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EDITORIAL

This edition of **Information Impact: Journal of Information and Knowledge Management** has brought together articles on many topical issues. This issue contains twelve well written articles of high quality on various thematic issues in information and knowledge management.

The lead article by Madu examines the perception of Nigerian Lawyers about the use of ICT in law firms in Imo State, South Eastern Nigeria. Etim and Udoh, in their article evaluates the availability of biological collections in three Universities in South South Nigeria.

Omosor's paper assesses computer literacy skills of academic librarians in Delta State Polytechnics. Ugwu and Ekere's paper is a comprehensive study on the training needs of librarians for digital library projects in University libraries in Nigeria. The problems of records management in University libraries in Nigeria is discussed by Akporhonor. Eguavoen's paper focuses on cataloguing backlogs in academic libraries. The article by Chukwusa examines the perception of Library and Information Science students about Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES).

Issues surrounding Digital Revolution and Open Access is the focus of the paper discussed by Asogwa and Onwubiko. This is followed by the vivid appraisal of Information Seeking Behavior in an ICT Based Environment by Ogbomo. Eze, Ogwu and Igwesi report on strategies for improving literature search in Nigerian academic libraries. Akor and Ebong surveys the influence of democratic leadership style on the job performance of librarians in North Central Zone of Nigeria and library research skills and the use of legal information resources in academic library respectively.

The editorial board wish our distinguished editors, contributors, subscribers and readers **Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.**

Margaret Ugboma PhD
Editor–in Chief

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PERCEPTION OF NIGERIAN LAWYERS ABOUT THE USE OF ICTS IN LAW FIRMS: THE IMO STATE EXAMPLE:

Evarest C. Madu PhD

Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to investigate how Lawyers in Imo State perceive the use of Information Communication Technology(ICT) in performing their duties. The study was predicated on two theoretical perspectives:- the diffusion of innovation theory and the theory of perception. A survey research design was adopted for this study. A total of 30 law firms with 121 partners located in Owerri were surveyed for this study. A census of the whole population was taken. Interviews were use to complement questionnaire administered on the partners. Findings showed that lawyers were not unaware of the potentials of information communication technology(ICT). They felt that the use of ICT would provide them with competitive advantage as ICT is perceived as relatively advantageous. Recommendations on ICT skills training was also made.

KEY WORDS; Perception, Lawyers, Nigeria, ICTs, Imo State.

Introduction.

Imo State is one of the 36 States in Nigeria and one of the five states in the south East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The Federal Republic of Nigeria which is located in the western part of Africa gained independence on October 1, 1960 from her British colonial masters. Basically the Nigerian legal system which is practiced in Imo, State a component of the country is based on the English common law legal tradition by virtue of colonization and the incidence of the policy of assimilation (Dina, Akintayo, and Ekundayo,2005).

English law has a great influence on the Nigerian legal system and forms a substantial part of Nigeria law. According to Dina, Akintayo and Ekundayo (2005), the sources of Nigerian law are: the constitution; Legislation ;English Law; Customary Law; Islamic Law and Judicial precedents. However, with advance made in information communication technology (ICT) there is rapid technological change and proliferation of information resources. Because of this escalating complexity of information environment, individuals including lawyers are faced with diverse, abundant information choices in their work place and in personal lives, (Kwan and Shatack, 2002) . Information and communication technology (ICT) embraces the use of both computer and telecommunication technologies in information handling. According to Fombad and Moahi, (2005), lawyers are not immune from the re-engineering process that is working its way through the rest of the world. Thus, it has been suggested that the lawyers task can be facilitated by the use of ICTs.

Literature Review.

Legal research as defined by Frederick Hicks (1942) "is the inquiry and investigation necessary to be made by legislators, judges, lawyers and legal writers in the performance of their functions". Black's Law Dictionary (2007) gives a more practical definitions when it defines legal research "as the process of identifying and retrieving law related information necessary to support legal decisions making". Legal research whether done in books or electronics databases is a process of problem solving involving a careful examination of facts and an understanding and familiarity with the nature and tools of the resources in order to implement an effective research design. Research underpins a lawyers' ability to function competently and provide adequate representation to the client.

