Use Of Social Media In Public Archives: Perspectives About Ghana's Readiness And Perceived Challenges.

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THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY PUBLIC ARCHIVES: PERSPECTIVES ON GHANA’S READINESS AND PERCEIVED CHALLENGES

Introduction

Social media has become an avenue through which archival institutions can disseminate information, engage users, and promote their collections and services to a wider audience. Due to the utility and influence of social media, international organizations such as the International Council on Archives (ICA) have adopted it as a major tool for promoting and improving the understanding and awareness of archives. The ICA recognizes social media as an important tool and therefore encourages member states and archival institutions to utilize social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, to promote their collections and services. In spite of the enormous benefits of its adoption and use, some national archives in developing countries, especially Ghana, appear not to have integrated social media into their operations. This raises critical questions about the perceived challenges of social media adoption and archival institutions’ readiness to effectively implement and utilize social media. Although these archival institutions face several challenges, no studies have examined the factors underpinning their inability or lack of readiness to adopt social media. Therefore, this study explores the challenges of social media adoption faced by Ghana’s Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) and the PRAAD’s readiness to incorporate social media into its operations.

Social media has emerged as a valuable tool for archival and special collections institutions, which employ social media platforms predominantly for promotional and outreach purposes. Specifically, it has been reported that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are used by archivists to disseminate messages, attract potential donors, and inform followers and users about new exhibitions, acquisitions, and upcoming or past events. In a survey conducted by Hopman, which explored the use of social media by a variety of archives and special collections, the respondents were asked about the effectiveness of their social media programs. Notably, the respondents highlighted multiple achievements that resulted from their institutions’ social media presence, including significant increases in donations of valuable archival material. It has been observed that archival institutions employ social media platforms to promote and call attention to their collections and finding aids. This practice finds support in Williamson et al.’s study, which demonstrated that posting finding aids on popular social media applications, such as Facebook, WordPress, and Twitter, enhanced the visibility of these finding aids on search engines, positively impacting their search-engine-result rankings.

The use of social media by archival institutions has been found to enhance the visibility and awareness of archives and attract new users, particularly among the younger demographic, whom it may be difficult to reach through other forms of communication. This connection between social media use and increased outreach is exemplified by Williamson et al.’s findings. After a year of

1 International Council on Archives, “Ideas for Promoting the Universal Declaration on Archives.”
3 Hager, “To Like or Not to Like”; Green, “Utilizing Social Media to Promote Special Collections.”
4 Hopman, “Social Media Use in Archives and Special Collections.”
5 Williamson, Vieira, and Williamson, “Marketing Finding Aids on Social Media.”
6 Hager, “To Like or Not to Like.”
dedicated social media efforts, Sam Houston State University’s Special Collections notably expanded the awareness of its archives in both the local and campus communities. This heightened awareness resulted in increased inquiries from students, faculty, and local community members seeking research assistance from the archives’ staff. In a notable instance, a researcher traveled for four hours to access three substantial manuscript collections, having learned about them exclusively through social media platforms. Furthermore, Green’s study highlighted the impact of social media implementation in the Department of Special Collections at the University of St. Andrews. After less than a year of operating social media channels, the institution garnered attention from local communities and media outlets, drawing substantial attention to their collection. Indeed, social media serves as a medium through which archives can generate increased interest in their institution, build relationships with their users, and promote public appreciation for the role of archives and special collections in preserving and sharing history.

Although the adoption of social media by archives has potential benefits, it is not without challenges. Researchers have investigated the various factors and challenges that contribute to archival institutions’ reluctance to embrace social media. Hopman’s survey on the use of social media by archives revealed various reasons for their reluctance to adopt or utilize these platforms. Among the respondents, 54 percent cited a lack of time, 51 percent mentioned a shortage of staff, 36 percent expressed a lack of interest, 26 percent highlighted a lack of training, and 10 percent mentioned financial constraints as a barrier. Additionally, the survey identified external factors, such as restrictions imposed by parent organizations, low prioritization of social media, and security and privacy concerns, as hindrances to incorporating social media into archival practices.

Nogueira’s study emphasized that archival institutions face a dilemma in deciding whether to embrace or delay the adoption of social media applications. This dilemma often stems from their limited understanding of these platforms or their reluctance to acknowledge them as official channels. For certain archives, the adoption process becomes burdensome, because it requires approval from senior management who may not fully recognize the value and significance of establishing a presence on social media platforms. In a survey of archives in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, Thorm investigated the reasons for archives’ limited implementation of social media technologies to enhance researcher engagement. Among the 68 participants who responded to the survey’s open-ended question, 32 percent (22) identified lack of resources as a barrier, 13 percent (9) expressed concerns about loss of control or authority, 9 percent (6) had reservations regarding the return on investment, and 4 percent (3) stated that they faced administrative hurdles. Notably, however, 22 percent (15) of the respondents revealed plans to incorporate Web 2.0 technologies to bolster researcher engagement.

