectively (Maponya, 2004). Information professionals can transfer their knowledge in the form of knowledge-based services and products including e-mail, Web 2.0, websites, online discussion forums, video-conferencing and other collaboration tools (Agarwal & Islam, 2014). For example, Wiki as a social media tool can be read and edited simultaneously, helping to improve collaboration amongst library staff, between staff and patrons, and even across libraries (Levy, 2009). 'Library Success: A Best Practices Wiki' is used by librarians across the world to share their knowledge and successful projects, facilitating collaboration across libraries. Cultural differences whether individualistic or collectivistic (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010), or developed and developing, play a major role in how people choose to share knowledge within organizations. While there has been widespread recognition of knowledge sharing using social media, and there have been limited studies on how social media creates a knowledge sharing opportunity (e.g., Majchrzak et al., 2013), Social network strengthens social relationships and knowledge sharing (e.g., Marouf, 2007), Social media speeds up the knowledge sharing activities (e.g, Panahi, Watson, & Partridge, 2012). So far though, no research has been done looking at knowledge sharing in social media for the developing countries' information professionals. A notable exception has been done by the present researchers who have reached out to the wide pool of librarians participating in the international training program.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Knowledge Sharing*

As a newly emerging business approach, KM has been working to address today's organizational challenges to increase efficiency and efficacy by applying various strategies, techniques and tools in their existing business processes. It has been described as a process or a set of processes (Abell & Oxbrow, 2001; Townley, 2001; White, 2004). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) define KM as the "capability of an organization to create new knowledge, disseminate it throughout the organization, and embody it in products, services and systems". The key steps in the KM process in an organization are often represented in the form of a KM cycle. Dalkir's (2013) integrated KM cycle covers 3 overarching phases: 1) knowledge capture and/or creation; 2) knowledge sharing and dissemination; and 3) knowledge acquisition and application. In this cycle, it was identified that once captured or created across the organization the dispersed knowledge needs to be assessed, then shared and disseminated across the organization. In practice, knowledge sharing is evident when employees share their tacit knowledge with one another. If communal sharing of knowledge is commonplace within a company, a knowledge sharing culture will manifest and this culture allows employees to exchange valuable information with each other (Adamovic, Potgieter, & Mearns, 2012). It is an activity through which knowledge is exchanged among people, professionals, communities or

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organizations. It works as a culture involved in the exchange of employees' knowledge, experiences and skills through the organization (Sylvio & Chun, 2010). Among the most important benefits of knowledge sharing is knowledge creation (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Choo (2000) focused on how information professionals help organizations manage what they know and can share. Using a framework for tacit, explicit and shared belief of knowledge, it was found that information professionals can play an important role by sharing knowledge in their organizations. In another study, Joshi, Nissen, and Sarker (2007) discussed that most of the researchers in the field believe that sharing and transferring tacit knowledge, particularly in this age, is significant and the organizations should continuously learn to be creative to survive in a competitive environment. Without sharing knowledge, an organization will not be effective and will gradually leave the competitive environment (Khatemianfar & Parirokh, 2006). Parke, Campbell, and Bartol (2014) examine how organizations promote knowledge sharing—a critical process for virtual team effectiveness. They demonstrate that teams who had the opportunity to initially meet in person, rather than conduct their meeting virtually, benefitted from increased team knowledge sharing. Wang and Wang (2012) investigate the quantitative relationship between knowledge sharing, innovation and performance. It was found that both explicit and tacit knowledge sharing practices facilitate innovation. However, while these studies have looked at organizational aspects, e.g., Campbell and Bartol (2014), Joshi, Nissen, and Sarker (2007), and Marouf's (2007) work on social networks and knowledge sharing in organizations, they do not investigate the core concept of knowledge sharing using social media for the information professionals. Despite limited implementations and varying perceptions of the library and information science (LIS) community toward knowledge sharing, most researchers view it positively and call for full involvement of LIS practitioners in KM.

## *2.2 Social Media and Knowledge Sharing*

Information professionals are undergoing a period of profound adjustment, with changes in the format of information handling, changes in the needs of users and increasing roles as librarians (Islam, Agarwal, & Ikeda, 2014b). This necessitates librarians to become not just providers of information, but knowledge seekers as well - both for their patrons and their fellow librarians as well. Like other organizations, knowledge sharing can help to address these necessities by creating new knowledge and disseminating knowledge for both employees and to improve library services. Recent technology forums like blogs, wikis and other social networking sites collectively named Web 2.0 tools or Web 2.0 platforms are being used for knowledge sharing (Levy, 2009). After the Web 2.0, the next step for the web is social media which is considered as Web 2.0 evolution. Web-based sharing has made the social media unique among Web 2.0 innovations. Social media not only encourages user-generated content, but also extends the focus to the users by allowing them to curate other content to share among their networks (Beattie, 2011). In recent years, interest in Web 2.0 has fallen as interest in social media has risen. For the present study, we use social media as many libraries are increasingly using social media to promote services, communicate and disseminate services to their user communities. It can be an effective method of user outreach in any libraries. Majchrzak et al. (2013) identified that the use of social media creates the opportunity