Perrit (1993), observes that lawyers are very much producers, processors, managers and purveyors of information. This is as a result of the fact that the learned man" needs to be current as regards information. He needs to know the latest information on legislation, judicial precedents etc; it is therefore interesting that lawyers are cautious by their very nature. In the same view, (Susskid 1997) has argued that the changing nature of work opportunities are afforded by electronic integration and the changing competitive climate. These have no doubt provided organizations like law firms with compelling reasons to rethink their structure, roles and missions and the manner in which they carry out their businesses. Arguing along the same line, Grant, (1998), Susskind (1997) have predicted that technology is capable of changing the lawyers' routines, challenge the inefficiencies as well as create opportunities for new form of law firms and practice.

On the revolutionary role of information communication technology (ICT), UNECA, (1999) has argued that ICT have diffused at such a rate than anticipated. According to them, the revolution in ICTs has not only altered the way people live, work and play, but has also created a new infrastructure for business. In the view of O'Brien, (2002), there are many ways that organizations may view and use information technology. Depending on their goals, aims and objectives, organizations, corporate bodies or business enterprises may use ICT to strategizse, it could also be used to support everyday operations. According to Kahana; Stanb and Chervany (1999), the process of information technology adoption is critical to deriving the benefits of information technology.

ICTs are crucial in facilitating communication and access to information for research and development activities in all sectors of the economy. The internet as an ICTs tool has been recorded to be widely spread and influencing almost all human activities, (Iskandar, 2003).

According to Ubogu, (2000) information seekers increasingly want instant, individual access to information without any mediation. They are expected to find the resources they want in a digital form, accessible electronically and are beginning to demand a one- stop shopping in an integrated information environment. Gleeson (2001) posits

that the past couple of decades have borne witness to a revolution in computer based communication technology. This has no doubt revolutionized the way people use information.

Theoretical Framework

This study is predicated on two theories, the diffusion of innovation theory and perception theory. The diffusion of innovation theory is essentially a social process in which subjectively perceived information about a new idea is communicated. The theory believes that a new idea, practice or object has perceivable channels, time and mode of being adopted by individuals or organizations. This theory has been widely used in the study of the adoption of ICTs in organization. However, the problem with this theory is that while it provides a good tool for descriptive research it does not provide adequate basis to predict out come or provide guidance for accelerating adoption rate. This theory which is of North American origin, appears to have cultural influence.

Perception theory on the other hand derives from the concept of perception which is the process of attaining awareness and understanding. Oxford English Dictionary (2006) posits that it comes from the Latin word *"perceptio percipio"* which means receiving, collecting, action of taking possession, apprehension with the mind or the senses. The process of perception involves understanding. Perception is linked with a person's understanding of what is truth. Reality is perceived according to the persons understanding of it and so perception needs to be confronted with the truth.

The theory of active perception has emerged from extensive research of sensory illusions. This theory which is increasingly gaining experimental support, can be surmised as dynamic relationship between description in the brain to senses surrounding all of which holds true to the linear concept of experience. Without perception, action would be unguided, and without action perception would serve no purpose, (Gibson 1987). According to Edmond (2005), the way the human mind functions is that it also admits past experience and takes that into consideration when interpreting new things. This means that while the mind admits that things change, it also admits that things do not change.

The two theories of diffusion of innovation and perception are in line with this study as they examine how new orders are interpreted in the mind and accepted or rejected,

Objective of the study

The broad objective of this study is to find out how the lawyers perceive the use of ICTs in performing their duties . Specifically this study seeks to:

a. Determine Lawyers perception of how ICT can provide relative advantage.
b. Determine lawyers perception on the compatibility of ICT
c. Determine factors influencing the adoption of and use of ICTs
d. Determine factors that inhibit the adoption and use of ICT

Research Methods

Survey research design is adopted for this study. Presently, there are a total of 48 law firm in Imo State with Owerri the state capital having most of the law firms. This study was therefore conducted in Owerri city. A total of 30 law firms with 121 partners located in Owerri were surveyed for this study. A census of the whole population was taken. Interviews were used to complement questionnaire administered on the partners. The questionnaire was the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire has a section which elicited demographic information from the partners such as sex, age, experience qualification. In the main, the data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency count, mean score and percentage).

Result, Analysis and Discussion

Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Age Distribution Of Respondent

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
21-30	31	25.0
31-40	60	50.0
41-50	20	16.5
51-above	10	8.5
Total	121	100

The respondents ages ranged from twenty one years to ages above fifty years. From the result shown in Table 1 above, the finding were dominated by respondents within the age bracket of 31-40 years with 60 (50%). This is followed by those within the age bracket of 21-30 years with 31 (25%) indicating it. The age range of 41-50 was indicated by 20 (16.5%) while 10 respondent (8.5%) were with the age bracket of 50 years and above.

