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Exploring the Information Seeking Behavior of the MBA Students: A Study

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Abstract:
The rapid growth of digitally recorded information has changed the traditional communities to inform society where effective information seeking has become essential in our day to day life. New perspective in research reversed traditional model of system design and placed the user at the centre of attention, instead of the system. This alternative approach was developed to access information needs and uses of information by the information seekers. This study is dealing with behavioural aspect of the MBA students in accessing and using different kinds of information sources as well as the process of fulfilling information needs. As management students have different prior degree of specialization. Thus, they behave differently. Statistical methods are used for the analysis and to prepare tabulation and graphical records.

Keyword: Information need, information seeking behavior, sources of information

1. Introduction

Information seeking is a fundamental human activity; it includes gathering information and building knowledge. In traditional communities collecting information was a social activity. The rapid growth of digitally recorded information and different information management systems changed the traditional communities to information society where effective information seeking has become essential in our day to day life. Information seeking is cumulative, reiterative, and holistic in nature and it is also context dependent. This empirical study on information needs and seeking, deals with the behavioral aspect of the information user is in accessing and using deferent kinds of information sources as well as the processes involved in fulfilling their information needs. This study also implies that the population of information seekers Is homogeneous. Perception of information seekers about meeting information need is initially uncertain. These perceptions are changed and modified over the process of information seeking. An individual's information seeking process is thus determined by the dynamics of perceptions given his/her initial stage as well as individuals prior knowledge, characteristics of source and channels, importance of information , and several demographic variables, which varies from individual to individual..Cognitive style represents stable attitudes, preferences, or habitual strategies that determine an individual's typical modes of perceiving, remembering, thinking, and problem solving. Linguistic difference both in printed and software can cause insurmountable accessibility problems. Cultural differences can certainly result in usability problems. Cultural differences generally reported in case of computerized system where it varies significantly in case of novice and experienced users.(Hofstede, 1991)

2. Objective

In this research information seeking behavior of the MBA students in different colleges have been studied in different levels. The objective is to find out the information seeking behavior dimensions of people who use information, and to group them on these dimensions. This study considers the perception of the information user about experiencing information needs and about potential sources and channels that would lead to his evaluation and selection process. Efficiency of human computer interactions also influences both accessibility and usability of information processing and is concerned with the acquisition, manipulation and extraction of relevant information by the information user. This research also shows the variation of relevant information by individual user from the computer based system.

3. Methodology

A questionnaire based survey method was adopted to gather the data on the information seeking behaviour of the MBA students. The questionnaire was then sent to a total of 200 management and doctoral students in four major colleges in West Bengal. MBA students were selected for the study as they different backgrounds knowledge with different areas of graduation specialization, like civil engineering, mechanical engineering, telecommunication, computer sciences, biotechnology, finance, economics, humanities, physics, chemistry, mathematics and linguistics, social science etc. Thus they express different information seeking behavioral characteristics. This respondents shared their experiences on the different behavioral characteristics at the time seeking information for various purposes. The study was conducted in the months of August to December 2014.

