

Information Culture of Ghanaian Immigrants Living in New Zealand

Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of this paper is to explore the information culture of Ghanaian immigrants living in New Zealand. The values, beliefs and behaviours that influence the ways information is identified, accessed, used, shared and preserved, defines people's information culture. Some Ghanaians have migrated to New Zealand for different reasons, including studies, work, and resettlement. To live successfully and peacefully in a foreign country, they need specific information and understand where to find, use and share it. This paper investigated the factors that influence the beliefs and perspectives Ghanaians hold around information the information they use in New Zealand.

Design/methodology/approach – A qualitative approach was adopted. Both questionnaire and interviews were used to collect data from 27 Ghanaians living in different regions of New Zealand. Basic questionnaire analysis was done in survey monkey. Interview transcripts were analysed manually by reading through severally using colour patterns to identify key concepts and themes and using tables to organise them.

Findings - The main areas Ghanaians are interested in using information about in New Zealand include education, health, information on environmental issues, New Zealand politics and sports. Few Ghanaians are interested in information about entertainment and religion and agriculture as these areas do not impact much on the purposes for their lives in New Zealand. Although most Ghanaians consider themselves as poor recordkeepers, they accord high value to the information they seek and use in New Zealand. Their preferred information source is the World Wide Web, although other sources like libraries, academic databases are also considered useful. The most preferred and trusted approach of sharing information is face-to-face is considered. Social media, WhatsApp, mobile phones etc. are also considered reliable ways of communicating information.

Research limitations/implication – Only 27 Ghanaians participated in the study, their circumstances surrounding the life in New Zealand may be completely different from other Ghanaians. So their views may not fully reflect the situations of all Ghanaians in New Zealand. Also, the fact that most participants were familiar with the researcher could impact their responses.

Practical implication – This paper provides a useful understanding of the information cultural patterns of Ghanaians and can provide a useful basis for further investigations of Ghanaians and other immigrants' life patterns in New Zealand.

Original value – Although other studies have looked at the Ghanaian immigrants in other countries, this is the first study that looks at the information culture of Ghanaians in New Zealand.

Keywords: *Information culture, Information behavior, Immigrants, Trust, Ghana, New Zealand*

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to discuss the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that influence how Ghanaian immigrants living in New Zealand account for the information they use, preserve and share among themselves. Hofstede (2007, p. 16) identifies that people's beliefs, attitudes and behaviours form part of the collective programming of the minds of a group the find themselves in. Culture is central when it comes to communicating and sharing of information. This article is therefore about the beliefs and philosophical perspectives that define Ghanaian

immigrants' behaviour towards the information they use and share among themselves and with other groups in New Zealand.

In the last decade, the number of Ghanaians in New Zealand has increased significantly, although Ghanaians are still a small group compared to other ethnic groups in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). An understanding of the types of information Ghanaian immigrants need and their culture around the information they use and share will be useful not only for both current and future members of the Ghanaian community but also, other social groups and immigrant communities in New Zealand. The New Zealand government will also be able to design an appropriate programme and services to support migrant communities.

Information is vital in every aspect of life. It is used and shared among groups of people every day either consciously or unconsciously to make life easy for one another. This sharing and using of information has been identified as the main method through which relationships are born, grown and evolved within communities (Hersberger, Rioux & Cruitt, 2005, p. 10). Having access to the right information at the right time to solve a problem is as valuable as any other precious resource that is required for human survival and success. Nevertheless, understanding the values and beliefs people attach to the processes for sharing and using information can be challenging. This is because different people have different cultures around the way they use and share information and various studies have shown that we usually do not have a clearer understanding of the processes and technologies involved in sharing what information is needed to solve which problem and to benefit who (Goldfarb 2014; Maiers et al., 2005; Sonnenwald, 2006). This study, therefore, explored the values and beliefs Ghanaian immigrants living in New Zealand attached to the types of information they need, use and share.

