Unlocking the Potential of Facebook as a Versatile Platform for Knowledge Sharing

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ABSTRACT

Social network sites, most notably Facebook, have fundamentally transformed the way information is transferred, received, and shared by individuals and organisations. This article explores the diverse contexts in which Facebook is utilised as a knowledge-sharing instrument, along with the key challenges encountered in adopting Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument. It also indicates the gaps in adopting Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument. In a systematic literature review, 400 articles accomplishing the research objectives were identified. The findings revealed that Facebook can be used in different contexts. Greater awareness of Facebook's versatility as a platform for knowledge sharing across various domains is recommended. This article also advises that the challenges related to cost, time investment and technical expertise be addressed, and emphasises the need for education and training.

KEYWORDS

Information transfer; Facebook; knowledge management; social media (SM); Social Network Sites (SNS); Systematic Literature Review (SLR)

INTRODUCTION

Since the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), human socialisation has taken on a new dimension by shifting from a physical to a digital means (Caruso, 2018). Several new communication channels have enhanced human communication (Bolton et al., 2020). Since the introduction of the social networking service (SNS), sometimes called the social networking site, platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Skype and others, have enhanced instantaneous interaction between two or more people (Tayo et al., 2019) by allowing them to share texts, photographs, videos and audio materials. SNSs enable users to establish connections with other users who share their interests and backgrounds (Hayes, 2022). Besides sharing, reviewing, reposting, and commenting on users' digital self-expression, SNSs allow sending and receiving information across contexts, continents and cultures.

SNSs are changing how teaching and learning are facilitated in an educational setting by enhancing connection, communication and participation (Alaslani & Alandejani, 2020; Ellahi, 2018). Educators can now create online learning links and use a platform such as Facebook, to discuss ideas, ask questions and share experiences to discover new information (Simamora, 2020). Facebook has also contributed to knowledge management and knowledge sharing. Because it facilitates lecturer-student interaction during teaching and learning (Chugh & Ruhi, 2018; Olaleye et al., 2020), Facebook is immensely popular in higher education as a platform providing easy communication options to learn and share educational materials (Börekci & Aydin, 2020). In addition, Facebook facilitates business and e-commerce (Perifanou et al., 2021), knowledge management and knowledge sharing (Karaoglan Yilmaz, 2019), health management (Tseng et al., 2022) and disaster management (Eaton et al., 2021), among other things. Because it is instrumental in disseminating digital resources, sending comments, transmitting knowledge, and communicating, Facebook has advanced teaching and learning considerably (Niu, 2019).

To understand the current state of research on the use of Facebook for sharing knowledge, the researchers conducted, in Scopus, an SLR of research articles published between 2017 and 2022. This study was guided by three research objectives. First, the study aimed to explore the various contexts in which Facebook serves as a platform for knowledge management and sharing. Second, it sought to identify and analyse the key challenges of adopting Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument. Lastly, the study attempted to uncover the gaps in using Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument and to indicate areas for improvement.

To achieve the research objectives of this study, a total of 400 articles identified in Scopus were downloaded and systematically analysed to get a comprehensive picture of the context of the study, the methodologies, and the limitations and gaps that were identified. The findings established the relevance of Facebook in educating students and informing not only academics, but also businesspersons, the government, the health sector, research communities, and other professionals. This paper contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the use of Facebook

for knowledge sharing by identifying the different contexts in which Facebook is used, as well as the limitations and gaps in using Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument. The subsequent sections will outline the background to the study, indicate the research methodology, and state the results, the recommendations, and the conclusions.

Information Diffusion Theory

Information Diffusion Theory is a theoretical framework focusing on how information spreads within a social system (Fu et al., 2019). According to Zhang et al. (2021), it investigates the systems, procedures, and factors that affect the sharing and utilisation of information or knowledge among individuals or groups. Xiaobing et al. (2021) maintain that the Information Diffusion Theory explains information sharing and dissemination on a platform. This theory also explores the factors contributing to the spread of knowledge, along with the role of influential users, network structures, and content characteristics (Banerjee et al., 2019). Influential individuals have a significant impact on information dissemination because they are trusted and respected. Understanding the role of influential users on Facebook can help identify the key actors who promote and facilitate the dissemination of knowledge (Pulido et al., 2020).

Additionally, the network structure of Facebook plays an important role in information diffusion (Zhu et al., 2018). Different network structures such as dense clusters, loosely connected networks or centralised hubs, can influence the speed and extent of information spread. Analysing the network structure allows information users to understand the pathways through which knowledge is transmitted and the potential barriers or accelerators to diffusion (Pratt et al., 2021).

Content characteristics also play a role in information diffusion on Facebook. Kim and Hastak (2018) affirm that the type, format, relevance, and emotional appeal of information can affect the likelihood of it being shared and adopted by users. Understanding these content characteristics can help in crafting knowledge-sharing content that is likely to be disseminated by the Facebook community.

By means of the Information Diffusion Theory, information users can comprehend the dynamics of information sharing on Facebook. Strategies such as identifying prominent users, enhancing network structures, and producing interesting and pertinent content, can be employed to improve the diffusion and adoption of knowledge on a platform.

In conclusion, the Information Diffusion Theory offers a valuable framework for analysing the flow of information within a social system. It provides useful insights into the processes and variables that influence the spread and adoption of knowledge on Facebook. Researchers can utilise this framework to enhance knowledge dissemination on the platform and encourage more effective information sharing among users by examining the role of influential users, network architecture, and content features. Additionally, this framework can assist in understanding the various contexts in which Facebook can be used to share knowledge and explore the challenges and current gaps limiting Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review conducted for this study provides information relating to the development and uses of social media and Facebook in particular. In addition, the roles that SNSs play to enhance knowledge management and sharing will be examined.