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to turn organization-wide knowledge sharing in the workplace from irregular activities to continuous conversion of sharing knowledge. They theorized four affordances (metavoicing, triggered attending, network-informed associating, and generative role-taking) of social media representing different ways to engage people in knowledge conversations. They also focused on how people engage in the knowledge conversation and suggest some mechanisms. Ardichvili, Page, and Wentling (2003) reported the results of a qualitative study of motivation and barriers to employee participation in virtual knowledge-sharing communities of practice in a multinational organization. They found that shyness, hesitations, criticism and misleading (treating them wrongly) are the issues which make individuals not interested to sharing knowledge even though it is very important for their organization. The study also indicated that when employees view knowledge as a public good belonging to the whole organization, knowledge flows easily. Subramani and Rajagopalan (2003) interviewed online community members of an organization where they found that factors like degree of collectivism, competitiveness, the importance of saving face, in-group orientation, attention paid to power and hierarchy, and culture-specific preferences for communication modes, are important factors for knowledge sharing. What they addressed was in order to introduce any country-specific knowledge sharing systems, a cultural needs assessment should be conducted. Marouf (2007) noted how social networks in organizations operate in sharing knowledge, and found that the strength of business relationships rather than the strength of social relationships contributed most significantly to the sharing of public and private knowledge in this organization. The results in this study suggested that organizations might invest in promoting inter-unit exchanges and in creating meaningful social nets for more innovative products and better performance. Identifying knowledge sharing requirements in academic libraries has been studied by Parirokh, Daneshgar, and Fattahi (2008) who showed that the majority of libraries that were investigated are quite receptive to knowledge sharing using Web 2.0, and the majority of librarians value the importance of knowledge sharing. It is apparent that there is widespread recognition of the importance of Web 2.0 in knowledge sharing in many organizations and libraries. The most related research to this study has been carried out by Sotirios and Alya (2009). In their study, 11 in-depth interviews were conducted and, additionally, secondary data were collected. Research findings indicated four key determinants of knowledge sharing by use of Web 2.0 tools: history, outcome expectations, perceived organizational or management support and trust. In particular, very few studies have been conducted on using Web 2.0 in developing countries. As the majority of the world continues to move into an internet-based society, we have seen significant social, cultural, economic and technological changes. Developing countries also have embraced Web 2.0 and have moved onto the next generation of the World Wide Web; however, some developing countries still struggle to bridge the digital divide (Azab, 2013). Panahi, Watson, and Partridge (2012) theoretically investigate and map social media concepts with tacit knowledge creation and sharing. By conducting a systematic literature review, they identified five major requirements that are required for tacit knowledge sharing. Among those requirements, social media has the ability to speed up the knowledge sharing activities. Vuori and Okkonen (2012) discuss that intra-organizational social media helps to reach the organizational goals and is helping to motivate colleagues. They noted that a social media platform is helpful for knowledge sharing and in making every day work easier and faster. Nevertheless, there is an acute gap of literature and initiatives

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on knowledge sharing using social media for the information professionals in developing countries. Therefore, we endeavor to explore this area and identify some factors and issues of using social media for sharing knowledge. Library professionals use social media for professional and personal development, and this study is confined to understanding uses of social media for sharing knowledge. However, the present study reflects an emerging interest that is relatively new in this profession, and therefore approaches that deal with these issues are mainly general in nature.

### 3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to investigate the awareness, factors and attitudes of knowledge sharing using social media among the library professionals in developing countries. The following research questions guide the study as well;

- RQ1. How aware are the library professionals of knowledge sharing using social media?
- RQ2. How do they believe social media facilitates knowledge sharing?
- RQ3. To what extent are they familiar with social media for their daily jobs?
- RQ4. Based on their perceptions, what is the perceived usefulness of knowledge sharing practices?
- RQ5. What barriers do they feel exist for knowledge sharing by using social media?

### 4. Methodology

We relied upon the qualitative e-mail survey method for collecting data, with open and close ended questions sent to library professionals via e-mail.

#### *4.1 Study Population and Sample*

The study population was information professionals from 11 countries. We compiled the e-mail addresses of information professionals from Bangladesh, Uganda, the Philippines, Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Cuba, Pakistan and India. The respondent sample was taken from STIMULATE (Scientific and Technological Information Management in Universities and Libraries: an Active Training Environment) and ITP (International Training Program) programs in Belgium. STIMULATE and ITP are approved by the Flemish Inter-university Council (VLIR) and are sponsored by the Belgian Government. STIMULATE (1-10) was the series training program and ITP is the new name of this program which started in 2012. STIMULATE and ITP are aimed at employees who work in university libraries, information and documentation centers, and libraries in developing countries. In order to manage modern libraries in a digital environment, training emphasis was given to information discovery in Web, digital library technology, repository software, application of Web 2.0 in libraries and partially focused on knowledge management in a digital environment. At the end of this training program, participants created a group listserv for knowledge sharing.

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The participants selection for this program has spread over South-East Asia, Africa and Latin-America, but has been particularly strong in Sub-Saharan African countries. As an ITP participant, the first author of this paper tried to reach out to a wide pool of library professional's through directory and listservs.

#### *4.2 Interview Protocol and Data Collection*

The instrument was pre-tested by 5 respondents who filled out the questionnaire to check for any question wording issues, and suggested minor changes. A web version of the instrument was created using Google form. The URL of the online questionnaire was sent to respondents through their e-mail address. E-mail addresses were taken from the directory of STIMULATE and ITP. Latest STIMULATE and ITP directory have lists of all the participants of these programs. There was a mix of self-developed questions and few adapted from prior studies such as Islam, Agarwal, and Ikeda (2014a), Islam, Agarwal, and Ikeda (2014b) Adamovic, Potgieter, and Mearns (2012), Ardichvili, Page, and Wentling (2003), Gaál et al. (2015), and Majchrzak et al. (2013). A total of 87 personalized individual e-mails with a link to a web-based questionnaire (including informed consent) were sent out to STIMULATE/ITP participants inviting them to participate in this study. A paragraph explaining social media with examples in the context of knowledge sharing for information professionals were included in the questionnaire. Out of these 87, 27 were completed, yielding a response rate of 31.03 %. Even though the study population was developing countries in reach, we expected a better response, but after multiple follow-up e-mails and efforts at reaching out, the response rate was low. As an exploratory study, the sample size was not sufficient. Data were gathered from April to August, 2015.