4. Literature Review

A number of studies in the recent past were carried out to find out the information seeking behaviour of users in different types of libraries all over the world. Some of the surveys in this context are reviewed here. Fatima, Nishat and Ahmad (2008) investigated the information seeking behaviour of college students to find out the awareness and usage of library resources. The findings of the survey indicated the need to increase the usage of library resources and services. Kakai and others (2004) observed that the information seeking behaviour of students involved active or course assignment ,prepare for class discussions, seminars, workshops, conferences, and for writting final year research papers. Majid and Tan (2002) investigated the information needs and information seeking behaviour of computer engineering undergraduate students at Nayang Technological University, Singapore. The purpose was to identify the types of information sources used by the students, their preferred information formats and the use of various electronic information sources. It was found that the use of databases andelectronic journals was quite low. Fidzani (1998) surveyed 144 students to determine the information seeking behaviour and use of information resources by graduate students at the University of Botswana. The purpose of the study was to find out what their information requirements were and determine their awareness of library services available to them. Sridhar (1995) investigated information seeking behaviour (ISB) of the Indian Space Technologists (IST) of ISRO Satellite Centre (ISC), Bangalore in his doctoral researchthis study have been published under the title, "Information Behaviour of Scientists and Engineers". This is the contribution towards user studies and therefore worth considering as one of the case studies. The foregoing case studies are mostly, illustrative in nature and not exhaustive. Guha (1993) deals with the information seeking and communications behaviour of Indian Scientists. The purpose was to identify the types of information sources used by the Indian Scientists, their preferred information formats and the use of various electronic information sources. Sridhar (1989) focuses on the Indian space technologies with respect to motives and purpose of seeking information. The study covers nature and type of information required, bibliographic information used, delegation of information gathering work, time spent in information gathering activities sharing of information. Barua and Tripathi (1988) deal with the information services, on-line system type of information need and the informal sources used by the scholars of Burdwan University. Rao (1987) presents the information-seeking behaviour of nutrition specialists of National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad with reference to the current information sources. Subrahamanyam (1983) presents the information seeking behaviour of doctoral candidates in social sciences. He makes a review of the user studies and gives the objectives and methods of study. He concludes that the university library services need to be geared up further to meet the information needs of the doctors.

6. Analysis and Discussion

For quantitave analysis, the parameters are included in the data input sheets. Different scales are necessary for analysis. After analysis of the different parameters, they are tabulated and inferences are drawn from them.

Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents with primary specialization.

Sl.No.	Field of Primary Specialization	Percentages
1	Marketing Management	48.5
2	Finance Management	30.2
3	Operation Management	4.7
4	Human Resource Management	12.3
5	Business Strategy	5

Table1: Percentage of respondents W.R.T. Field of Primary specialization

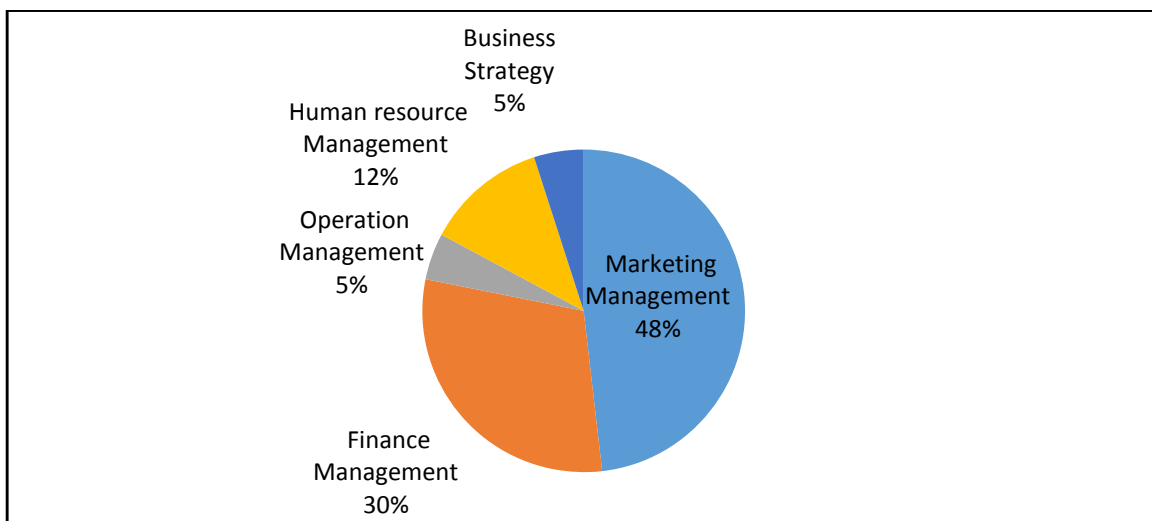The above table can be represented by the pie diagram in the following way:

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents w.r.t. Field of Primary Specialization

Student's aptitude of taking specialization in management is studied in the above table. It is found that all the six colleges give the same result. Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents search information for different purpose.