Social media

Social media refers to websites and programs that make it easy to share information instantaneously (Gretzel, 2018). According to Kumar and Nanda (2019), the term "social media" can apply to any internet communication tool that enables users to instantly generate information, share material and interact with others. Real-time sharing of images, ideas and events through social media has revolutionised peoples' personal and professional lives (Duong, 2020; Iqbal et al., 2022). Numerous websites and mobile applications (apps) fall under the category of social media. They include social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn (Kakkar, 2020). Other social media networks include media sharing networks (Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube); discussion forums (Reddit, Quora and Digg); bookmarking and content curation sites (Pinterest and Flipboard); consumer review networks (Yelp, Zomato and TripAdvisor); blogging and publishing networks (WordPress, Tumblr and Medium); social shopping networks (Polyvore, Etsy and Fancy); interest-based networks (Goodreads, Houzz and Last.fm); and knowledge-sharing networks (Kakkar, 2020).

In 1987, the National Science Foundation Network's introduction of the NSFNET, an American nationwide digital network, marked the birth of the internet as we know it today (Stevens, 2021). Ten years later, in 1997, the first social media networking platform, SixDegrees, was introduced (Rovira-Collado & Mateo, 2019). SixDegrees gave users the option to add their profiles and friends. It was invented by Andrew Weinreich roughly seven years before Facebook (Alston, 2020). Wells et al. (2019) affirm that this social media network's rise to prominence in 1999 sparked off a social media craze that endured to this day. Interaction was the raison d'être of social media during these years (Manca, 2020).

The recent trends in social media usage, particularly in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, have altered how people communicate, collaborate, share information and live their lives (Bodrunova, 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Urbonavicius et al., 2021). A significant number of internet users are so enthusiastic about social media that they have incorporated these sites in their daily routines (Kumar & Nanda, 2019). The three social networks on which students; businesspeople; professionals; government; and other stakeholders spend most of their time, are Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook (Shane-Simpson et al., 2018). These social media sites not only facilitate engagement beyond distance and time, but also reinforce human self-expression and memory-making by regularly presenting users with new challenges by means of algorithmic scheduling (Zheng et al., 2018; Schemer et al., 2021). Having been channelled to aid teaching and learning, collaborations and knowledge sharing, social media sites have played an increasingly important part in education, professional engagement, businesses, governance, and disaster management in recent years (Kumar & Nanda, 2019; Schmuck, 2021).

Facebook

Facebook is a social media platform that makes it easy for people, organisations, institutions, and businesses to communicate and share content online (Appel et al., 2020). It was developed by Mark Zuckerberg at Harvard University in 2004 with the intention to serve college students (Tien et al., 2019). By 2006 anyone older than 13 with a working e-mail address was able to sign up for Facebook (Garcia et al., 2018). Currently, Facebook has nearly 2,93 billion active monthly users (Statista, 2022), making it the most widely used and most popular SNS (Chin et al., 2022). Gibbs et al. (2019) assert that the main reasons for using Facebook include making friends; maintaining relationships; involvement in a virtual community; passing time; and accessing your own entertainment. Yau and Reich (2019) add peer conversation to the uses of Facebook. Individuals create Facebook profiles to connect, interact, share knowledge, collaborate, and meet others who share similar interests (Chin et al., 2022).

Facebook has been used as a medium of teaching and learning in various academic settings and has proven itself over the years (Slim & Hafedh, 2019). Shiau et al. (2018) affirm that Facebook is the most popular social networking platform among college students. Chin et al. (2022) concur that its many uses make Facebook extremely popular among college and university students. Raza et al. (2020) maintain that 71% of Facebook users in the United States are college students. Seeing that virtually every student has a Facebook account, educators could take advantage of it and use Facebook as a teaching and learning tool (Vázquez-Cano & Díez-Arcón, 2021). Collaborative environments are fostered in higher education institutions when educators use Facebook to help students share their knowledge on projects (Dwivedi et al., 2020). According to Namaziandost and Nasri (2019), students who are aware of the advantages of SNSs also believe that Facebook can get rid of communication barriers outside the classroom as they can contact their lecturers or tutors any time from various locations. Thanks to their Facebook accounts, students can inform their friends of their status; see their friends' statuses; chat; send private messages; publish; watch; tag others; comment on photographs or videos; and play games (Dwivedi et al., 2020). They can also get clarification or resolve issues on the virtual platforms created on Facebook (Naeem, 2019; De León & Trilling, 2021). Bal and Bicen (2017) claim that students using Facebook are not only motivated and satisfied, but also achieve their goals. Because Facebook promotes cooperative learning and interaction with lecturers, it encourages student-centred education (Vate-U-Lan, 2020). Orioque (2021) and Kim et al. (2021) believe that communication, collaboration, and resource or material sharing are the main educational uses of Facebook.

Businesses use the Facebook communication platform to encourage behavioural engagements regardless of distance or time (Dwivedi et al., 2020). Facebook's digital trail and openness can also help organisations improve their knowledge management operations (Schmitt, 2018). One of Facebook's greatest advantages is the ability to target a certain population through paid campaigns and adverts. Kim and Kim (2018) submit that Facebook helps smaller businesses market their products, improve their customer service, and increase

their presence and sales. Moreover, a Facebook business page can be a useful marketing strategy for small businesses as it increases their online visibility (Lupo, 2018) and enables two-way contact with their customers, which will boost customer service and feedback (Schenk, 2018). Lee et al. (2018) assert that the messaging service of Facebook enables businesses to communicate with consumers directly, share information, gather client input, and identify areas for development and improvement.

Knowledge management and knowledge sharing

In today's digital world, knowledge management is considered the lifeblood of organisations and critical to their survival (Ochieng et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2023). According to Bello (2018), the concept of knowledge management originated in the 1970s because of the need to convey information to stakeholders. Books by management theorists and practitioners such as Peter Drucker and Paul Strassman, boosted the trend. These books, according to Bello (2018), examined how knowledge and information can be used as beneficial organisational resources. Another management expert, Dorothy Leonard-Barton of the Harvard Business School, contributed immensely to the theory of knowledge management and the evolution of its practice by distinguishing various dimensions of managing knowledge (González-Valiente et al., 2019). Knowledge management can be defined as gathering, organising, sharing and analysing knowledge to make it easily accessible to people (North & Kumta, 2020). Hislop et al. (2018) affirm that knowledge management has improved the creation and dissemination of information, which, in turn, have boosted personal and organisational competence.