## **5. Analysis**

### *5.1 Demographic*

Table 1 shows the demographic distribution (education, gender, age, experience, country and program type) of the survey respondents. A total of 27 library professionals took part in this study. Based on the demographics and other personal background information obtained, a majority of the respondents were female 51.9% and 48.1% were male. In describing the respondents' academic qualifications, 18.5% had a PhD degree, 11.1% had an MPhil (Masters of Philosophy) degree, 44.4% had an MA (Masters of Arts)/ MSS (Masters of Social Science) degree and 25.9% completed their Bachelor education in library and information science. Most of the participants' had 5-10 years of professional work experience and only 7.4% had more than 15 years of working experience. We can see that the participants' category for this study varies less considerably as ITP participants account for 48.1% and STIMULATE participants 51.9% for the rest. In total 27 library professionals from 11 countries participated and most of the respondents were from Bangladesh.

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**Table 1.** Professionals’ Demographic Information (N=27)

| Variable     | Classification  | %     |
|--------------|---|-------|
| Gender       | Male  | 48.10 |
|              | Female  | 51.90 |
| Education    | Bachelor  | 25.90 |
|              | Master  | 44.40 |
|              | M.Phil  | 11.10 |
|              | PhD   | 18.50 |
|              |   |       |
| Experiences  | Less than 5 years   | 7.40  |
|              | 5-10 years  | 48.10 |
|              | 10-15 years   | 37.00 |
|              | More than 15 years  | 7.40  |
| Program type | ITP   | 48.10 |
|              | STIMULATE   | 51.90 |
| Country      | Bangladesh (8); Philippines (7); Kenya (4); Maldives, Tanzania, Ghana, Uganda, Ethiopia, Cuba, India, Pakistan (1 each country) |       |

As there was no uniformity for professional designation, the professional position is identified from the -open-ended part of the questionnaire. Participants hold different positions including librarian, assistant librarian, library officer, reference and electronic database officer, academic librarian and information specialist. Only one of the participants from Ghana held a knowledge manager position in his organization.

### 5.2 Perceived awareness towards knowledge sharing

In exploring the respondents’ basic understanding of knowledge sharing using social media, the respondents were asked to identify the various extent of knowledge sharing on a seven-point Likert scale (ranging from 1= not at all aware to 7= completely aware). Table 2 shows the frequency of professional responses and mean (and standard deviation) for each item of the questions.

**Table 2.** Extent of Knowledge Sharing Awareness in Social Media (N=27)

| Knowledge sharing awareness<br>(To what extent are you aware of:             | (Frequency %) |      |       |       |       |       |       | Mean | SD   |
|--|---------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|
|  | 1             | 2    | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     |      |      |
| - the term “knowledge sharing”?  |               |      |       | 7.40  | 37.00 | 55.60 | 6.48  | 0.64 |      |
| - KS as one of the KM components?  |               |      | 11.10 | 14.80 | 40.70 | 33.30 | 5.96  | 0.98 |      |
| - the importance of knowledge sharing with your colleagues?                  |               |      |       | 14.80 | 51.90 | 33.30 | 6.19  | 0.68 |      |
| - knowledge sharing as a goal of your organization?                          |               | 3.70 |       |       | 22.20 | 22.20 | 51.90 | 6.15 | 1.17 |
| - knowledge sharing can remove the vagueness of your professional knowledge? |               |      | 3.70  |       | 18.50 | 44.40 | 33.30 | 6.04 | 0.94 |
| - the importance of knowledge sharing in organizing your knowledge?          |               |      | 3.70  |       | 18.50 | 51.90 | 25.90 | 6.00 | 0.78 |

The participants exhibited a high degree of awareness regarding social media. The degree of awareness of social media among the library professionals was high as the mean score in all categories were above 5.

### 5.3 Existing ways of knowledge sharing

It is often said that it is essential to create a “Knowledge Sharing Culture” as part of a Knowledge Management initiative in every organizations. Gurteen (1999) noted that change must start with the individual and, this is where an individual believes a knowledge sharing (KS) culture can begin. Question (Q.3) was designed to understand the KS culture in their organizations. In response to the KS culture question, most of the respondents (70.37) replied that they have KS culture in their organizations, 11.11% indicated ‘no’ and 18.51 % replied ‘do not know / I am confused’ about the practice of KS in their organizations. In the questionnaire (Q4) question was designed to ascertain the various ways in which respondents’ organization attempt to share knowledge among staff. In table 3, 51.9% of the respondents replied that they share knowledge through telephone and 48.1% of the respondents through group discussion.