Context

Cultural factors that influence Ghanaians' information culture, can be traced from their original context in Ghana. The people of Ghana comprise over 100 different linguistic and cultural groups, making it a multicultural country with no single national language (Ghana Statistical Services, 2016; GhanaWeb, 2016). Ghanaians share information based on trust. They ensure that any party they share their information with aligns with the belief and values they see in the information they are sharing. To Ghanaians, every attempt to share information is an effort towards managing a risk in preserving their hope for the future. In a study that partly explored Ghanaian's attitudes towards the preservation of their cultural heritage resources, it was found that most Ghanaians are conscious of the need to protect their creative and intellectual materials, which forms a major part of their information. These behaviours sometimes make them cautious as to who they want to share their information with (Boamah, 2014, p. 125).

On the other hand, the various positive cultural belief systems and traditions from the multiple Ghanaian cultures have enabled the development of certain constructive behaviour patterns in the Ghanaian individual, such as tolerance, hospitality, confidence and understanding. These traits make the people very easy to mix with other cultures both within and outside their country. The contrast between the secrecy in sharing cultural information and the tolerance that makes Ghanaians easily relatable to other people, makes it even more interesting to explore deeper understanding of what cultural patterns in New Zealand influence the information Ghanaians are using and sharing, with whom they share it; and how they share their information in the New Zealand society.

Ghanaians in New Zealand

As at March 2013, the Ghanaian ethnic group living in New Zealand comprised 207 people (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). According to Statistics New Zealand. There was a 5.5 percent decrease between 2006 and 2013. A reason for this decrease is discussed in the findings of this

study. Statistics New Zealand further reveals that most of the Ghanaians in New Zealand (87.0%) lived in the North Island and 13.0% lived in the South Island. Most of them (92.8%) lived in the main urban areas. The most common region of Ghanaians was the Auckland Region (65.2%), followed by the Wellington Region (11.6%) and the Canterbury Region (8.7%).

Research problem

The concept of information culture is usually discussed in organisational contexts, focusing on the beliefs and behaviour employees bring to the organisation to manage records and corporate information. However, we usually forget that these employees are selected from specific groups within the society. Any behaviour or attitudes employees bring to the organisation are determined by the beliefs and value systems that define their individual cultural group within the wider society. It is there important to explore the information culture of the groups within the society to fully understand the information culture individual employees bring to the organisation.

The information cultural patterns exhibited by Ghanaian immigrants around the information they use, share in New Zealand, are unclear. The specific types of information they need and are willing to use and share are not clearly determined. Particular factors, such as preferred language, their preferred information sources, skills and competencies in using information technology, and respect for information as records that influence their culture around information usage, are also uncertain. It is unclear whether they are able to obtain the information they need to perform the roles that they have come to New Zealand to perform and how they are making sense of that information in the context of New Zealand. This study, therefore, seeks to explore and understand the various information Ghanaian immigrants' use and what influence the ways they share information among themselves in the context of New Zealand. Following the above problem, this study is guided by the following research questions:

- *What types of information do Ghanaian immigrants in New Zealand use?*
- *What factors determine the information culture of Ghanaian immigrants in New Zealand?*

The essence of this study is therefore to explore the various topic areas in which Ghanaian immigrants in New Zealand are interested in, with the purpose of understanding the main cultural patterns that influence their use of information in these areas.

Literature review

People need specialized skills and knowledge to be able to identify an information need and define it clearly. The main process people use to acquire and share information can be framed in four major behavioural aspects, including how the individual:

- Cognitively stores representations of other people's information needs
- Recalls those needs when acquiring (in various contexts) information of a particular type or quality
- Makes an association between the information that s/he has acquired and someone's s/he knows who s/he perceives to need or want this information
- Shares this information in some way (Rioux, 2005, p. 169)

These combined behavioural processes can be influenced by people's information culture, which emanates from their belief systems social norms and values and philosophical principles

within the society they grew up in. Thus, people's decision on which type information to use or share, how to share it, which associations to make, how to form them and whom to share a piece of information with, are all influenced by their beliefs and values.