Ngoepe and Ngulube highlighted the inadequate use of information communication technologies (ICTs) for the marketing of archives by the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa. The absence of cellular phone technology and popular social networking tools, such as Facebook, blogs, podcasts, wikis, YouTube, and Twitter, prevented effective outreach, particularly to the

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7 Williamson, Vieira, and Williamson, “Marketing Finding Aids on Social Media.”
8 Green, “Utilizing Social Media to Promote Special Collections.”
9 Mason, “Outreach 2.0.”
10 Hopman, “Social Media Use in Archives and Special Collections.”
11 Nogueira, “Archives in Web 2.0.”
12 Thorman, “Use of Web 2.0 Technologies.”
Mukwevho and Ngoepe examined the use of social media as a promotional tool by public archives in South Africa and found that, despite widespread access to social media platforms through mobile technologies, only a few repositories utilized social media. They attributed the limited use to departmental policies that prohibited archives from having their own social media accounts and restricted the use of specific platforms. Netshakhuma’s assessment of factors affecting social media use in South Africa’s Mpumalanga Archives indicated unanimous agreement among the participants that the absence of social media policies, lack of management support, and staff resistance to change hindered the adoption of social media.

Garaba’s study of the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA) demonstrated the gradual implementation of ICT applications by archival institutions housing liberation heritage records. However, there remain untapped opportunities to use social networking tools to enhance outreach and raise awareness of institutional profiles. Lack of affordability, budgetary limitations, and a shortage of qualified ICT staff were among the challenges identified as key obstacles for archival institutions.

A similar study of ESARBICA by Saurombe revealed that although the majority of directors of national archives recognized that social media could help archival institutions reach a wider audience, a significant portion (78 percent) did not utilize these platforms. When asked to explain their reluctance to use social media, the directors provided the following reasons: stringent procedures imposed by the Ministry of Home Affairs, concerns about the use of social media for political and social issues, lack of creativity and exposure, plans for implementation in the future, bureaucratic hurdles involved in obtaining permission, high staff turnover, and financial constraints.

In the Ghanaian context, studies have consistently advocated the use of social media by cultural institutions such as the PRAAD and Ghana Museums to enhance user experience, attract funding, create awareness, and strengthen operational capabilities. However, no studies have addressed the extent to which archives have adopted social media platforms, archives’ readiness to utilize these platforms, and the barriers to their implementation.

**Contextualization**

The PRAAD Act, no. 535, was passed in 1997 to establish the PRAAD, which is responsible for managing the records of public institutions of the Ghanaian government. Formerly known as the National Archives of Ghana, the PRAAD consists of various registries in public offices, including government ministries, departments, agencies, the National Records Center, the National Archives, and eight regional branches, located in Greater Accra, Cape Coast, Sekondi, Koforidua, Kumasi, Tamale, Sunyani, and Ho.

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13 Mukwevho and Ngoepe, “Assessing the Extent.”
14 Mukwevho and Ngoepe, “Taking Archives to the People.”
15 Netshakhuma, “Assessment of the Status of the Social Media Records.”
16 Garaba, “Availing the Liberation Struggle Heritage.”
17 Saurombe, “Taking Archives to the People.”
19 PRAAD ACT 535.
20 Akussah, “Preservation of Public Records in Ghana.”
The Greater Accra branch, which serves as the head office, houses the largest collection of archival documents in Ghana. These documents span the colonial era and the period following Ghana’s independence from Britain in 1957. It is noteworthy that the Accra branch contains over half of the National Archives’ materials in duplicate form, enabling researchers to conduct comprehensive studies using only the Accra archives.\(^{21}\) The archives hold significant collections, including records of the Native Affairs Secretariat from the British colonial era, records of missionary societies and Ghanaian churches, correspondence and dispatches of colonial administrative governors, maps and plans, local newspaper collections, personal papers of prominent individuals, such as Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana’s first president), land-boundary records, and a series of land-boundary settlement proceedings held throughout the colony in 1950.\(^{22}\) For example, in 2017, Ghana utilized archival documents provided by the PRAAD to successfully resolve and win a maritime-boundary-dispute case against Côte D’Ivoire at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.\(^{23}\)

Despite its rich holdings and pivotal role, like other public institutions in Ghana, the PRAAD faces myriad challenges, such as neglect, underfunding, preservation difficulties, limited access to high-speed internet, inconsistent electricity supply, and outdated computers.\(^{24}\) Moreover, the institution struggles with visibility and public awareness. It has been reported that most of the archival repositories in Ghana are relatively unknown, resulting in low patronage of the archival materials in these repositories.\(^{25}\) For instance, research conducted in the Volta and Eastern regions of Ghana revealed a lack of public awareness of those regions’ archives.\(^{26}\) Studies have attributed the limited visibility and public awareness of the PRAAD to the lack of a vibrant web presence, which would include a website and social media accounts.\(^{27}\) This significantly diminishes the PRAAD’s ability to effectively serve its patrons.