**Table 3.** Current state of KS (N=27)

| Ways of KS                   | Frequency(Multiple) | %     |
|------------------------------|---------------------|-------|
| Meeting in every week        | 5                   | 18.51 |
| Group discussion             | 13                  | 48.10 |
| Group e-mail                 | 10                  | 37.00 |
| Newsletter                   | 12                  | 44.40 |
| Formal & informal discussion | 10                  | 37.00 |
| Using networking sites       | 8                   | 29.60 |
| Telephone                    | 14                  | 51.90 |
| All the above                | 2                   | 7.40  |
| Others                       | 3                   | 11.10 |

Meanwhile, we identified that 44.4% used newsletters, followed by 29.6% who used networking sites, and only 7.4% who replied that they practice all the ways of knowledge sharing in their organizations.

### 5.4 Use of social media

It is apparent from table 4 that 66.7% of professionals are familiar with social media, 3.7% indicated ‘no’ and 29.6% replied ‘do not know’ social media. It is important to note that 29.6% replied that they do not have familiarity with social media but they use it. So, while they use these tools, they may not recognize how these tools can contribute to organizational effectiveness. In response to the questions about respondents’ use of social media for knowledge sharing, 29.6% of the respondents indicated that they use blogs, followed by 25.9% who use RSS and 11.1%

who use Wikis. The majority of the respondents (48.1%) said that they use a newsgroup/forum and instant messaging to share their knowledge.

**Table 4.** Social Media for Knowledge Sharing (N=27)

| Are you familiar with the concept of social media (n=27)                 | Frequency | %     |
|--|-----------|-------|
| Yes  | 18        | 66.70 |
| No   | 1         | 3.70  |
| I do not have clear knowledge  | 8         | 29.60 |
| <b>Check the major social media tools that you use (Multiple) (n=27)</b> |           |       |
| RSS  | 7         | 25.90 |
| Wikis  | 3         | 11.10 |
| Blogs  | 8         | 29.60 |
| Flickr   | 1         | 3.70  |
| Newsgroups/Forum   | 13        | 48.10 |
| Instant messaging  | 13        | 48.10 |
| All the above  | -         | -     |
| Others   | 11        | 40.70 |
| <b>Social Networking (Multiple) (n=27)</b>                               |           |       |
| Facebook   | 20        | 74.10 |
| Twitter  | 4         | 14.80 |
| LinkedIn   | 23        | 85.20 |
| Academia   | 8         | 29.60 |
| All the above  | -         | -     |
| Others   | 6         | 22.20 |
| <b>How often do you use social media tools? (n=27)</b>                   |           |       |
| Never  | 1         | 3.70  |
| Seldom   | -         | -     |
| Sometimes  | 2         | 7.40  |
| Usually  | 11        | 40.70 |
| Always   | 13        | 48.10 |
| <b>How long have you been using social media tools? (n=27)</b>           |           |       |
| Less than one year   | -         | -     |
| More than one year   | 14        | 51.90 |
| 2-4 years  | 3         | 11.10 |
| 4-6 years  | 6         | 22.20 |
| More than six years  | 4         | 14.80 |

Table 4 also shows that, as a part of social media tools, social networking sites are used by many professionals. It can be clearly seen that the number of respondents who use these tools for knowledge sharing varies considerably. Most of the respondents (85.2%) use LinkedIn as a professional network for knowledge sharing, followed by Facebook (74.1%), Academia (29.6%) and Twitter (14.8%). Only 22.2% replied that they use other social media for knowledge sharing.

It can be mentioned here, 29.6% replied that they do not have clear knowledge of Social media but they use it. It is revealed that most of the respondents (48.1%) use these tools ‘always’, 40.7% respondents use ‘sometimes’ and 7.40% use ‘seldom’. There were only 3.7% respondents who never use these tools. In addition, the period patterns of using these tools were summarized and we identified that most of the respondents (51.9%) have used social media tools for more than one year. A good number of respondents (14.8%) have been using social media tools for more than six years.

In response to the question, “with whom do they share knowledge using social media?”, 55.6% of the respondents replied that they share knowledge with colleagues, co-workers in other departments, and external professionals. It is apparent from table 5 that Social media helps to share professionals’ knowledge not only in the same community, it also elicits the professional sharing of knowledge in different communities of people.

**Table 5.** Knowledge Sharing

| With whom (Multiple)                                       | Frequency | %     |
|--|-----------|-------|
| I share knowledge with my colleagues in my own department  | 7         | 25.90 |
| I exchange knowledge with co-workers from other department | 6         | 22.20 |
| I exchange knowledge with external professionals           | 8         | 29.60 |
| All of them  | 15        | 55.60 |
| Others   | 12        | 44.40 |

Table 6 compares the types of knowledge used by information professionals in social media. We can clearly see that same number of respondents (55.6%) share knowledge which they think will add values and is relevant to their fields. It is also identified that professional information in newspaper, magazines and television and professional events like training, workshops and conferences are shared by same number (51.9%) of respondents. In addition, 44.4% of the respondents expressed that they share knowledge that they have learned and 33.3% indicated that they share knowledge on personal job experience. The findings indicate that professionals have positive attitudes about sharing all types of knowledge in a Web environment.

**Table 6.** Types of Sharing Knowledge

| Type of knowledge (Multiple)   | Frequency | %     |
|--|-----------|-------|
| I share manuals and other information about my job                             | 6         | 22.20 |
| I share professional information from newspapers, magazines, and television    | 14        | 51.90 |
| Useful knowledge relevant to my field  | 15        | 55.60 |
| Professional training, workshop, conferences and other events in my profession | 14        | 51.90 |
| Personal job experience  | 9         | 33.30 |
| Sometimes, I share what I have learned   | 12        | 44.40 |
| Express my opinion when adding relevant issues                                 | 15        | 55.60 |

### 5.5 Perceived factors of using social media for knowledge sharing

Librarians have realized that social media can be leveraged for organizational advantage and that is why they have become interested in replicating the outcomes of social media for sharing their knowledge. Perceived evaluating factors have been taken from the previous studies of Kumar and Tripathi (2010), Razmerita and Sudzina (2009), Reychav and Weisberg (2010), and Sotirios and Alya (2009). Table 7 shows the frequency of professional response and mean (standard deviation) for each questionnaire item.

