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FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

THE ADOPTION AND USE OF ONLINE REFERENCE SERVICES BY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES AT BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION (BUSE)

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the adoption and use of online reference services (ORS) with the aim of discovering the factors that affect adoption and use of the ORS among undergraduate students. The study made use of an amended version of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model as its theoretical framework. It was preferred because it is an empirically validated model combining eight major models of technology acceptance and their extensions. The research objectives and questions where influenced by the following constructs of the model: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions and attitudes. The research was pragmatic as it utilised both the positivist and interpretivist approaches. The cross sectional survey research strategy within a case study was used in which quantitative data were collected from 217 students using questionnaires in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (FSSH) while qualitative data were collected from 7 professional librarians through questionnaire. Stratified sampling was applied to students while purposive sampling was applied to library staff. Microsoft Excel 2013 was used to analyse quantitative data and qualitative data were coded for integration with quantitative data. The research established that undergraduate students' level of awareness of ORS at BUSE is high while usage of the same services is low. It was also found that the major impediment of use of ORS at BUSE are facilitating conditions including erratic power supply, slow internet, inadequate computers and related gadgets, and inadequate training. Students were positive the use of ORS would improve, once challenges were addressed. It was also concluded that all elements of UTAUT have influence on students' behaviour of intention to use ORS. The study recommended that for improvement of quality, awareness and use of ORS, there be enrichment of awareness campaigns, use of library ambassadors, in-depth training, innovative marketing, and quick responses to queries and improvement of information communication technologies (ICT) Infrastructure university wide.