As a member of the West African Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (WARBICA), the PRAAD has committed itself to increasing the use of the region’s archives by improving their accessibility. To achieve this, the PRAAD designates one week of every year as National Archives Week, during which activities such as talks, exhibitions, study tours, and film viewings take place to raise public awareness.\(^{28}\) Despite the evidence that some steps have been taken to raise awareness about the PRAAD, the literature on the extent to which the PRAAD uses social media is very limited, although it has been reported that it has a Facebook account. Thus, researchers need to engage in an ongoing discussion of the PRAAD’s readiness to adopt and use social media in its outreach activities and the obstacles to its implementation. The present study, conducted through the University of Ghana Department of Information Studies, sheds light on the PRAAD’s readiness to embrace social media platforms in archival practices, examining both the potential benefits and the perceived challenges of doing so. By describing the current landscape and identifying areas for improvement, this study will support the use of social media in Ghanaian

\(^{21}\) Ntewusu, “Serendipity.”
\(^{22}\) Henige, “National Archives of Ghana.”
\(^{26}\) Otu and Asante, “Awareness and Use of the National Archives.”
\(^{27}\) Asamoah, Akussah, and Mensah, “Funding Memory Institutions in Ghana”; Marty, “Public Records Administration and Archives Department in Cape Coast, Ghana.”
\(^{28}\) Akussah, “Preservation of Public Records in Ghana.”
archives, promote wider access to archival materials, and foster increased public engagement with the country’s rich history and cultural heritage.

**Conceptual Framework**

In view of the importance of the adoption of IT innovations at the organizational level, this study uses Iacovou et al.’s model of electronic data interchange (EDI) adoption. Several studies have used this model to examine the factors that influence firms’ decisions to adopt IT innovations.

The EDI adoption model is based on three major constructs: perceived benefits, organizational readiness, and external pressure. Perceived benefits are the potential advantages of adopting IT innovations. Our study uses this construct to explore participants’ perceptions of the benefits to be obtained from social media adoption by the PRAAD. Organizational readiness encompasses the availability of resources, including funds, human resources, IT infrastructure, and equipment for the adoption and use of technology. We use this construct to determine the presence of social media policies and the availability of financial, human, and IT resources. External pressure comprises the influences exerted by the organization’s environment, such as competitive pressure and the demands and expectations of users or customers. The present study focuses on identifying users’ expectations and demands regarding the PRAAD’s use of social media.

**Figure 1. Electronic Data Interchange Adoption Model**

**Methods**

**Study participants.**

This study’s participants were staff members of the National Archives, a division of the PRAAD head office, which is located in Accra, Ghana, the national capital. The rationale for limiting the study to the Head Office stemmed from a range of factors. Chief among them was the office’s considerable archival repository, which serves as the primary repository for crucial records encompassing the colonial and postcolonial eras, court judgments, and special collections. These holdings have made the office a focal point for substantial public patronage. Moreover, the Head Office’s management, including the director and top-level executives, maintains supervisory

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29 Iacovou, Benbasat, and Dexter, “Electronic Data Interchange and Small Organizations.”
31 Oliveira and Martins, “Literature Review of Information Technology Adoption Models.”
authority over regional archival repositories. Given this pivotal oversight role, we identified the Head Office as an ideal setting for exploring the adoption and use of social media by archives. Notably, an archive’s implementation of social media may entail soliciting support from higher management for policy formulation, financial allocation, and human resource allocation.

The Archives Division comprises four units: Reference and Repository, Reprographics, Editorial and ICT, and Preservation. The inclusion criteria for participants were as follows: (1) staff member of one of the four units of the Archives Division and (2) willingness to participate in the study. Thirteen of the twenty staff members of the Archives Division took part in the study: four participants from Editorial and ICT, two from Reprographics, and seven from Reference and Repository. Of these participants, 23 percent were female and 77 percent were male (see Table 1 for details).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Work experience</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AR_1</td>
<td>Benson</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR_2</td>
<td>Ashraf</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR_3</td>
<td>King</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR_4</td>
<td>Theresah</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>30 years</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR_5</td>
<td>Naki</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR_6</td>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR_7</td>
<td>Abrampaah</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR_8</td>
<td>Gynah</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR_9</td>
<td>Goodwill</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR_10</td>
<td>Issaka</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR_11</td>
<td>Agyemang</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR_12</td>
<td>Duncan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR_13</td>
<td>Freeman</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>32 years</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Instrumentation.**

This study gathered information about the feasibility and challenges of social media adoption by the PRAAD and the PRAAD’s readiness to adopt and use social media. The National Archives’ staff members were aware of the challenges the PRAAD faced as well as the extent of its readiness. Moreover, the staff would be involved in the implementation of social media. Thus, to gain insights into the perspectives of staff members, this study adopted a qualitative design. Qualitative designs enable access to in-depth information about experience, meaning, and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participants.