Farooq (2018) asserts that managing knowledge is as crucial to institutions and organisations as managing their financial assets. Organisations rely on knowledge, which eventually evolves into a resource and serves as a crucial success factor and a competitive advantage (Ganguly et al., 2019). Organisations create value from their intellectual and information-based assets through knowledge management. Mazorodze and Buckley (2020) opine that the benefits of having a knowledge-intensive organisation include not only the efficient and intelligent use of the knowledge, but also an increase in productivity, performance and innovation. To enhance organisational synergy, knowledge management is just as crucial as other organisational resources and assets (Bashir & Farooq, 2019).

Cave drawings dating from 15 000 BC represent one of the oldest instances of knowledge sharing. Man's means of documentation evolved from pictures into alphabets and from cave walls into scrolls (Castilleja, 2020). By the end of the last century, the internet made instantaneous, worldwide communication and information sharing possible in a variety of ways, including socially networked videos, sophisticated text databases and online learning tools (Castilleja, 2020). For many years, professionals did not prioritise information sharing. But by the end of the 20th century, they began to realise the significance of knowledge management and sharing (Nguyen et al., 2019). Organisations having systems in place for exchanging crucial information with their personnel, are said to be engaging in knowledge sharing (Allameh, 2018). According to Bhatti et al. (2021), knowledge sharing is the act of transferring or disseminating

information from one person, group or organisation to another. Allameh (2018) views the exchange of knowledge, skills and experiences among people as knowledge sharing. Aboelmaged (2018) affirms that knowledge sharing not only helps businesses keep their intellectual assets, but also boosts productivity by ensuring that employees have access to information or knowledge when they need it.

The aim of knowledge sharing is to disseminate vital information, thereby improving organisational and institutional competence (Al-Kurdi et al., 2020). Knowledge sharing influences more than just the interchange of information. It also affects power dynamics, interpersonal interactions, influence models, and how people view their roles in society (Ahmed et al., 2018). Maintaining relationships between people, especially those who work remotely or in hybrid arrangements, is one of several benefits of sharing knowledge in the workplace (Tønnessen et al., 2021). It also improves work output, saves money that would have been spent on leadership development, training and knowledge retention, fosters a sense of community and promotes a healthy work environment (Mohajan, 2019). Besides stimulating high-level planning and innovation, it also increases efficiency, productivity, teamwork and employee happiness in higher education (Farrukh et al., 2019). According to Brache et al. (2021), knowledge sharing is a "contact sport", meaning that it functions best when people come together to discuss ideas and discover new opportunities. Social media has facilitated knowledge management thanks to the relevance of information; the storage of data; the creation of a virtual context; collaboration; the accessibility and usability of available information; reporting dynamics; and the trust it inspires (Ciampi et al., 2020).

Literature synthesis

Owing to social media, organisations can improve their knowledge management and knowledge-sharing practices and enhance competence through social interaction (Ahmed et al., 2019). Social media has enabled organisations and businesses to share information and work together (Ahmad et al., 2018) by asking questions, posting knowledge and leaving comments (Neeley & Leonardi, 2018). Haro-de-Rosario et al. (2018) affirm that several businesses, including public sector organisations, have adopted social media to share knowledge and increase awareness of their business opportunities. In terms of knowledge management and sharing, the theoretical attributes of social media reveal that efficient utilisation can help to extract and apply knowledge in organisations, particularly in sectors where information silos are likely (Cao & Ali, 2018). Cao and Ali (2018) believe that thanks so social media and the facilitation of knowledge management and knowledge sharing, organisational stakeholders stay connected in more ways than previously thought.

Facebook, as a social media site application, goes beyond the limits of private use. Countless organisations and institutions use it to communicate and share knowledge (Ahmed et al., 2019). Higher education institutions, organisations and businesses' use of Facebook has increased interaction and efficiency (Mishra, 2020). Its use in knowledge management and knowledge-sharing practices has improved document and file transfers through instantaneous

e-mails; collaboration through virtual meetings; and social networking (Berraies et al., 2020). According to Alraja et al. (2020), Facebook has enhanced business enterprises' brand awareness, improved their content marketing, and promoted brand recognition. Finally, Ahmed et al. (2019) contend that using Facebook for knowledge management and sharing has greatly facilitated engagements, information or material sharing, awareness, teaching and learning, and collaboration.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section describes the methodological approach to accomplish the research objectives mentioned in the introduction. The study incorporated all articles related to the phenomenon under investigation. The database selection and eligibility criteria, the search strategy, and the selection criteria applied in this research are explained in the subsequent sections.

Database selection and eligibility criteria

As Scopus is the most authoritative database of peer-reviewed research literature (Elsevier, 2022), this study consulted Scopus as its search database. Only articles dealing with Facebook were considered. Papers, published theses or dissertations, work in progress, and secondary sources were disregarded. Only peer-reviewed, open-access articles published between 2017 and 2022 and written in English qualified.

Search strategy and selection criteria

The Scopus database search options included article titles, keywords or abstracts. The keyword was 'Facebook'. Other search fields such as 'higher education institutions', 'social media', 'knowledge management', and 'knowledge sharing', were added. Owing to the various search fields, 400 articles meeting the search criteria were downloaded. Table 1 presents the summarised inclusion and exclusion criteria of the study.