**Table 7.** Perceived Factors of Using Social Media (N=27)

| Perceived evaluating factors                                       | 1     | 2    | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | Mean | SD   |
|--|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|
| KS through social media is convenient                              |       |      | 7.40  | 11.10 | 11.10 | 51.9  | 18.50 | 5.62 | 1.14 |
| Comfortable to share knowledge                                     |       |      | 7.40  |       | 37.00 | 29.60 | 25.90 | 5.66 | 1.10 |
| Increases my competency  |       |      | 37.00 | 37.00 | 14.80 | 7.40  | 3.70  | 5.96 | 1.10 |
| Sharing knowledge freely   |       |      |       | 7.40  | 29.60 | 25.90 | 33.30 | 5.88 | 0.99 |
| It help to build my career   | 14.80 | 7.40 |       | 3.70  | 22.20 | 48.10 | 3.70  | 5.37 | 1.52 |
| Good or my reputation  | 3.70  |      | 7.40  | 7.40  | 18.50 | 40.70 | 22.20 | 5.48 | 1.45 |
| Promotes KS at the org. & the personal                             |       |      | 3.70  | 3.70  | 18.50 | 40.70 | 22.20 | 5.92 | 0.99 |
| Improves efficiency, effectiveness and establish a sharing culture |       |      | 11.10 | 3.70  | 22.20 | 40.70 | 22.20 | 5.59 | 1.21 |

It is apparent from table 7 that professionals generally agreed with the perceived factors of using social media for sharing knowledge. As an overall trend, we see that perceived factors ratings fell above 5, i.e., the average score. The overall mean score indicates that respondents are well aware of the evaluating factors of social media.

### 5.6 Perceived motivational factors contributing knowledge in social media platform

When asked about their reasons and motivations for participating in social media, professionals mentioned a wide range of benefits and outcomes that acted as motivators for their participation. Table 8 shows the frequency of professional response and mean (standard deviation) for each questionnaire item.

**Table 8.** Reasons for Using Social Media for KS (N=27)

| Motivational factors                    | 1 | 2    | 3    | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | Mean | SD   |
|---|---|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|
| Effective communication                 |   | 3.70 |      |       | 18.50 | 55.6  | 22.20 | 5.88 | 1.01 |
| Managing personal knowledge             |   | 3.70 | 7.40 |       | 29.60 | 37.00 | 22.20 | 5.55 | 1.28 |
| Facilitating new concepts and ideas     |   |      | 3.70 |       | 25.90 | 44.40 | 25.90 | 5.88 | 0.93 |
| Solving problems through discussion     |   | 3.70 |      |       | 11.10 | 66.70 | 18.50 | 5.92 | 0.95 |
| Informed of the latest news, activities |   |      |      |       | 14.80 | 40.70 | 44.40 | 6.29 | 0.72 |
| Receiving desired help and feedback     |   | 3.70 |      | 11.10 | 3.70  | 59.30 | 22.20 | 5.81 | 1.14 |
| Help in increasing my network           |   |      | 3.70 |       | 11.10 | 48.10 | 37.00 | 6.14 | 0.90 |

In addressing the perceived motivational factors for knowledge sharing in social media, we see that motivational factors ratings fell above 5, i.e., the average score. As a result, we can conclude that all the respondents agreed that motivational factors of social media are important as their knowledge sharing platform. Besides this, some information professionals mentioned other reasons such as satisfaction in helping others, passion about certain topics and one’s area of practice. Sample responses from social media respondents illustrate reasons and motivations for professionals’ willingness to contribute their knowledge in social media platforms. Here, we include opinions only on blogging as they mentioned only this one.

- **IIP-1** “it was also about sharing information - at my library. I frequently get called up to ask if I’ve seen x or y problem before, so I can now just point people at my blog”.
- **STIMULATE-5** “I originally started blogging to note down useful things I’d learned in my job that evolved into writing about what I’d been doing, so the blog became a journal and a record”.
- **STIMULATE-8** “Since I work on-site with our users I don’t always see other colleagues as often as I might like, so keeping a blog enables the rest of my team to keep up with my activities (and I can follow the blogs of my team mates)”.
- **STIMULATE-9** “in the ever-changing world, it’s helpful to build a level of credibility tied to you as an individual. I’ve built professional connections worldwide that would not otherwise exist, as a result of my blog”.

### 5.7 Perceived hindering factors of social media

To understand respondents’ perceptions of what might hinder their practice of social media for KS, information professionals agreed with a number of factors that could act as potential barriers to their participation in social media. Table 9 summarizes the main obstacles for the effective use of social media and shows the frequency of knowledge sharing barriers and mean (standard deviation) for each item.