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32 PRAAD ACT 535.
33 Hammarberg, Kirkman, and De Lacey, “Qualitative Research Methods.”
To collect the data for this study, we adopted a semi-structured interview guide. The interview guide was based on the constructs of the conceptual framework and a review of the relevant literature, and it covered three main categories: perceived benefits of social media, customer expectations and public demands for social media, and readiness to adopt and use social media.

Procedure and data collection.

Before data collection, the study and its protocols received approval from the institutional review committee of the study site. An official letter was then sent through the Department of Information Studies at the University of Ghana to the institution where the data were collected to obtain further approval before implementation. The second author scheduled the interviews with the prospective participants. Of the twenty staff members, only thirteen accepted the invitation for an interview. The rest either failed to respond or declined the invitation to participate in the study. The interview guide was distributed to the participants during the second author’s visit to acquaint them with the instruments and enable them to provide the right information to enrich the study.

The objective of the study was explained to each participant, and all of them were assured of their right to freely withdraw from the study anytime they wished. The participants were given the assurance of anonymity in the study’s presentation of its findings. To that end, the participants were assigned a code during the interviews (see Table 1). They were also assured that apart from the members of the research team, no other person would have access to the recorded data. The data collection spanned a period of twelve days from May 6 to May 17, 2019. All the interviews were conducted in English, lasted between thirty-five minutes and one hour, and were recorded with the participants’ permission.

Data analysis.

The first author transcribed the audio-recorded interviews verbatim using a Microsoft Word document. Subsequently, the first author phoned all the participants to discuss the interviews’ dominant themes. All the participants consented to the use of their data in this study. We performed a thematic analysis of the interviews following the steps proposed by Braun and Clarke, that is, reading, coding, mapping and charting, and documenting the draft report.34 The constructs of the conceptual framework were used as a priori themes. Initially, the authors read the interview transcripts to become acquainted with their content. They then held a meeting to discuss the key emerging themes and brainstorm phrases to use as codes. The first author categorized all the codes under subthemes, which were reviewed by the research team. The research team then tabulated the subthemes under the a priori themes (perceived benefits, external pressure, and organizational readiness). Passages associated with the codes were extracted from the interviews. The third author wrote the first draft of the results, which was given to all the other authors, whose responses to the results were included in the final draft.

34 Braun and Clarke, APA Handbook.
Results

The majority of the participants appeared to have a strong awareness of the advantages of social media. As a result, they maintained that the adoption and effective use of social media would benefit Ghanaian public archives immensely in their efforts to communicate with the public, disseminate information, and publicize their collections. The participants revealed that researchers wanted to engage with the PRAAD on social media platforms. Regarding the readiness to adopt social media and use it effectively, there was a general consensus among the participants that readiness was low due to poor IT infrastructure, lack of funds, lack of staff with the requisite skills, and lack of social media policies and guidelines. Table 2 presents the a priori themes, subthemes, and associated codes.

Table 2. A Priori Themes and Discussion Points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A priori themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Benefits</td>
<td>Social media as publicity tool</td>
<td>Promote PRAAD &amp; its collections, raise image, reaches more people, increase revenue &amp; clientele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication and information dissemination platform</td>
<td>Respond to requests &amp; enquiries, improved service delivery, access to information worldwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Pressure</td>
<td>Customer demands</td>
<td>Significant pressure from youth and clients from abroad, creation of Facebook account</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Readiness</td>
<td>Financial resources</td>
<td>Poor financial state, inadequate budgetary allocation, lack of funds to buy enough electricity power, inadequate finances impact negatively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IT resources</td>
<td>Inadequate computer hardware, Poor internet access, Poorly resourced IT Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of training on social media use, the need for expert to train staff, potential challenge of training, The need to train dedicated staff to manage social media,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy and guidelines</td>
<td>Lack of social media policy and guidelines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perceived Benefits

Social media as publicity tool for public archives.

The participants shared their views on the benefits of utilizing social media. Some participants discussed the importance of using social media as a publicity tool and its attendant benefits for the PRAAD. Many participants intimated that public awareness of the PRAAD and its services in Ghana was low. In view of this, seven of the thirteen participants held the opinion that social media could be used to create awareness of the PRAAD’s services and collections:

It is just to get people aware, just to create the awareness that the archives exist in Ghana and they could have the chance to access certain documents at the National Archives.
There are instances where many people do not know that the archives even exist but in using the social media, we will be able to broaden our horizon for others to know that we have National Archives in Ghana. (AR_10, Issaka)

I think with the use of social media we can promote the archives, or our services can go beyond our premises. (AR_2, Ashraf)

So, I think investing into social media or getting all the social media platforms from the least to the top, whichever one that we think will be appropriate, will be a medium to sell our products and services out there. (AR_1, Benson)

Two participants affirmed that social media could bring the PRAAD into the limelight because social media has the power to reach a large number of people in a short period of time. In their opinion, social media could thus reach a wider audience than traditional advertising media:

I think it is relevant because social media reaches a lot of audience within a very short time. So, one, it will bring attention to the department. (AR_4, Theresah)

And these days, by social media, you can reach volumes or thousands of people that no letter or circular could do that. By creating awareness on social media that there is a place called PRAAD. (AR_5, Naki)

Four participants also pointed out that using social media for publicity could increase the archives’ revenue generation, clientele, and patronage of its services. In their opinion, publicity based on social media could attract the patronage of more researchers and internally generated funding would consequently increase. Other participants held the view that such publicity would attract government funding as well as external investments and grants:

So, having us on social media, I think it will put us out there because those who do not know us and what we do will know us and then it could also serve as a source of revenue. It will increase our client base because people who do not know about us will get to know us. (AR_4, Theresah)

The exposure will be there, the exposure and maybe there will be investments or maybe we will get the needed investments if government realized we are playing a critical role in the scheme of things. (AR_8, Gyinah)

Public recognition and an improved public image were among the benefits of social media discussed by the participants. Two participants commented that social media publicity could improve the public image of Ghanaian public archives and give archival institutions more recognition.

**Communication and information dissemination platform.**

The participants explained how the PRAAD could utilize social media in both its communications and provision of reference services. Five participants stated that social media could enable archives to engage their clients and respond to their requests and inquiries. Some participants held the view
that social media provides local and international clients with information about Ghanaian archives and their collections before they decide to travel to an archive:

So, for somebody to travel from a distance to an archival institution just for information that he may get or not get, it is better to use social media so that somebody far away in Australia or elsewhere need not travel down to Ghana or Accra for that information or to come down and realize the information is not available. (AR_8, Gyinah)

Notwithstanding the benefits participants enumerated above, two participants expressed some reservations about the adoption and use of social media. These participants emphasized the need for caution when using social media, particularly in the context of archives. One participant underlined the uncertainties regarding where the information posted on social media platforms is captured and stored, referring to the platforms’ databases and servers. This lack of clarity raised concerns about the security of sensitive information shared on social media. Another participant recognized that although social media offers benefits, it also comes with problems. This acknowledgment highlights the importance of understanding and managing the potential risks associated with archives’ use of social media.

The study revealed significant insights into the advantages and challenges of the Archives Division’s Facebook account. Seven respondents highlighted the positive impact of the account, emphasizing its ability to attract global followers, generate comments, and elicit inquiries from interested individuals. Facebook also helped staff of the Archives Division respond to client requests and disseminate vital information about the PRAAD’s events and programs:

We are also on Facebook which is a social media platform. I think we are excelling ourselves well and we are building much over there. We have quite a number of our clients contacting us through our Facebook page and making request on the page. Sometimes they even respond to their request through the same medium so that is one aspect of the social media platform that we are excelling ourselves on. Sometimes our events that we intend to organize, we also try to put it across on the social media platform, where we expect that those of our friends or our clients who are on the platform will have access to such information. (AR_9, Goodwill)

Despite these clear advantages of the Facebook account, the study identified certain challenges. A prominent issue was the lack of reliable, high-speed internet connectivity, which negatively affected the operation of the Facebook account. One respondent reported resorting to the use of personal data to respond to Facebook inquiries due to a slow internet connection. Additionally, the individual managing the Facebook account faced difficulties juggling that responsibility with other duties, which resulted in an inconsistent management of the account:

For instance, the person who is managing our Facebook account has other duties and responsibilities so he cannot be there all the time to keep the Facebook running. He goes there once a while to visit the site to see what is happening and then respond to it. So, clients coming to request social media platforms, yes, they do but it is not everything that we can do because the resources are not there. (AR_1, Benson)
External Pressure

Customer demands.

Another interesting theme was customer expectations and demands for the adoption and use of social media by the public archives. Nine participants stated that the considerable pressure and numerous requests to adopt and use social media originated from clients. According to some of the participants, this pressure led to the creation of the organization’s Facebook account. However, participants noted that most of the requests and recommendations originated from young clients and clients from abroad:

Yes, they do, and it was one of the requests that led to the search room creating the Facebook account. Some of them recommend other social media platforms to us but because we do not use them sometimes when they talk the only thing, I tell them is “I hear.” They do ask most of the times. . . . [T]he older generation look for information on land disputes and chieftaincy disputes. They are not so keen about the social media but the younger ones and those who have to travel from other countries to this place are very interested in the use of social media. They made search inquiries before they come here so when they come, they know what they are about. So, I think the older people would understand the importance of social media as time goes on. (AR_1, Benson)

There have been some clients who ask us, “Are you guys on Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, and those kinds of things?” Maybe they would not come and tell you officially that please go on Snapchat, Instagram, etc. For a client to ask, “Are you on this or that platform?” it means that they expect you to be there so that they can interact with you over there; so indirectly, they are making those requests. (AR_3, King)

Organizational Readiness

Financial resources.