Types of information

Information can be grouped into different types. Because information is used for various purposes by different groups of people, categorisation of information, as well as how the term "information" itself, is defined, varies. It depends on the purpose for which the information types and its definition are developed by the group using it. Bates (2006), for instance, identified the fundamental forms of information and defined the term *information* for the purposes of information sciences/studies. According to Bates, the definition of information goes to the very basis of any living being's awareness that can be experienced, including a bird call, our friend's "Hello", the rock we trip over, the intuition we have about the honesty of someone we are talking to, a book we read, etc. (2006).

Michael Buckland also uses a communication lens to perceive different types of information they occur in the various aspects of the process, including information as a fact or knowledge; information as the thing carrying the fact and information as the process of telling the fact. According to Buckland (1991), *Information-as-knowledge* includes the fact which is the subject of the act of the informing and can create cohesive knowledge. These facts can be seen as the details, truth, realities, evidence, proof or specifics that enable a unified, solid understanding for individuals. *Information-as-thing* contains these facts. They are tangible and can be seen or felt, unlike information as knowledge. Information as a thing includes books and document. *Information-as-process* is seen in actions, behaviours and conducts through which other people are informed or notified of the facts. These types of information occur in our daily life and are widely discussed in the literature.

The concept information has a much wider scope than it is normally thought of (Kaye, 1995), and so is the ways it is typified. In fact what is seen as information has been defined variously by different experts and individuals are concerned about the role that what they perceive as information can play in their decision making and learning (Rowley, 1998). The varying definition of information and how it can be various classified makes some experts believe that the meaning of information is complex (Budd, 2011, p. 58). Budd, analysed the various definitions of information and proposes one that integrates meaning and truth. Thus, stressing the importance of language in theorising what can be defined or classified as a type of information (2011). Hence, what appears meaningful to any individual and holds true to a group can be a useful information for that individual or group. This assertion also highlights the important fact that culture places an important role in determining what is considered information for any group of people. No wonder in her analysis of the various representations of the data, information, knowledge and wisdom (DIKW) hierarchy, Rowley (2007) defines information to include peoples' beliefs and the value they attached to some data (Rowley, 2007, p. 168).

On a different level, the types of information grouped into natural, transmitted and recorded information, to be consistent with Buckland's (1991) classification. According to Kaye, Natural information is the information is the information received from the natural environment, which human beings experience through perceptions or sensory. This type of information forms the basis to generate cultural information. When you look at the sea, a tree or the sun, the moon or a bird etc., you obtain information about these natural elements through your senses. You hear the sounds, you feel the heat, you see the beauty etc. These are natural

information coming to you. Thus, natural information can only be received and they are received through stimuli. If you use any form of tools or device to note, enter, record or document any of these types of natural information, you get a different type of information known as recorded information. Information we memorise in our minds for sharing later can also be classified as recorded information. The moment we let out recorded information for other to also see, feel, and hear that information through the devices on which the information was recorded, we get transmitted information. For instance, if you memorise the sound of a bird and keep it in your head you have a recorded information. But the moment you make the same sound for another person to hear, you have transmitted and that person receives transmitted information (Kaye 1995).

The types of information people use can also be classified in the disciplinary areas (Bickley, 2014). According to Bickley, in this perspectives, we can have groups like sports information, entertainment information, information on politics, information on education, information on agriculture, etc. The ability of individuals to identify, search and use specific information is as important as any type of information. Being able to know the subject matter content in a particular disciplinary area to achieve information need, has in recently times, been called disciplinary literacy (Bickley, 2014). According to Bickley, people become more interested in the information in a particular disciplinary area when they have:

- content knowledge in that field,
- experience and skills
- ability to read, write, listen and speak confidently about the information in the area
- think critically in a way that is meaningful within the content areas of that discipline.