Table 1.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Articles in full text and open access	Outside the search timeframe
Articles published between 2017 and 2022	Not written in English
Articles are written in English	Not related to the research focus
Articles published in the Scopus database	Duplicated articles
Articles that fall within the scope of the study	

Articles not complying with the inclusion criteria were discarded. Figure 1 presents a flowchart of the articles included in the study.
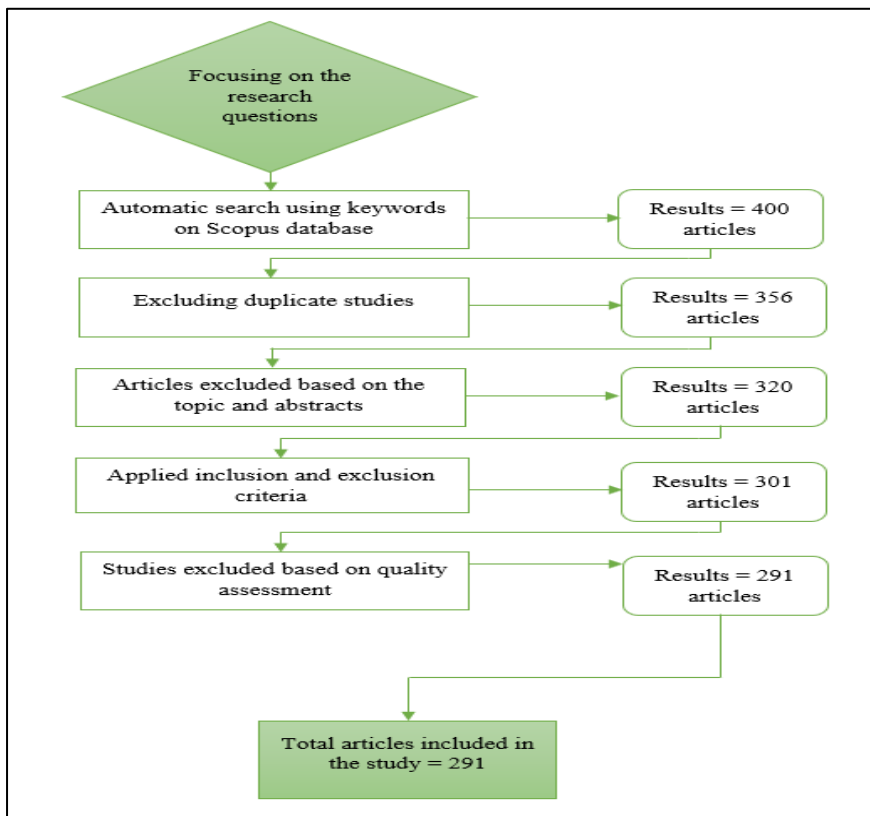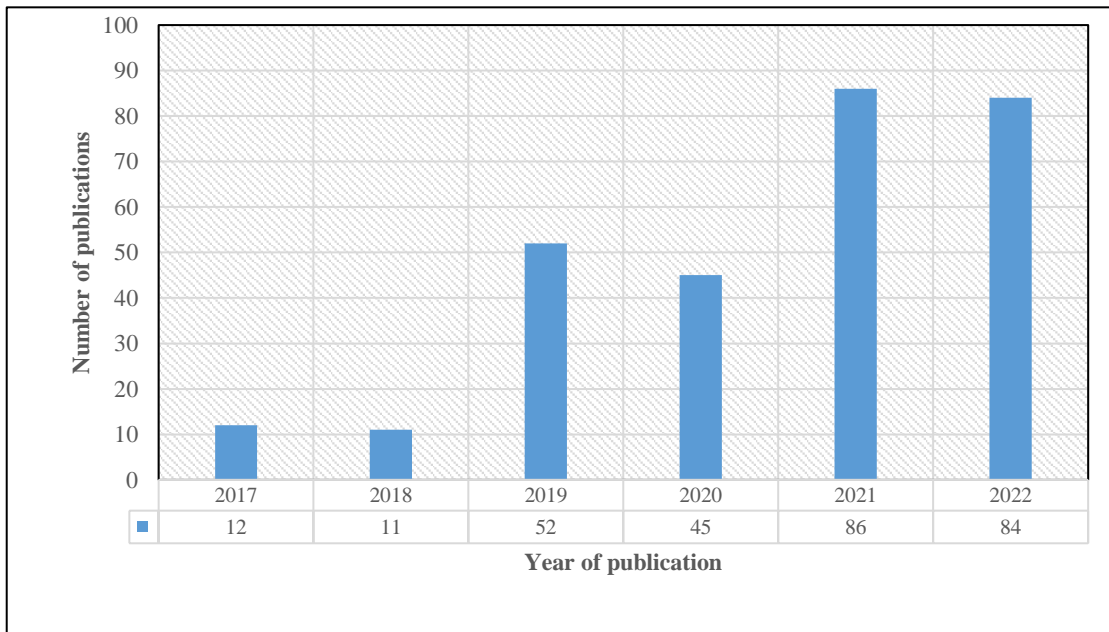
Figure 1.

Flowchart of the articles included in the study

      Figure 1 shows that a total of 400 articles were identified in Scopus. Only 291 articles meeting the inclusion criteria were considered for analysis.

Data extraction and synthesis for SLR

The ATLAS-ti™ 9 software package was used to analyse data based on the themes and categories of the research focus. The themes included the authors of the articles; the year of publication (see figure 2); the continents on which the articles were written (see figure 3); and the research methodologies adopted by the various studies (see figure 4). Thereafter, Microsoft Excel was used to analyse and present the findings. The researchers also utilised ATLAS-ti to go through the 291 articles and identify the various contexts in which Facebook is utilised according to the different authors (see table 1). The researchers, moreover, brought into play this software to identify not only the challenges arising from Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument (see Table 2), but also the gaps in adopting Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument. Free quotations were created and coded and the outputs were generated by means of the ATLAS-ti network diagram.

Figure 2.