**Table 9.** Barriers of Using Social Media for KS (N=27)

| Barriers of knowledge sharing               | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | Mean | SD   |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|
| Lack of support and recognition from org.   |       | 3.70  | 3.70  |       | 14.80 | 55.60 | 22.20 | 5.81 | 1.14 |
| Trust (quality and accuracy of information) | 22.20 | 3.70  | 3.70  |       | 37.00 | 29.60 | 3.70  | 5.55 | 1.47 |
| Trusting that other ‘s treat negatively     | 3.70  |       | 3.70  | 3.70  | 37.00 | 29.60 | 22.20 | 5.48 | 1.34 |
| Put effort but people do not use            | 3.70  | 3.70  | 7.40  | 7.40  | 29.60 | 37.00 | 11.10 | 5.11 | 1.47 |
| Fear of bring out confidential information  | 7.40  | 2.70  | 3.70  | 11.10 | 14.80 | 29.60 | 29.60 | 5.29 | 1.81 |
| Afraid of others can take credit            | 3.70  | 18.50 | 3.70  | 14.80 | 25.90 | 18.50 | 14.80 | 4.55 | 1.80 |
| Time consuming (filtering & updating)       |       |       | 7.40  | 3.70  | 40.70 | 33.30 | 14.80 | 5.44 | 1.05 |
| Lack of awareness and familiarity           | 3.70  | 7.40  | 11.10 |       | 29.60 | 37.00 | 11.10 | 5.00 | 1.61 |
| Lack of knowledge of using social media     | 7.40  | 3.70  | 7.40  | 7.40  | 29.60 | 37.00 | 7.40  | 4.88 | 1.62 |
| Lack of support                             |       | 7.40  | 14.80 | 7.40  | 22.20 | 44.40 | 3.70  | 4.92 | 1.41 |

There's no doubt that social media is becoming a significant part of the information professionals' daily lives. There is the joy of learning new ways of knowledge sharing, but there is often the accompanying pain of using social media along with the benefits. The majority of the respondents replied that fear of publishing something confidential or violating organizational policy, that people might treat their opinions in negative ways, uncertainty of the credibility of information, and a lack of support and recognition from organizations are the barriers that they feel of using social media. Overall, it is clear that most of the professionals agreed with the barriers statement as the average score i.e. 'mean' fell above 5. Apart from that, question 22 was designed to ascertain the various strategies which respondents think are needed to use social media for knowledge sharing. Most of the respondents (70.4%) replied that incorporating KM in LIS education and practicing KM in libraries is extremely important for knowledge sharing, followed by creating awareness of using social media (48.1%), using internet and electronic resources (44.4%), holding workshops (25.9%) and in service training programs (25.9%).

Finally, respondents were asked to provide their comments on using social media for knowledge sharing. Very few of them took the opportunity. Some of their comments are:

STIMULATE- 8 "Internal wiki should be used for knowledge sharing among the professionals in organizations. At the same time preservation of this knowledge is vital" - Bangladesh.

ITP-1 "KM is very important nowadays, especially taking advantage of the Social media tools. It becomes easier and faster to share knowledge with Social media tools" - Kenya

ITP-1 "In librarianship using technology is extremely important for knowledge sharing because librarians are information specialists to deliver and disseminate information to users using modern technology and update themselves to promote the profession and delivering current awareness service" - Ethiopia

STIMULATE-10 "On a social media platform, socialization occurs when individuals or groups share methods, understanding, experience, skills and Social media makes it easier to discover new knowledge for taken decision in the Library" - Cuba

STIMULATE-7 "The Concept is good but awareness is lacking. Most people associate Social media to only imply to Facebook. In developing countries the low bandwidth problem makes the tool not favorable/popular. Confidentiality of information is another issue" - India

## 6. Findings and Discussion

In this study, we set out to answer a few research questions on the perceptions of information professionals of using social media for knowledge sharing and the degree to measure of perceived factors of using social media. One of the difficulties in getting people to share knowledge emanates from the nature of knowledge itself. Philosophers define knowledge as "justified true belief" and it is problematic to understand (Gettier, 1963). This has made knowledge sharing potentially complex and here Social media could play a leading role in sharing knowledge by interactive information sharing, user-centered design, and collaboration in the World Wide Web. This study identifies the key issues of knowledge sharing and collaboration using social media by exploring the reasons

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for and barriers to librarians in developing countries. The findings addressed the research questions and the results of these questions were summarized in various tables.

*6.1 RQ1 & RQ2: How aware are they about social media and knowledge sharing and how do they believe social media facilitates knowledge sharing?*

The outcome of knowledge sharing is the creation of new knowledge that significantly improves professional's knowledge which supports improving organizational performance.

Creating user generated contents, peer to peer communication, networking, multimedia orientation and user friendly features and associated tools have made social media a good channel for knowledge sharing. Table 2 summarized the responses of the information professionals and showed that most of the respondents (55.6%) are aware of using social media for knowledge sharing. Moreover, findings indicate that the degree of knowledge sharing using social media is high as the average score fell above the mean for each question. We can conclude the significant takeaways from the table. There is a big focus on social media which can help to share knowledge and raise the awareness of librarians. It is in line with the previous studies of Bosch (2009) and Rogers (2009) where they found that social media, libraries, and web 2.0 are popular with librarians and librarians are well aware of the impact of social media in knowledge sharing, promoting public relations and for teaching and learning. Among other findings, librarians believed that social media has a significant effect on knowledge sharing. Most of the respondents (mean 5.96) believed that the important outcomes of using social media in knowledge sharing is increasing competency, career building and promoting knowledge between personnel and organizations. Most of the features of social media deal with the competency, free of charge, variety of channels and works as platform which are ties with the previous studies of Saw et al. (2013), Sophia (2009), and Raju (2014). All of these studies focus on why social media is important either on a personal level or on organizational levels.