The *types of information* talked about in this study focused on this group of disciplinary knowledge and literacy. The study sought to identify which disciplinary areas Ghanaian immigrants are more interested to use information on. It also looked at the ability of Ghanaians immigrants to search for and use the information they need from specific disciplines and the types of beliefs, values, perspective and philosophies that influence their use of information from their preferred disciplinary areas information type. These beliefs, values and perspectives define their information culture around the information they use and share.

Information Culture

The concept of information culture involves the values, beliefs and behaviours that influence the ways in which people identify information, accessed it, used it to achieve desired results, including how they share and preserved information for the future. People perceive beliefs and behaviours differently. So, a definition of information culture by Oliver and Foscalini is adopted for this paper - *the values accorded to information and the attitudes toward it, within organisational context* (2014, p 2). Although the information culture concept is defined within an organisational context, Oliver and Foscalini further explained that the information culture idea also applies to a whole societal context as well (2014). The application of the information culture framework in this study is extended beyond just the organisational context to include the whole society. This is to help understand the beliefs, attitudes and values of a specific cultural group – Ghanaians – attach to their behaviour around the information they use and share among themselves within the New Zealand society.

According to Oliver (2011) information culture is shaped by influences occurring at three main levels - some of which are more open to change than others. The influences that are likely to change are seen as a fundamental layer of the information culture.

- Respect for information as evidence - Recognition and awareness of the need to manage information for the purpose of accountability
- Respect for information as knowledge - Recognition and awareness of the need to manage certain information for the purpose of increasing knowledge and awareness
- Willingness to share information - The level of granularity to which information sharing is regarded as the norm within the organisation
- Trust in information - This will focus on consideration of preferred primary sources for information, for example, individuals or text resources
- Language requirements - Any constraints associated with particular character sets used, also need for multi-lingual versions of information
- Regional technological infrastructure - Technological infrastructure in place externally will be a profound influencing factor on the dimensions of the information culture within an organisation

Other factors that can influence people's information culture include their skills, knowledge and experience relating to information management. These influences can be acquired and/or extended within the context they are applied. They appear at the second level as:

- Information related competencies, including information and computer literacy
- Awareness of environmental (societal and organisational) requirements relating to information

At the peak of the framework are the information governance and architecture that is in place and also the trust people have in systems that have been established to manage information.

Components and types of information culture

The information culture concept has different components. The main constituent areas appear commonly discussed in the literature. This involves the flow of information communication. Information flow can be horizontal or vertical. Horizontal information flow is where people share information with their superiors or superiors sharing information with their subordinates. Another important component is how people make decisions based on informed judgement to access to the information they need to do their job and how easy or difficult they are able to access the needed information (Douglas, 2010). People's perception of information management as part of their role is yet another relevant constituent of the information culture concept. This percept has an impact on how they share information in order to build an effective working relationship. It also controls recognition of information technology as a tool to enable achievement of business outcomes and determines how they collaborate with others and regulates their understanding of information management processes and procedures (Choo et al., 2008). According to Douglass (2010, p. 48-49), the main types of information culture include:

- Functional culture is where people, especially managers use information as a means of exercising influence or power over other
- Sharing culture is where people of differing statuses, such as manager and employees trust each other to share and use the information to improve their performance
- Inquiring culture is where people search for information to better understand the future and ways of changing what they do to align themselves with future trends/directions
- Discovery culture is where people are open to new insights about the crisis and radical change and seek ways to create competitive discontinuities.