Sl. No.	Purpose of Information Search	Percentage
1	Project Work	77.3
2	Basic Search	42.7
3	Regular Study	64.5
4	Obtaining New Ideas	56.5
5	Discussions	34.6
6	Specific Purpose	42

Table 2: Percentage of respondent's w.r.t. Purpose of Information Search

The above table can be represented by the bar diagram in the following way:
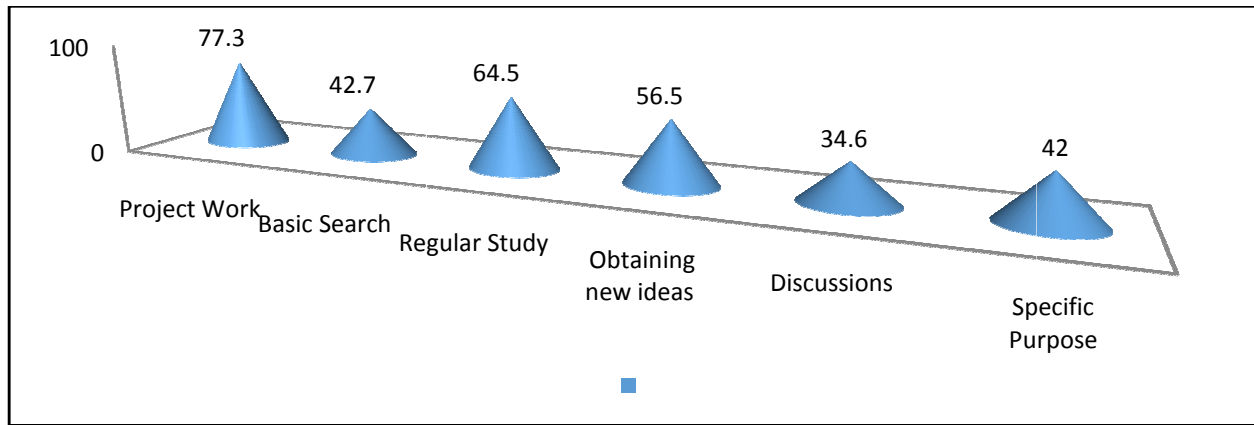

Figure 2: Percentage of Respondents w.r.t. Purpose of information search

It is found that maximum respondents search for information for their project work, and regular study. The percentage of information seekers for obtaining new ideas and for specific purposes follows the next. The first two types of search include the search for known and partly known information. In other words, they depict specific information search objects. Thus it can be concluded from the above percentage that maximum MBA students use information only to so their specific regular study, and project work. Besides 56.5% of the students used information to get new ideas and 34.6% of the students use information for discussion or other purposes. Thus, half of the students are not interested in new ideas or new knowledge . Further 77.3 % of the master degree and doctoral researchers of management are only interested in their day to day course work in our country.

Table 3 shows the Percentage of Respondents search information in different printed sources.

Sl. No.	Type of Printed Information search	Percentages
1	Text Book/ Monographs	85.6
2	Professional Journals	66.6
3	Pre-Prints	6.9
4	Conference Proceedings	12.5
5	Newsletters/Bulletins	64.6
6	Bibliography	16.1
7	Handbooks	24.3
8	Indexing/Abstract of Journals	14.8
9	Patent /Report/Standard/Specification	15.4
10	Review Article/ Theses	57
11	Library Catalougue(OPAC)	14.8