*6.2 RQ3 and RQ4: To what extent are they familiar with social media and what is the perceived usefulness of knowledge sharing practices?*

From the organizational perspective it is very encouraging that 70.37% respondents replied that their organization has a knowledge sharing culture. Most of the respondents (51.90%) have been using social media tools for more than one year, and most of them always use these tools as a part of daily activities. Findings indicated that librarians are more familiar with instant messaging and newsgroup forums, (48.10%) while they are less familiar with Flickr, Twitter and Wikis. This is in line with the previous study of Olasina (2011) where the author noted that use of instant messaging and newsgroup forums are popular among librarians. We also identified that a good number of respondents (29.8%) are using blogs. Using a blog, for example, is very useful in preserving the organizational and personal memory, and can be used to convey values, build 'esprit de corps', reveal how things work around the organization, and to communicate complex ideas (Schrecker, 2008). Concerning, Social Networking Sites (SNSs), most of the respondents' use the LinkedIn professional network as a knowledge sharing tool. It is true that LinkedIn is the largest social

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networking site for professionals. Of all the global professional networking sites, LinkedIn is also the largest, with over 238 million users in over 200 countries and territories around the world, and professionals are signing up to join LinkedIn at a rate that is faster than two new members per second (Hueber, 2013). The experience of colleagues in various sectors is an important source of knowledge. This is particularly true with the respondents in this study, because their activities and processes involved transmissions of professional ideas, personal job experience and exchanges of experiences. Most of the time these exchanges take place in informal and spontaneous situations or meetings. Social media could play an important role and facilitate these experiences in different areas of the Web. Several perceived evaluating factors of using Social media were identified, and respondents agreed with those factors. These included: effective communication (in terms of ease of use, speed and reach), managing personal knowledge, generating discussion about new concepts and ideas, finding answers to particular problems, staying informed about the latest news and activities of fellow colleagues and receiving desired help and feedback. Some of the respondents noted perceived usefulness are;

“To get feedback on what my colleague does”

“To generate discussion about new concepts, ideas, opportunities, news, and competition”

“To communicate more effectively with the people I work with”

“To avoid answering the same question multiple times”

### *6.3 RQ5. What barriers do they feel exist for knowledge sharing by using social media?*

The findings demonstrate that currently librarians in developing countries are facing barriers differently. In a library with a knowledge sharing culture, librarians share ideas and insights, and reveal how things work around in the library. The only blockage and obstruction to this is the knowledge owner is considered to be in possession of power, and how this affects the individual. Consequently, the fear of publishing, trust and the perception of not being adequately recognized for the knowledge shared is a major stumbling block, which is supported by many studies. For example, as a truly effective communication vehicle, all parties in social media bear a responsibility to be genuine and accurate. Questions arise in trust. One can be genuine and accurate but how can one be sure that his patrons are too? Where social media becomes a part of a library's outreach strategy, privacy concerns become part of the discussion. Librarians have a long history as guardians of privacy rights (Mack et al., 2007). Social media, like any other technology, takes a bit of time and play to learn. Usually librarians have limited time to learn how to use social media, which is not given priority (Burkhardt, 2010). In addition, the study also found that interactive features of Social media and willingness are not enough to remove all barriers for knowledge sharing. Even when librarians give the highest priority to the interests of their professional community, they tend to shy away from contributing knowledge for a variety of other reasons, which are not based on Social media. In accepting knowledge sharing in the Web, librarians need to be convinced of the benefits that it would bring about to the library and the professional community. Failing to make professionals understand the benefit of sharing their strategic knowledge will result in hesitation

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to partake in any further knowledge sharing practices. Moreover, information professionals feel that incorporating KM in LIS education, practicing in libraries, arranging workshops, conducting in service training programs, raising awareness of using Social media tools, using the internet, as well as providing electronic resources are the important issues that need to consider for knowledge sharing in Social media platform. In this short study, the respondents were well aware of how important social media is to promote sharing knowledge. The main challenge to introduce a new concept is in changing the existing culture to accept the new values. In order to successfully establish an environment for knowledge sharing in social media, there is a need to undergo a process of cultural, technological, organizational and individual changes which subsequently require changes in management.

## 7. Conclusion

For the present study, we set out to answer five research questions. Information professional's response brought forth a rich set of findings, which are limited by the size of the sample. The initial findings of this study is to explain the phenomenon of social media and knowledge sharing which have important implications for more in-depth research and theory in knowledge sharing. Social media is a powerful new form of communication and, because of the ubiquity of social media use information professionals can leverage these communication tools to interact with faculty, staff, and students in new ways. It is often difficult in academic libraries to spread the different events or services that the library is offering. Many professionals are already experimenting with different social media services like Twitter or Facebook to interact and connect with their patrons, yet there are still a number of questions that come up as this is still fairly a new territory. Information professionals should try to keep themselves up-to-date and do their best to adapt themselves with new technologies, because it will facilitate them to improve their position in the academic community as well as help them for their personal and professional development. They should make efforts to collaborate and share their knowledge with their colleagues through social media, which could be helpful in terms of updating their knowledge and promoting their skills to offer better and efficient services to end users. This small study cannot conclusively provide specific details about the knowledge sharing situation in developing countries professionals; however, the findings did provide some indicators and pointers towards the state of knowledge sharing practices as perceived by the librarians, especially the respondents of this study. The initial findings suggest the level of acceptance among the respondents of this study toward using Social media as KS tool is positive. The study also indicated that respondents' perceived evaluating factors are the primary reason to practice knowledge sharing in social media. The culture of knowledge sharing depends on the attitudes of people within that culture. If they are reluctant to share their knowledge, then there will be no way that the knowledge can be shared effectively. We hope that professionals can reach a plausible conclusion, whether Social media in knowledge sharing has come to success or have a long way to go.