The definition of information culture can be broadened to include more than just people's beliefs values and attitudes. According to Boamah (2014) information culture also include all the information infrastructure within a country. Information infrastructure includes that communication systems, information technologies, information institutions, information related competencies and basic education systems which enable the public to understand, store and use information within a country (Sugihara, 1994 p. 82). Compared to Ghana, New Zealand has advanced information infrastructure than Ghana. New Zealand has a National Library, National Archive, effective ICT network systems such as Digital.govt.nz, ICT.govt.nz etc. But Ghana has no national library and national archive. The institutions providing public library services and national archival services are the Ghana Library Board and the Public Records and Archives Administration Department respectively (Boamah 2014).

Studies conducted on Ghanaian immigrants

Cultural patterns (especially attitudes and behaviours) of Ghanaian immigrants in living in different countries have been a subject of investigation in relation to various issues by various researchers in many different country contexts. For instance, there have been studies on Ghanaian immigrants' attitude towards healthcare practices in various countries (Barimah and van Teijlingen, 2008; Boateng, Nicolaou, Dijkshoorn, Stronks, & Agyemang 2012; Knipscheer & Kleber 2007). Issues relating to remittance, involving Ghanaian immigrants and their families at home have also been examined (Ecer & Tompkins 2013). Housing issues affecting Ghanaian abroad have also been explored (Coe 2016). Other researchers have also looked at immigration issues affecting Ghanaians in the diaspora (Walt & Israel 2004), and issues relating to stress and psychological problems (Agyei et al. 2014), just to mention a few. However, there does not appear to be any study in the literature on the attitudes and behaviours of Ghanaians in relation to how they use and share information among themselves, even though the way information is used and shared may have been involved in the issues mentioned above.

An important area Ghanaian immigrants commonly seek information about, is the healthcare systems of the countries they move to. Although healthcare systems in advanced countries are adequate for efficient professionals, services are mostly provided to only residents. Information on whether or not immigrants with non-residential status qualify for healthcare services, therefore, becomes very useful. It is for this reason that Barimah and Teijlingen's (2008) study on the use of traditional medicine by Ghanaian immigrants in Canada, is an interesting one. In many cases, immigrants seek information on alternative healthcare to help them survive, where they are not allowed to use orthodox medical care because of their non-resident statuses. Ghanaians, especially those in countries with bigger Ghanaian communities, such as Canada, have been found to support and share information on the use of Ghanaian Traditional Medicine to help them survive (Barimah & Teijlingen 2008).

In 2008, Kristine Krause examined how legal status, transitional network and religion interrelate in health practices among Ghanaians living in London. She emphasised that situational, formal and informal contacts between the people are very meaningful in the event of sickness and helps them to support one another both practically and financially to find treatment (Krause, 2008). This is especially important when the Ghanaian group finds themselves in a country where there are language barriers and other issues such as lack of trust in healthcare providers (Boateng et al. 2012).

When Ghanaians move to live outside their country, how to communicate with family back home becomes a very important aspect of their lives. Using an ethnographic approach, Burrell and Anderson (2008) explored an understanding of how the personal aspiration and social

landscape of Ghanaians living in London shaped their use of a collection of new information and communication technology, such as camcorders, digital cameras, the internet and mobile phones to get in touch with families in Ghana. Two main sequences of ICT use were found – to maintain connections with family and culture back home and for seeking information, new ideas and contacts around the world (Burrell & Anderson 2008). The findings of Burrell and Anderson's study reveal useful systems, tools and modes of sharing information between Ghanaian in London and the families at home. It would be interesting to know what tools and systems those living in New Zealand also use.

Information seeking behaviour of migrants

Obtaining the right and accurate information at the right time is deemed significant to both the well-being of immigrants and their host countries (Khoir, Du, Koronios, 2015). According to Khoir et al the capability to navigate information in a new landscape is increasing an important outcome that is likely to enable social inclusion in a new country. But this is mostly challenging for immigrants. The literature also shows some analysis done by experts on the information seeking behaviours on migrants. Interestingly majority of the studies conducted on information seeking behaviour of migrants focuses on health information (Bernadas and Jiang, 2016; Galeshi, Sharman, Cai, 2018; Nölke, Mensing, Krämer, and Hornberg, 2015; Oh, Zhou, Kreps, and Kim, 2014). For instance, how immigration status exert profound influence on the behaviours of Korean American and Native Koreans seeking health information have been explored by (Oh, Zhou, Kreps, and Kim, 2014). According to Oh and colleague researchers, Koreans who also identify as American have low screening rates for cancer, because there is a reduced access to health related information creating a gap in knowledge and widening health disparities among the Korean immigrants in America.