Table 3: Percentage of Respondents of Printed Information Search

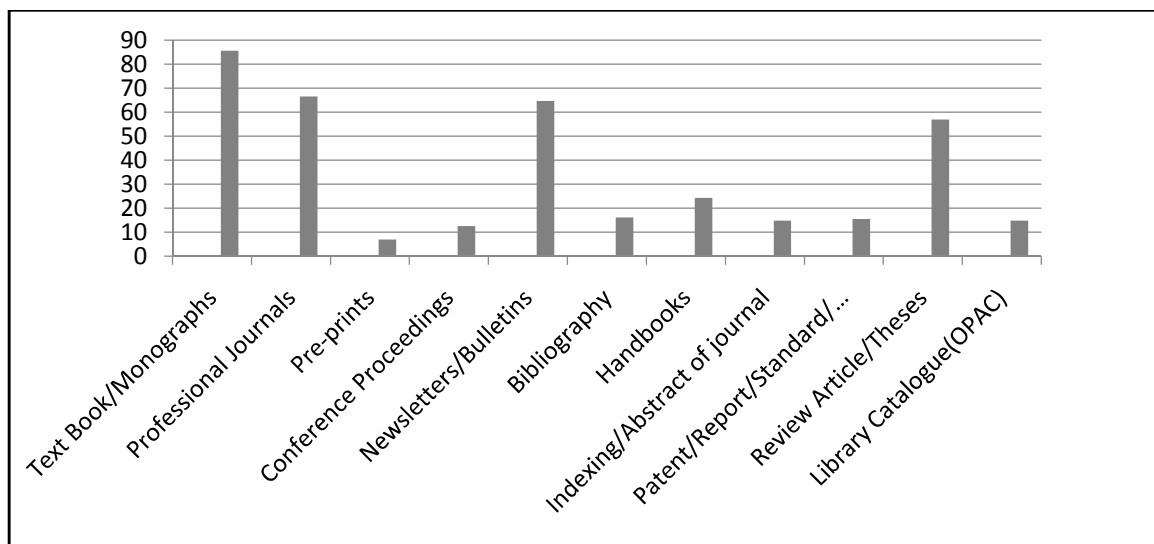The above table can be represented by the Bar diagram in the following way:

Figure 3: Percentage of Respondents of Printed Information Search

It is found that maximum respondents search for information in text books, professional journals,articles and bulletin. All of these printed sources are scholarly sources. It can be interpreted that students are more inclined to refer scholarly sources when it comes to referring printed sources of information. Maximum numbers of MBA students (85.6%) are dependent on text books / monographs. From the table 2 it was seen that more than 75% of the students are only interested in their regular course work and project works; thus they mostly depend on the printed text books and monographs. A good percentage of the students are also consulting professional journals (66.6%), newsletters/ bulletins(64.6%) and review article / theses of their specific field. Thus, it can be concluded that they are more interested in primary information sources after consulting the regular courses. Very few no. of students are consulting the secondary documents like handbooks, bibliographies, indexing / abstracting journals, Library catalogue (OPAC) etc. They students are not also familiar with the primary nascent documents like pre-print, conference proceedings, patent/report/standard/specification, etc. Table 4 shows the percentage of respondents search information in different non-printed sources.

Sl.no.	Type of Non – Printed Information Search	Percentages
1	Radio	6.9
2	TV	40.3
3	Mobile	14.1
4	Website	83.3
5	Internet	96.1
6	Online Journal	64.9
7	CD/DVD	15.4
8	E-mail	38.7
9	Conversation with Peers	56.1
10	Conversation with Experts	74.8

Table 4: Percentage of respondents of Non-Printed Information Search

The above table can be represented by the pie diagram the following way:
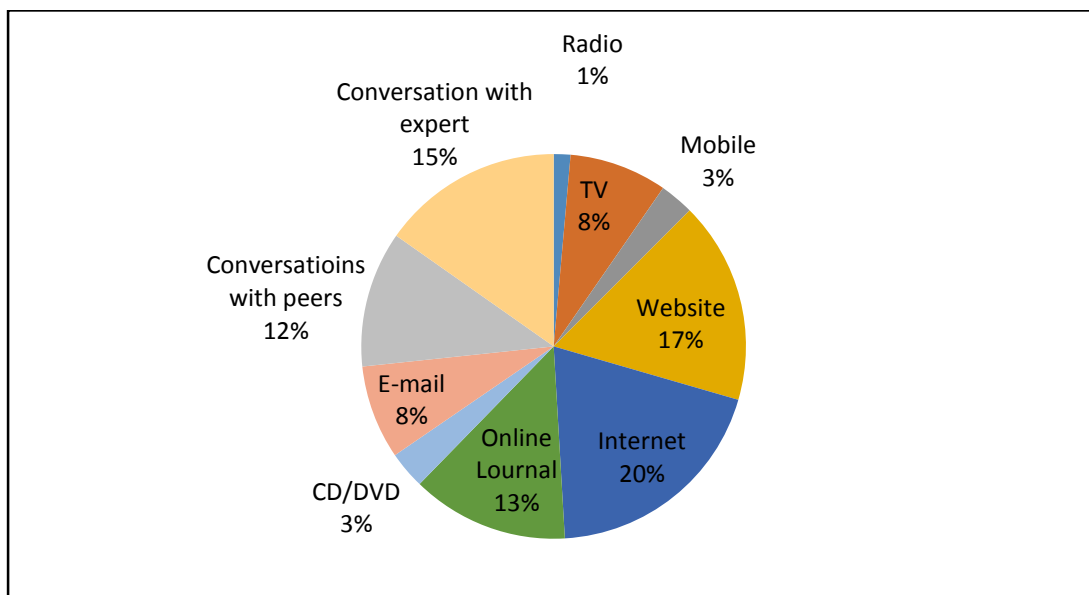
Figure 4: Percentage of Respondents of Non- Printed information search