Publication numbers by year

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
■	12	11	52	45	86	84

Year of publication

Publication numbers by year (2017–2022)

As to the year of publication, an interesting discovery was made. Figure 2 shows a marked increase (of almost 300%) on the number of Facebook articles published from 2017/2018 to 2019/2020. In 2021, the number of publications again increased by more than 90%, from 45 articles in 2020 to 86 articles in 2021. Considering that the Covid-19 pandemic reached its peak in January 2021 (Ravelo & Jerving, 2022), the continued upwards trend of publications during the pandemic is noteworthy. Although the graph shows that only 84 articles had been published in 2022, it should be noted that the current study considered only Facebook articles published until 6 June 2022. One would expect a notable increase in the number of articles published in 2022.

Publications by continent

The authors also wanted to determine if the Facebook articles were published across the globe or only on certain continents. Figure 3 presents the continents on which the studies had been conducted.

According to figure 3, most articles on Facebook were published in Europe (120), Asia (89) and North America (47). Fewer Facebook articles were published in Africa (15), Australia (15) and South America (5).

Figure 3.

*Articles published by continent*
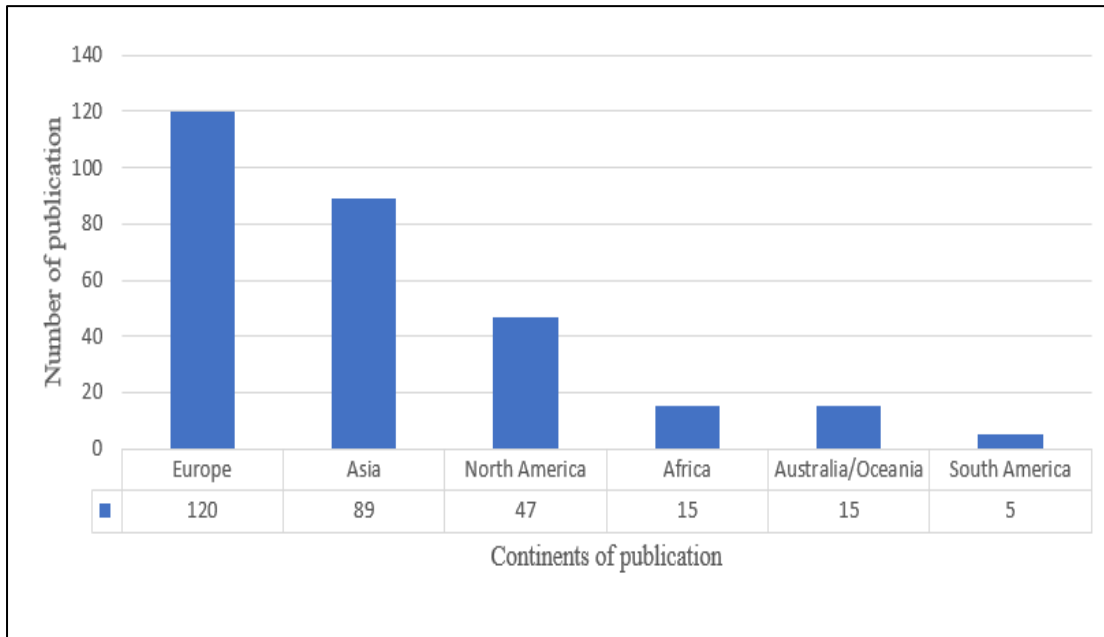
Research methodologies

To determine the methodologies that the authors of the 291 Facebook articles applied, ATLAS.ti was used to search the data set for quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. Figure 4 presents the research methodologies the authors of these articles adopted.

Figure 4.

Research methodologies distribution
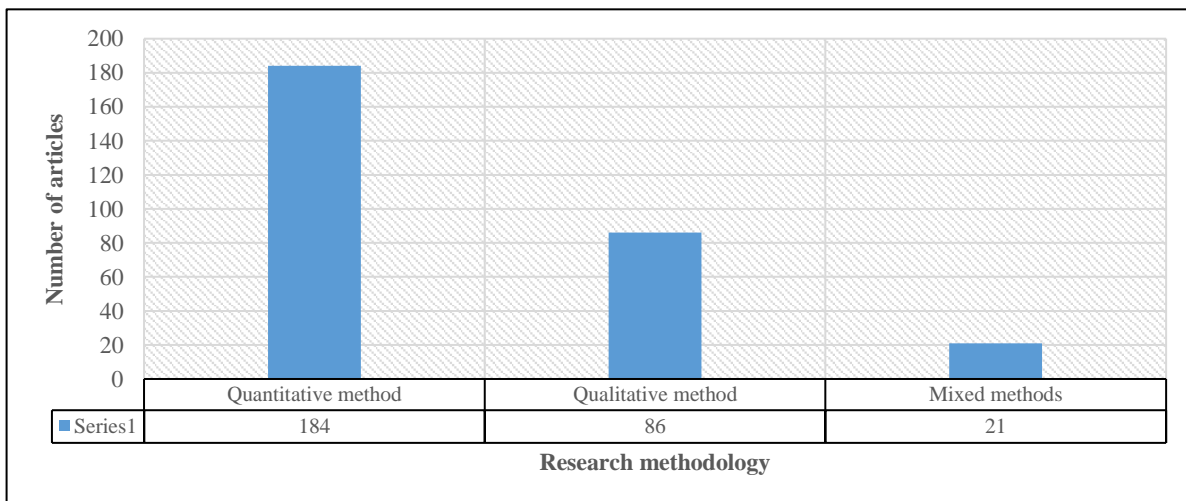
Although several methodologies were applied to study the use of Facebook to share knowledge, figure 4 shows a definite preference for quantitative data collection methods (184). Qualitative (86) and mixed methods (21) came down in favour.

Presentation of research results

This section discusses the findings of the study. The first section presents the categorisation of Facebook as knowledge management and sharing instrument. The second section deals with

the key challenges encountered in adopting Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument, and the last section examines the gaps in adopting Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument.