All the participants lamented the PRAAD’s pitiful financial state. They noted that the Government of Ghana was the main funder of the country’s public archives. However, budgetary allocations to the institution were woefully inadequate. Therefore, eight (62%) of the participants held the opinion that the PRAAD’s poor financial state would negatively impact its effective adoption and use of social media. For example, five participants complained about the lack of funding for adequate electrical power to run the institution:

The budget allocation that this department gets is nothing to write home about. Normal stationery we cannot sometimes afford to buy. For instance, electricity credit is always an issue. (AR_5, Naki)

Yes, we do, we buy prepaid, and ideally, we are supposed to use our air conditioners but because of financial problem if we use our air conditioners from Monday to Friday the next week, we might not get electricity. So that is a big challenge. Electricity is a big problem, and we are hoping that things will turn around. (AR_1, Benson)
IT resources.

Eleven participants indicated that the public archives were inundated with challenges, including outdated computers and the lack of relevant computing accessories, unreliable and slow internet connectivity, and a poorly resourced ICT Unit. Some of the participants called for a retooling of the institution with updated computers, quality scanning and imaging equipment, laptops, cameras, modems, and equipment that could provide an uninterrupted power supply. Participants attributed the slow and unreliable internet access to the low-bandwidth internet connectivity. In their opinion, the institution lacked the funds for high-speed internet or higher-bandwidth connectivity:

As it stands now, we are operating on a very low bandwidth to the extent that the slightest of traffic, you can’t interact. You have to wait until later in the day when most people have gone home before you can quickly access and actually address most of the requests that come in on social media platforms.” (AR_6, Stephen)

It is very poor. Let me say it all comes back to the financial aspect because connectivity deals with bandwidth. So, the more you purchase the bandwidth the faster your connectivity becomes but at the moment we are using one-megabyte bandwidth for the whole institution. (AR_2, Ashraf)

Human resources.

Nine participants stated that they had not received professional training on social media use. They therefore emphasized the importance of and need for staff training on social media etiquette, guidelines, and promotion and marketing. The participants expressed two positions regarding staff training. Eleven participants expressed the belief that it was necessary to train a select group of staff members to manage the public archives’ social media accounts. They maintained that this team should have the sole responsibility for posting updates, events, and announcements and handling interactions with clients. Whereas many of the participants held the opinion that such training should be limited to a designated team, two participants maintained that all the staff members should receive training on the use of social media to promote the archives:

At the end of the day, it should not be an expert team or a one-man thing. At the end of the day every staff should be equipped or maybe have knowledge of whatever will go on so that if the expert team is not there wherever we find ourselves can also give out our best service. (AR_2, Ashraf)

From what I have seen once in a while a staff posts something on social media but there should be dedicated trained staff or team to post content on the social media platforms every day. I don’t think we are there. (AR_9, Goodwill)

Another training issue identified by the participants was the need for an expert to provide the requisite training. Six participants were pessimistic about the competence of the in-house IT staff to carry out the training. However, these participants added that it would be difficult to secure funding for the services of a social media expert.
**Guidelines and policies.**

Eleven (85%) of the participants acknowledged that the PRAAD had no formal social media policies or guidelines. Consequently, the public archives’ social media activities were not formally regulated:

So, these are some of the things we should look at when it comes into full operation. We should also have a crisis control policy or something that will guide social media use. Because once you start using Facebook or any other social media, you need policy to govern it. Social media can be a friend and same time can be an enemy if you do not do things well. (AR_1, Benson)

In fact, you know a policy is a management document. Usually, it is management document that gives directives as to how we should do certain things within the institution, the dos and don’ts will also be there. Honestly speaking, ever since I came here, I have never seen a policy directive on how we should use social media as individual or as staff. I am yet to sight one. (AR_3, King)

**Discussion**

Despite the potential of social media use to promote archival institutions and improve the understanding and awareness of archives, there are scholarly discussions about why some archival institutions are unwilling or hesitant to implement social media. However, such discussions exhibit a limited understanding of organizational readiness to adopt social media and the challenges of adoption. Our study used the EDI adoption model to explain the challenges of social media adoption faced by the PRAAD. In the perceived benefit dimension, improved understanding and recognition of the relative advantage that adoption of social media can provide increase the likelihood of adoption.35 This study’s findings showed that the majority of the participants appeared to have a strong understanding and awareness of the benefits of the adoption of social media by the public archives and thus favored the integration of social media into the PRAAD’s operations. This finding partly aligns with those of Saurombe’s study, which revealed that a majority of the directors of national archives in South Africa recognized that social media could enable the archives to reach a wider audience, despite not utilizing it in their archives.36

Our study’s participants discussed social media as a publicity tool for the PRAAD. They noted that public appreciation and awareness of the PRAAD and its services were low. According to the participants, the PRAAD houses vital records and archives that are of immense value to Ghana, yet very few citizens are aware of or patronize the PRAAD. As a result, vital archival resources tend to be underutilized due to low levels of patronage and awareness, leading to decreased funding and revenue generation for the institution. This is not surprising, because previous studies have reported that there is little public awareness of the PRAAD.37 These studies have noted that social media