It is seen from the above analysis that almost all MBA students prefer internet and websites for searching information. Though they consult books at the time of searching information for their course work or project work, but they mostly depend on online information in different websites. They express that they are more comfortable with the internet than searching huge books at time of interview and data collection. A good percentage of the students (64.9%) also search online journals of the respective fields for searching information (known or unknown). They also use Emails for getting new information. But a small number of students use mobiles (14.1%) or exchange of CD/DVDs (15.4%) for information search. Very few students (6.9%) use radio FM channels to get new information. It can be also noted that a major percentage of the students (74.8%) are also depends on the conversation of the experts of the specific discipline while seeking information. A good percentage of the students (56.1%) also share their information and experiences with their peer groups.

7. Findings
Table 1 discusses the propensity of the management students about choosing their specific field. It is seen that they prefer core disciplines. Table 2 discusses the purpose of information seeking. This graphical representation clearly states the purpose of information seeking by the management students. From the table 3, it is noticed that while searching printed documents, the management students, mostly depend on the textbooks or professional journals.

Table 4 state the percentage of information user in the on-line media. Now-a-days, almost all students depend on searching internet or any other websites. This may be due to ease of use, easy accessibility, low cost and time saving characteristics of the computer devices.

Joint percentages of respondents in each printed and non-printed information sources are found from cross tabulation. It is observed that 75.4% of respondents refer websites (non-printed) and book (printed) sources together to collect information. Similarly, 64.6% of the respondents refer internet as well as journal together to collect information.

Another demographic characteristic has been also noted at the time of collecting data that the search of information by the students, whether it is in case of searching printed information sources or in case of non- printed sources it is highly affected by the background knowledge or previous subject of specialization of the students. The students having specialization in any technical subjects or in computer based subjects are more sensitive to use online search. They do not prefer printed documents. On the other hand, students having graduation specialization in chemistry, mathematics, literature and social sciences prefer printed journals and books. Though these students use online information to meet their information seeking very frequently, due to easy accessibility of the online sources and also due to some user friendly software, still they are comfortable with the printed documents.

8. Conclusion
A fundamental property in user behavior is the difference among individuals. User differs in terms of prior degree of understanding about the information, the sources they use, the channel they prefer and the way they communicate. Different users are differently sensitive to searching variables like time, distance, perception about information availability, and consequently their searching process changes to a great extent. The successful implementation of the library activities requires a thorough understanding of distribution of user heterogeneity and identification of preferences at user level. For example, a library wishing to increase online journal viewer-ship may consider mailing notes on online utilities to time sensitive users. Similarly, libraries, planning for inter-library tie up would communicate to the distance sensitive users. The user's preferences and sensitivities towards time, distance and costs can also be well represented through the study of the information seeking behavior of the users. In the extreme, the determination of service requirement in unique for each individual and it requires knowledge of model parameters at the individual level. This diversity

provides information centers with the economic/social incentive to offer different services to different group of people. These different services can be promoted, priced and placed in front of the users in a manner appropriate for the target groups by the study of the information seeking behavior in future.

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