Research objective 1

The first research objective was to explore the diverse contexts in which Facebook serves as a platform for knowledge sharing. It was found that Facebook can be used in numerous sectors ranging from education, business and e-commerce to disaster management; governance; health management; professional learning; knowledge management; knowledge sharing; leisure; relationship building; virtual community access; and information search. Table 2 describes and explains each sector. In this article, to maintain clarity and relevance, acknowledging that there are additional sources available on the topic, the authors have specifically focused on including the most relevant references to substantiate the uses of Facebook in facilitating communication as highlighted in Tables 2, 3 and 4.

Table 2.

Contexts in which Facebook serves as a knowledge management and sharing instrument

Sectors/contexts identified in the study	Description of the contexts
Education	Facebook is used to facilitate learning in institutions. Students in various geographical locations find it useful (Fähnrich et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2020).
Business/e-commerce	Facebook serves to create awareness of a particular product or several business opportunities (Perifanou et al., 2021; Tien et al., 2019).
Disaster management	Facebook is used to manage a disaster or national crisis (Eaton et al., 2021; Rantasila, 2022).
Governance	Facebook helps to facilitate governance in complex societies (Rantasila, 2022; Van der Vlist et al., 2022).
Health management	Facebook is used to disseminate information or educate citizens on important health issues (Skeens et al., 2022; Tseng et al., 2022).
Professional learning	Facebook facilitates professional learning that benefits people from diverse academic backgrounds (Eaton et al., 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2020).
Knowledge management	Organisations utilise Facebook as a knowledge management instrument (Karaoglan Yilmaz, 2019; Simsek et al., 2020).
Knowledge sharing	Facebook is used as a knowledge sharing instrument to disseminate all sorts of information among stakeholders (Karaoglan Yilmaz, 2019; Simsek et al., 2020; Eaton et al., 2021).
Leisure, relationships, virtual community, information search	Facebook serves to maintain relationships and diffuse important information among users (Simsek et al., 2020; Eaton et al., 2021; Pasquini et al., 2021; Arora et al., 2022; Tseng, 2022).

Research objective 2

This section identifies and analyses the key challenges encountered in adopting Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument. Findings indicate that key challenges include the cost of knowledge sharing; time investment; expertise to handle technicalities; the protection of data privacy; hacking; organisational culture; organisational capability/time management; a lack of internet connection; compliance with laws or regulations; licensing requirements; identifying the right platform to market products or target audiences; distrust; and the usage of codified signals.

Table 3.

Key challenges encountered in adopting Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument (see Appendix)

Research objective 3

This section explores the gaps and areas for improvement in the adoption of Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument. It was found that few articles have been published in Africa. The quantitative and qualitative methods were preferred to mixed methods. In addition, information on Facebook's impact on the facilitation of knowledge sharing is scant.

Table 4.

Gaps in adopting Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument

Gaps found in the study	Description of the gaps
Few articles were published in Africa	According to figure 3, most articles dealing with Facebook were published in Europe (120), Asia (89) and North America (47). Only fifteen were published in Africa, fifteen in Australia and five in South America. This disparity is considered a gap in the use of Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument.
More researchers adopt quantitative and qualitative methods	Figure 4 tabulates the methodologies that have been applied to study the use of Facebook to share knowledge. It is noteworthy that only 21 studies adopted a mixed-methods approach. It is in stark contrast with the quantitative data collection methods adopted in 184 studies and the qualitative methods adopted in 86 studies.
Lack of information on the impact of Facebook on knowledge sharing	The study found that information users in Africa lack vital information on the impact of Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument (Ferenczi et al., 2017; Preston et al., 2021).

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

The authors conducted a SLR analysis and came across evidence of Facebook as a versatile platform for knowledge sharing. According to the reviewed articles, Facebook is often utilised for educational purposes. Fähnrich et al. (2020) identify Facebook as a learning instrument in higher education that can easily be adapted to enable peer interaction; the sharing of a

knowledge base; collaboration with others; teaching and learning; and the sharing of resources. Dwivedi et al. (2020) concur that educators can use Facebook to create collaborative environments in higher education institutions. It can help students communicate and collaborate on projects. Perifanou et al. (2021) assert that besides its educational purposes, Facebook could facilitate e-commerce. In business, it can be used not only to create awareness of a particular product and share information regarding the functions of a new product, but also to advertise new opportunities and products, enhance customer services and sales, and maintain online visibility. Businesses utilise Facebook to facilitate business; promote their brands; establish the interests of potential customers; create business concepts; engage audiences; and generate sales (Tien et al., 2019).

The findings reveal that Facebook is utilised to share information during times of disaster. Eaton et al. (2021) posit that emergency warnings; pleas for assistance or rescue; details of rescue missions; and the phone numbers of rescue teams can be dispersed through Facebook during a disaster. In a similar vein, Rantasila (2022) submits that Facebook facilitates requests for the donation of specific items; the coordination of aid distribution; requests for volunteer work; and feedback about disasters. Facebook is often utilised to issue instantaneous warnings, directions and instant alerts. It also serves as an additional route for emergency services during natural disasters such as storms, flooding or tornadoes (Rantasila, 2022). In the case of governance, Facebook, as a form of social media, assists to exchange crucial information during crises, which is one of its biggest advantages. Governments also employ it to change citizens' bad opinion of service delivery. Facebook enables governments to reach out to citizens, disseminate information about science, health, and services, and collect feedback and suggestions about ways to improve their operations (Van der Vlist et al., 2022).