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35 Chwelos, Benbasat, and Dexter, “Empirical Test of an EDI Adoption Model”; Iacovou, Benbasat, and Dexter, “Electronic Data Interchange and Small Organizations.”
36 Saurombe, “Taking Archives to the People.”
37 Asamoah, Akussah, and Mensah, “Funding Memory Institutions in Ghana”; Yeboah, “Poor Record Keeping in Public Institutions”; Marty, “Public Records Administration and Archives Department in Cape Coast, Ghana.”
could be used to create awareness and improve the public image of the PRAAD and consequently increase its recognition, clientele, patronage, and revenue generation. This finding corroborates those of previous studies that have reported that social media has been utilized to successfully publicize and promote archival institutions.\(^\text{38}\)

Our study’s participants maintained that the Ghanaian public archives could use social media in their communications and in their provision of reference services. This belief echoes previous studies that have reported that social media can facilitate archives’ interactions with potential and existing users.\(^\text{39}\) Interestingly, participants held the opinion that social media could serve as a platform on which users could access the PRAAD’s collection and contact information. This is unsurprising, because when we were conducting the study, the PRAAD did not have a functioning website on which this information could be found.

External pressure from suppliers and clients appeared to be a very important factor for adoption.\(^\text{40}\) This finding echoes the situation in this study, in which a majority of the participants indicated that they had received numerous requests from clients for the PRAAD to adopt social media. Those client requests led to the creation of a Facebook account for the Reference and Repository Unit. This finding is consistent with Samouelian’s study, which reported that patrons or users were the driving force of social media adoption by many U.S. archives.\(^\text{41}\)

Interestingly, participants noted that customer requests for social media adoption and use originated from young clients and clients from abroad. Most users of social media applications, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, and Tumblr, are young adults, who tend to be technologically savvy.\(^\text{42}\) Therefore, it is unsurprising that young clients requested the adoption of social media by the PRAAD. Moreover, when we were conducting the study, the PRAAD did not have a website on which its contact information (email address, telephone numbers, and digital address) and information about its services and collections, such as finding aids, indexes, policies and guidelines for accessing collections, and reading-room rules and procedures, could be found. The absence of a website may have led to the requests from foreign clients. This finding suggests that the PRAAD should improve its reference, promotion, and outreach activities on social media in a way that aligns with clients’ preferences and demands. Doing so would enable the PRAAD to target the various segments of its clientele using their preferred medium of communication.

Organizations with high levels of readiness are likely to adopt and integrate EDI into their operations.\(^\text{43}\) In this study, even though participants exhibited a keen interest in social media adoption, it emerged that the PRAAD’s readiness to adopt and use social media was inadequate. Our findings revealed that the PRAAD relied on the Government of Ghana for all or most of its

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38 Green, “Utilizing Social Media to Promote Special Collections”; Hager, “To Like or Not to Like.”
39 Duff, Johnson, and Cherry, “Reaching out, Reaching in”; Gorzalski, “Examining User-Created Description”; Green, “Utilizing Social Media to Promote Special Collections”; Kriesberg, “Increasing Access in 140 Characters or Less.”
41 Samouelian, “Embracing Web 2.0.”
42 Duggan et al., “Social Media Update 2014”; Ilakkuvan et al., “Patterns of Social Media Use.”
funding but that budgetary allocation to the institutions was woefully inadequate. For instance, participants lamented the lack of funding for adequate electrical power to run the institution. This finding corroborates those of previous studies that have described the various financial challenges faced by the PRAAD, including inadequate budgetary allocation, inadequate revenue generation, and difficulties in accessing the allocated funds.44 The PRAAD’s lack of financial resources seems to be the fundamental challenge from which most of its other challenges stem. This challenge has implications for the funding and provision of the resources that would enable the institution’s effective implementation and use of social media. Hopman, Saurombe, and Garaba’s research identified financial constraints and budgetary limitations as significant obstacles to the adoption of social media by archival institutions.45

Successful social media adoption and use by archival institutions necessitates adequate equipment and hardware, such as scanners, cameras, computers with advanced processing capability, and good internet connectivity.46 This study found that the PRAAD had inadequate hardware and equipment. Participants mentioned that although the PRAAD had internet connectivity, the connection was poor, unreliable, and slow due to its low bandwidth. This finding confirms a previous study’s conclusion that the PRAAD’s internet connectivity was slow and unreliable.47 Erratic and slow internet connectivity will pose a major challenge to the PRAAD’s social media activity. Because patrons will be communicating with the PRAAD in real-time chats or conversations, reliable, high-speed internet connectivity will be required to ensure timely feedback to customers.