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## 8. Limitations and Future Study

Firstly, the present study was broad as it focused on knowledge sharing, social media and developing country information professionals. Each of these constructs and their affect could well be supported in separate studies. As a result, it was difficult to give in-depth treatment to all of these.

Secondly, the target population of the study was only developing country information professionals and particularly international training program participants. The sample size was not adequate for a qualitative study and was quite low. Moreover, the response rate was low for this study due to language barriers of the non-native English respondents, unwillingness to respond to the survey, time variations between continents and e-mail spam.

Thirdly, we did not come up with a theoretical model for this study. For the present study, we only examined that developing country information Professionals' Knowledge Sharing Practices in Social Media.

The findings of the study could be supplemented with a case study or depth interviews of information professionals to get a more in-depth picture of this issue. A bigger sample would gather more data, which will overcome the limits of the transferability of findings. Future studies also could focus more on a model of knowledge sharing through social media.

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**Q7. If you are using these sites, please mention which:**

Facebook  
Twitter  
LinkedIn  
Academia  
All the above  
Others

**Q8. How often do you use social media?**

Never                  Seldom                  Sometimes                  Usually                  Always

**Q9. How long have you been using social media?**

Less than one year                  More than one year  
2-4 year                  4-6 year                  More than 6 year

**Q10. Do you like the idea of using social media for professional knowledge sharing?**

Yes    No

**Q11. Are you familiar with the concept of 'Social media'?**

Yes                          No                                  I know but I do not have good knowledge

**Q12. Does your organization use any social media tools?**

Yes                  No                  we are on the way to using                  we are in planning

**Q13. Check the major social media that your organization use (i.e. if yes)**

|                   |                   |          |        |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------|--------|
| RSS               | Wikis             | Blogs    | Flickr |
| Newsgroups/forums | Instant messaging | Facebook |        |
| Twitter           | All the above     | Others   |        |

**Q14. Check the major social media tools that you use**

|                   |                   |       |        |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------|--------|
| RSS               | Wikis             | Blogs | Flickr |
| Newsgroups/forums | Instant messaging |       |        |
| All the above     | Others            |       |        |

**Q15. Is access to any of these social media tools restricted during the work hours if your organization has office-based Internet connection?**

Yes  
No  
Sometimes

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**Q16. Is there any encouragement on the part of your organization to use these tools for communication, file sharing and knowledge sharing, etc.?**

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

**Q17. To what extent do you agree with the following (1-strongly disagree to 7-strongly agree)**

- Knowledge sharing through social media is very convenient to me
- I feel comfortable to share my knowledge with colleagues through social media
- My professional expertise increases when using social media
- I share my knowledge and experience voluntarily with my colleagues as it is free
- Social media tools help to build my career
- Social media is good for my reputation in my community
- Social media promotes knowledge sharing ability at the organizational as well as personal level
- Social media improves the efficiency and productivity of professionals not only demolishing the factors that hinder staff to share their knowledge, but also by helping to establish a sharing culture in the library.

**Q18. With whom do you share knowledge using social media?**

- I share knowledge with my colleagues in my own department
- I exchange knowledge with co-workers from other department
- I exchange knowledge with external professionals
- All of them
- Others

**Q19. Which type of explicit and tacit knowledge you usually share using social media? (Multiple)**

- I share manuals and other information about my job
- I share professional information from newspapers, magazines, and television
- Useful knowledge relevant to my field
- Professional training, workshop, conferences and other events in my profession
- Personal job experience
- Sometimes, I share what I have learned
- Express my opinion when adding relevant issues

**Q20. In your opinion, what are the reasons for information professionals' willingness to use and/or contribute their knowledge to social media platforms? (1-Not at all important to 7-Extremely important)**

- Effective communication (in terms of ease of use, speed and research)
  - Managing personal knowledge
  - Discussion about new concepts and ideas
-

Finding answers to a particular problem  
Staying informed of the latest news from and activities of fellow colleagues  
Receiving desired help and feedback  
Help in increasing my network

**Q21. Barriers to professionals' willingness to use/contribute their knowledge to social media platforms.**

Lack of support and recognition from the organization  
Trust (Trusting the quality and accuracy of information)  
Trusting that others will treat the information negatively  
The risk is that I spent time contributing to the community, but people do not use the information that I publish  
Fear of publishing something confidential or violating organizational policy  
My colleague could take the credit for my ideas  
Too much information that needs to be filtered and need more time to be updated  
Lack of awareness and familiarity with these tools  
Lack of knowledge in using these tools  
Lack of support of using these tools in my university

**Q22. What are the strategies that you think are needed to use social media tools for knowledge sharing (1-Not at all important to 7-Extremely important)**

Holding workshops  
In service training program  
Creating awareness of using social media tools  
Using internet and electronic resources  
Using online databases such as ERIC, Emerald, Sage and Elsevier  
Incorporating Knowledge Management (KM) in Library and Information Science (LIS) education and practicing KM in academic libraries

**Q23. Finally, please put your opinion using social media for knowledge sharing-----**

