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THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USE OF RESEARCH COMMONS BY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

Research Commons are spaces with technology and design that emphasise knowledge creation. They are described as the next phase of providing interactive research tools for students. However, the success of such technological spaces is dependent on their adoption and use by the user audience. The major aim of the study was to unearth the factors that influenced the usage of the Research Commons by undergraduate students. This was against a background that the facility was being underutilised. The study was guided by the Unified Theory of Technology Acceptance and Usage (UTAUT) model. A cross sectional survey was used across the ten UZ faculties. Survey questionnaires were administered to a sample of 370 undergraduate students selected through stratified random sampling. Additionally, interviews were conducted with 10 faculty librarians, IT manager and Research Commons coordinator selected through purposive sampling. The study revealed that the use of the facility enhanced undergraduate students' academic performance even though the usage of the facility was low. More so, the findings on effort expectancy and performance expectancy and facilitating conditions established that these were the key determinants of the undergraduates' behavioural intention to use the Research Commons. It also revealed that support services were not always available for users. It was concluded that students had knowledge of the facility but this did not translate to actual use and acceptance of the facility was at varying levels. The researcher recommended that library management needs to ensure that research support services be at the disposal undergraduate students and rigorous promotional strategies need to be adopted to captivate old and new users.