In health management, Facebook facilitates the exchange of knowledge through discussion forums on healthcare policies and practices (Skeens et al., 2022). On Facebook, medical practitioners encourage healthy habits, interact with the public, and instruct and communicate with patients, caregivers, students, and colleagues (Tseng et al., 2022). Thanks to Facebook, policymakers and healthcare professionals can inform the public about health issues and respond to queries (Skeens et al., 2022). Patients prefer to share their opinions or experiences with one another on Facebook. Laestadius et al. (2022) contend that Facebook can be utilised for stigma reduction, health promotion and education about health hazards. Furthermore, numerous healthcare organisations have created such media to engage the public and enhance communication (Tseng et al., 2022). Another important finding is that Facebook can serve to enhance professional learning. Professionals can use Facebook, as an interactive site, to promote online interactions. Eaton et al. (2021) add that professionals can use Facebook to facilitate discussions, create awareness and differentiate between legitimate news and fake news. Professionals also adopt Facebook as a means to discuss new ideas or debate important concepts; ask questions; exchange stories on concepts; and gain new insights or professional ideas (Eaton et al., 2021).

Facebook, as a knowledge management and sharing instrument, helps to disperse information to employees. Karaoglan Yilmaz (2019) claims that Facebook facilitates data storage; the creation of a virtual context; collaboration; and the accessibility and usability of information. According to Simsek et al. (2020), Facebook can be put into service to access information anytime, anywhere, and automate and standardise the information in reporting dynamics to inspire employee trust. Facebook can also foster relationships between people, especially those who work remotely or in hybrid arrangements (Eaton et al., 2021). As a knowledge-sharing instrument, Facebook improves work output, saves money that would have been spent on leadership development, and fosters a healthy work environment (Pasquini et al., 2021). It further stimulates high-level planning and innovation, and increases efficiency, productivity, teamwork and employee contentment (Karaoglan Yilmaz, 2019; Simsek et al., 2020).

The study further found that Facebook can serve as a platform to make friends; maintain relationships; gain access to a virtual community; pass the time; and entertain oneself. Arora et al. (2022) affirm that Facebook is a social network site where people look for partners, make acquaintances, and establish long-lasting relationships. According to Simsek et al. (2020), Facebook is used not only for leisure, but also for finding and sharing information or improving one's knowledge. Tseng (2022) maintains that Facebook can be utilised to schedule virtual meetings or events, host virtual webinars, public meetings and other activities. This discussion validates that Facebook can be used in different dimensions, which assist individuals, businesses and governments to send and receive various types of information.

The challenges of adopting Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument are numerous. The cost of internet access was identified as a significant challenge. Organisations and users go to all the expense of content creation, advertising and technical resources (Tseng et al., 2022; Rajan et al., 2021). Tomaszek and Muchacka-Cymerman (2021) assert that a great deal of time is invested in managing and maintaining a presence on Facebook, in effecting regular updates, in monitoring interactions, and in responding to queries. The expertise to handle the technicalities of the platform is highlighted by Todorovic (2021) as a challenge for especially individuals and organisations with limited digital skills.

Data privacy and security concerns are crucial challenges, not to mention the risk of hacking and unauthorised access to sensitive information (Perifanou et al., 2021). Sacks et al. (2021) view organisational culture and capability/time management as challenges. Integrating Facebook into existing workflows and ensuring sufficient resources and personnel can be a daunting prospect (Rezende da Cunha Júnior et al., 2019; Simsek et al., 2020). The study also highlighted that limited internet connectivity hinders the effective use of Facebook to share knowledge, particularly in areas with inadequate infrastructure (Todorovic et al., 2021; Simsek et al., 2020).

This study further established that licensing requirements may present legal and compliance challenges, especially when copyright material is shared or certain functionalities

on the platform are put into service (Robertson & Dasoo, 2019). Identifying the right platform to market products and reach a target audience is another challenge because Facebook's algorithms and ever-changing policies can affect visibility and engagement (Fähnrich et al., 2020). Distrust among users is of great concern for Hong and Gardner (2019) in that it can hamper knowledge-sharing efforts. Except for that, codified signals may render the transfer of information ineffective (Todorovic, 2021).

The fact that the researchers found relatively few articles dealing with Africa implies a gap in the literature about the use of Facebook for knowledge sharing on this continent. It highlights the need for research on the unique challenges and opportunities African organisations and users encounter with Facebook as a knowledge-sharing platform. Another gap is the imbalance between the use of quantitative and qualitative research methods in studying Facebook's role in knowledge sharing. Not discounting the strengths of both methods in any way, the mixed-methods approach should give a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of Facebook in facilitating knowledge sharing. This finding suggests the importance of a mixed-method approach to capture a broader range of insights and perspectives. Furthermore, the study reveals a lack of information on the actual impact of Facebook on knowledge sharing. Although the platform is widely used and recognised as a potential medium for knowledge exchange, many more empirical studies assessing the outcomes and effects of Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument need to be conducted (Ferenczi et al., 2017; Preston et al., 2021). This knowledge gap highlights the importance of research that measures and evaluates the impact, benefits, and drawbacks of utilising Facebook for knowledge-sharing purposes.

This study aligns with the principles of Information Diffusion Theory as it posits that the dissemination and adoption of information are influenced by various factors, including the characteristics of the information, the individuals involved, and the channels used for communication (Zhang et al., 2021). According to this study, Facebook serves as a channel for the diffusion of knowledge across different sectors and contexts. The study examines how information is adopted in education; business; disaster management; governance; health management; professional learning; knowledge management and sharing; leisure; relationship building; virtual communities; and information search contexts. It also explores the diverse uses of Facebook for knowledge-sharing purposes. This coordinates with Information Diffusion Theory, which emphasises the role of channels such as social media platforms like Facebook, in facilitating the dissemination and adoption of information (Xiaobing et al., 2021). The challenges of using Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument such as cost; time investment; expertise; data privacy; and organisational culture, also reflect the dynamics of information diffusion. Such challenges can act as a barrier to the flow and adoption of knowledge through Facebook. Addressing them will optimise the diffusion of knowledge and promote effective knowledge-sharing practices.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the use of Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument across various sectors and contexts. The findings indicate that Facebook is a versatile platform suitable for educational purposes; business and e-commerce facilitation; disaster management; governance; health management; professional learning; knowledge management and sharing; leisure activities; relationships; virtual communities; and information search. These diverse applications illustrate Facebook's immense potential for disseminating and exchanging knowledge. This article also shed light on the challenges of adopting Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument. Cost; time investment; technical expertise; data privacy; hacking risks; organisational culture; internet connectivity limitations; compliance with regulations; licensing requirements; identifying appropriate marketing platforms; a lack of trust; and understanding codified signals were identified as significant obstacles. They need to be addressed for effective knowledge sharing on Facebook. Furthermore, the study identified gaps in the existing literature, particularly the lack of research focusing on Africa; the dominance of quantitative and qualitative studies and the neglect of mixed-methods approaches; and the limited information on the impact of Facebook on knowledge sharing. These gaps underscore the need for further research into the unique challenges and opportunities associated with Facebook as a knowledge-sharing platform in different contexts and regions.