Table 2: The Perception of ICT by Lawyers in the Provision of Relative Advantage.

Advantages of Using ICT	Agree	%	Uncertain	%	Disagree	%
Enhance efficiency	62	51.0	7	6.0		
Reduces information overload	40	33.0	15	12.5		
Aids communication with colleagues	31	25.0	10	8.5		
Produces comparative advantage	81	67.0	6	5.5		
Very convenient	70	58.5	11	9.5	5	4.5
Enhance economic gains	61	50.5	12	10.5		
Enhance legal research	71	58.8	8	6.5		
Reduces routine processes	41	33.5	17	14.5	8	6.5
Aids storage and retrieval of cases	60	50	24	210		
Facilitates communication with clients	51	41.5	20	17.0	12	10.5

Majority of the Lawyers agreed that ICT is providing relative advantage. As shown in Table 2 :81 (67.07%) of the lawyers who agreed on the relative advantage of ICT ranked highest. This is closely, followed by those who argued that it enhances their legal research 71 (58.5%). Ranking third with 70 (58.5%), lawyers indicating it is the issue of convenience of work. 62 (51%) of the lawyers agreed that it enhances efficiency where 60 (50%) argued that it aids storage and retrieval of cases. On the case of relationship with clients, 51 (41.5%) of the respondents agreed that it facilitates communication with clients, while 41 (33.5%) of the lawyers felt that it reduces routine processes.

Table 3: Perception on The Compatibility of ICT

Perception	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
I do not need ICT in my legal work	10 8.5%	24 21.0%	86 68.5 %
ICT is difficult and fearful	17 14.5%	20 17.0%	83 67.0%
I can succeed without ICT	41 33.5%	10 8.5%	69 57.0%
ICT prone to redundancy	20 17%	24. 21%	76 62.0%
Computer is stressful in legal work	15 12.5	29. 25.0%	76 62.0%
Lack of computer skill in legal work	40 33%	17 14.5%	63 53.0%

Table 3: shows that 86 (65%) of the lawyer disagreed that they do not need ICT in their legal work, only a negligible 10 (8.5%) agreed that they do . However 41 (33.5%) of the lawyer felt strongly that the would succeed in their legal profession without ICT, while 69 (57%) of them felt otherwise. Even though the lawyers perceive ICT to be compatible to their job, some still felt that they could survive without it. There is therefore the need for computer literacy training for the lawyers. On the issue of redundancy, some lawyers 20 (17%) agreed that it could render some of them redundant while a higher percentage 76 (52%) felt that the use of ICT would not make lawyers redundant.

Table 4: Factor Enhancing The Use of ICT In Law

Factors	Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
Benefits of ICT	82 67.5%	24 210%	14 12.0%
Good results in ICT use	66 54.5%	31 25.0%	23 20.5%
Availability of packages	61 50.5%	40 33.0%	19 16.5%
Strong partnership support	59 49.0%	38 31.0%	23 20.5%
Need for collaboration	59 49.0%	44 37.9%	17 14.5%
Better access to information	54 45.0%	48 39.5%	18 15.0%
Improved productivity	51 41.5%	51 41.5%	18 15.0%
Access to international data bases on law	51 41.5%	48 39.9%	21 20.0%
Encourages resources sharing	51 41.5%	45 37.5%	24 21.5%
Efficient and effective Delivery of service	49 40.5%	46 37.5%	25 215.%

A list of possible factors that enhance the use of ICT was provided to the lawyers for their ranking. Table 4 shows that benefits that accrue to the users of ICT ranked highest

complication of use, lack of ICT skills, lack of user manual, ignorance about usage and difficult of access are some of the factors that impede their use of ICT.

There is no doubt that the use of information communication technology (ICT) require some skills. It is there recommended that appropriate training through workshops, seminars and conference on ICT skills be provided for the lawyers. Also law firm should reduce the cost of access to ICT facilities and reduced the difficulties lawyers face in trying to have access to ICT facilities.

Finally, lawyers themselves must change their attitude and appreciate the fact that the use of ICT in modern day work has become sine-qua non hence they must embrace it.

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