Among the factors that contribute to organizational readiness is the availability of staff with expertise and competence in social media.48 This study’s participants indicated that they had not received any professional training in the use of social media. Although many social media applications are easy for moderately computer-literate users to set up and navigate, specialist training is needed for proper and effective implementation at the institutional level.49 The majority of the participants acknowledged their need for training on issues such as social media marketing and etiquette and how to conduct archives-related activities on social media platforms. This is not unexpected, because it appears that their social media experience was limited to creating and managing their personal social media accounts, which is entirely different from managing the social media accounts of a corporate institution.

Social media policies and guidelines are crucial to supporting and guiding organizations’ strategic social media implementation.50 This study found that the PRAAD had no existing policies or guidelines for social media use. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have reported a lack of social media policies.51 The lack of social media policies and guidelines implies that the

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45 Hopman, “Social Media Use in Archives and Special Collections”; Saurombe, “Taking Archives to the People”; Garaba, “Availing the Liberation Struggle Heritage.”
46 Green, “Utilizing Social Media to Promote Special Collections.”
48 Iacovou, Benbasat, and Dexter, “Electronic Data Interchange and Small Organizations: Adoption and Impact of Technology.”
49 Green, “Utilizing Social Media to Promote Special Collections.”
50 Purser, “Using Social Media in Local Government.”
51 Hopman, “Social Media Use in Archives and Special Collections”; Mosweu, “Use of Social Media Platforms for Increased Access and Visibility.”
PRAAD’s social media accounts were being operated without any formal oversight. Because employees and users were not guided by any policies or guidelines, they were prone to making various blunders that could result in serious reputational damage to the PRAAD. The absence of policies and guidelines makes it difficult to hold employees accountable for such mistakes, and it may burden employees with concerns about being unfairly held responsible for scandals that could arise from mistakes in the use of social media accounts. This absence of policies partially supports the conclusions of Saurombe’s study, which identified the absence of social media policies as a major factor contributing to the reluctance of directors of national archives in South Africa to adopt social media.52

Limitations and Future Research

In view of this study’s limitations, its findings should be interpreted with caution. First, the study relied solely on the reports of staff members of the Archives Division; it did not include reports of staff members of the Records Center. Future studies should include the perspectives of staff of the Records Center of PRAAD. Moreover, the study was limited to the PRAAD’s Head Office, located in Accra, Ghana’s capital city, leaving out seven regional offices. To develop a holistic view of the PRAAD’s readiness to adopt social media and the challenges of social media use, future studies should employ quantitative methods and include a large number of participants from the regional offices. Despite these limitations, this study offers a significant exploration of the readiness dimensions of social media adoption and provides valuable insights for archival institutions aiming to adopt social media effectively. The study emphasizes that aligning organizational resources, addressing technological constraints, and providing staff training enhance archival institutions’ readiness to successfully implement social media.

Conclusion and Implications

This study explored the PRAAD’s readiness to adopt social media and the challenges it has faced in doing so. We found that there was considerable customer demand for social media adoption by the PRAAD, which indicated that clients were interested in engaging with the PRAAD on social media platforms. The interviews revealed that the majority of the participants had a substantial understanding and awareness of the benefits of social media adoption by the Ghanaian public archives and that they thus supported its integration into the PRAAD’s operations. However, it came to light that the PRAAD’s readiness to adopt and make effective use of social media was inadequate due to the challenges involved, such as insufficient ICT infrastructure, lack of adequate financial resources, lack of staff training in the professional use of social media, and lack of social media policies and guidelines.

These major findings have implications for resource allocation and the creation of social media policies. First, there is a need to establish social media policies that will guide and regulate employees’ and customers’ social media activities. Second, staff members need to be trained on the organizational use of social media for promotion and advocacy. Third, the Ghanaian government and the PRAAD need to invest funds in IT infrastructure to facilitate the adoption and use of social media.

52 Saurombe, “Taking Archives to the People.”
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APPENDIX: Semi-structured Interview Guide

I. Background
   a. Can you share some information about yourself, including your age, highest academic qualification, and your tenure of work in PRAAD?

II. Perceived Benefits from Social Media Adoption
   a. What potential benefits do you foresee social media bringing to the activities of PRAAD?

III. External Pressure (User Demand)
   a. Could you describe any instance(s) when patrons or visitors have expressed interest in adopting or suggested that you utilize social media platforms?
   b. How did these interactions unfold, and what were their perspectives on the potential use of social media in your context?

IV. Organizational Readiness
   a. How would you describe the financial state of PRAAD?
   b. In your view, how will the present financial state of PRAAD impact on the adoption of social media?
   c. Could you explain the policies and laws that guide the use of social media in PRAAD?
   d. How relevant do you consider social media platform training for staff at PRAAD?
   e. How would you describe the sophistication of the computer technology in PRAAD?
   f. What is the quality of your internet connectivity in your organization?
   g. What potential barriers might affect or impede social media adoption?

V. Conclusion
   a. Is there anything else you would like to share about social media use in PRAAD?