Lastly, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing insights into the diverse uses, challenges, and gaps in adopting Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument. The findings emphasise Facebook's potential for effective knowledge dissemination and exchange, and the need to address its challenges. Once they are addressed, organisations, educators, policymakers, and individuals can make informed decisions and implement strategies to optimise the use of Facebook for knowledge-sharing purposes and, ultimately, foster a culture of collaborative learning and innovation.

Recommendations

The recommendations of this study are as follows:

- Increase research in Africa: To address the deficiency in articles published in Africa, more research on the use of Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument is recommended. This will provide valuable insights into the local context and bridge the research gap.

- Promote mixed-methods studies: Given the profusion of quantitative and qualitative studies in the current literature, mixed-methods approaches are recommended. Integrating quantitative data collection methods and qualitative insights will result in a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of adopting Facebook for knowledge sharing.

- Investigate the impact of Facebook on knowledge sharing: To address the scarcity of knowledge about the effect of Facebook on knowledge sharing, further research is needed. Research should focus on its benefits and drawbacks in different contexts.

- Enhance awareness and offer training: To address the challenges related to cost, time investment, technical expertise, data privacy, and licensing requirements, comprehensive awareness campaigns and training programmes are proposed. Such initiatives would educate users, organisations and stakeholders in best practices, security measures and legal compliance when Facebook is utilised for knowledge-sharing purposes.
- Foster collaboration and inspire trust: Given the challenges associated with organisational culture, capability and trust, fostering a collaborative environment that encourages knowledge sharing on Facebook is crucial. A collaborative environment can be created by promoting a culture of openness, establishing clear guidelines and protocols, and facilitating collaboration among users and organisations.
- Improve internet connectivity: To overcome the challenge of poor internet connection, efforts should be made to enhance internet infrastructure and accessibility, particularly in areas with limited connectivity. This will ensure that users have reliable and high-speed internet access to effectively utilise Facebook as a knowledge-sharing platform.
- Finally, all information stakeholders such as professional bodies, organisations, governments and individuals, should adopt Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument to facilitate the instantaneous dissemination of information.

Limitations and recommendations for further studies

The study had a few limitations that open doors for future research. It investigated only articles written between 2017 and 2022 reviewing the various uses of Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument. Other studies investigating the challenges encountered by social media users in adopting Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument should be conducted. Furthermore, various theories indicating the importance of Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument should be investigated. The proposed studies will result in theories and facts that could resolve issues regarding the adoption of Facebook as a knowledge-sharing vehicle.

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APPENDIX

Table 3.

Key challenges encountered in adopting Facebook as a knowledge-sharing instrument

Challenges identified in the study	Description of the challenges
Cost of knowledge sharing	The study found an outstanding cost associated with Facebook usage in knowledge sharing. Users must pay to use the site (Tseng et al, 2022; Rajan et al., 2021).
Time investment	The time it takes to compose a message proves to be a challenge to Facebook users (Tomaszek & Muchacka-Cymerman, 2021).
Expertise to handle technicalities	Facebook users are expected to understand the technical information-sharing dynamics before they send their messages to target users (Todorovic, 2021).
Protection of data privacy	The protection of data privacy is another challenge for Facebook users. They are advised to apply secure browsing to protect their information. This way, other people don't have access to their information without their permission (Perifanou et al., 2021).
Hacking	Facebook users face the risk of identity theft, a peril of adopting Facebook as a means of knowledge sharing (Lopes & Yu, 2017).
Organisational culture	Most organisations are reluctant or find it difficult to adopt Facebook as a means of knowledge sharing owing to their organisational culture or policies (Sacks et al., 2021).
Organisational capability/time management	Some organisations are incapable of handling the Facebook usage dynamics owing to lack of human resource capacity and time management issues (Rezende da Cunha Júnior et al., 2019; Simsek et al., 2020).
Lack of internet connection	Countless users have a difficult time to share their information on Facebook because they do not have a speedy internet (Todorovic et al., 2021; Simsek et al., 2020).
Compliance with laws/regulations	Facebook's management makes a point of protecting data and people's privacy by restricting the content that users can share. All Facebook users are expected to obey these laws (Robertson & Dasoo, 2019).
Licensing requirements	Facebook users are not allowed to use other peoples' content unless they have their permission or a license (Lazar, 2022).
Identifying the right platform to market products or target an audience	Organisations find it difficult to identify the appropriate sites to market their products on Facebook. Selecting the demographics, locations and interests of their target users is a challenge for them (Fähnrich et al., 2020).
Distrust	Anti-Facebook sentiment in public debate appears to be at an all-time high owing to widespread COVID misinformation and unsuccessful attempts to prevent it. Numerous scams,

	falsehoods and the idea that Facebook allows harmful information to spread contribute to distrust (Hong & Gardner, 2019).
Usage of codified signals	Businesses can use signals to understand their audience, their activities, and their preferences thanks to the Facebook pixel. They can develop customised audiences based on shopper signals to launch more successful advertising campaigns. Codified signals frustrate information users who cannot decode them (Todorovic, 2021).