Also, Galeshi, Sharman, Cai, (2018) explored an understanding of how factors such as ethnicity, gender and immigration status influence the behaviour of foreign-born millennials and second generation adults in seeking health information in the USA. They found that while the internet is the primary source of health related information for all young adults, more educated young people sought health information from family members, interestingly non-educated one depended on the internet as the source of their health related information (Galeshi, Sharman, Cai, 2018, p. 628). Galeshi and colleagues' study is very relevant to the discussion in this paper as it firstly identifies health information as a type of information and it also focuses on immigrants and foreign-born individuals.

The only research studies regarding information seeking behaviour and migration relating Ghanaians found in the literature concerns internal migration within Ghana (mostly from northern to Southern parts of the country). In this regard, Lattof (2018) analyses how health insurance status affects kayayei (head porters) migrants' care-seeking behaviours. According to Lattof, both insured and uninsured migrants did not seek formal health services due to the unpredictable nature of out-of-pocket expenses.

Also, Agyemang, Ngulube, and Dube, (2018) looked at various sources of information available to beads producers at Krobo in the Eastern Region of Ghana and assessed the problems they encountered when searching for information about their work, to determine their information needs and information seeking behaviour. According Agyeman and her colleague researchers, these rural Krobo beads producers need information on markets for their beads, health issues, civic matters, political issues credits to enhance their business, information on farm inputs and agricultural husbandry practices and internal news. Usually they seek these information from their intimate family, neighbours, friends, NGOs, radio, television and beads sellers Agyeman et al. (2018, p. 3).

No matter where Ghanaians migrate to, some of these socio-cultural contexts in which they view the information they need including the ways they view their health and other information remain apparent despite their adjustment to using the systems in their host countries (Owusu-Dakuu, and Smith, 2010).

Thus this study seeks to explore the various cultural patterns Ghanaian have carried with them from their socio-cultural context of Ghana to influence the types of information they need and how they seek and use it in the context of New Zealand, where they have now migrated to live.

Methodology

An interpretive qualitative methodology was employed for the study. Qualitative approaches are particularly useful for developing in-depth understanding and interpretation of issues (Walsham 2006) and they enable deeper explanation of events and processes, leading to specific outcomes (Kaplan and Maxwell 2005, p.33). Both interviews and questionnaires were employed to collect data from 27 Ghanaians in New Zealand. Using two different data collection methods was found appropriate in this study because in situations like this they help to better understand different aspects of the phenomenon (Schutt 2015). The questionnaire made it easy to reach respondents in different regions and also boosted participants' certainty that their confidentiality was much more protected, which was consistent with assertions in the methodology literature (Creswell, 2015; Gray 2014). The questionnaire was designed using Survey Monkey and it was followed up with interviews as discussed in subsequent sections.

To find participants for this study, two initial contacts were identified in Wellington and Hamilton. This led me to have access to various Ghanaian communities in New Zealand including those in Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch and some Ghanaian WhatsApp group platforms including Ghana Abusuafuo and Ghanaian PhD Scholars WhatsApp group. It was by engaging with these communities that I found that the Ghanaian community in Auckland and Hamilton have the same membership. It was the same people who were living in Auckland that have moved to Hamilton. Those from this group who participated in the study identify as coming from Hamilton that is why it appears as having zero participants from Auckland.

Through these initial contacts, other Ghanaians living in other regions of New Zealand were identified. A search on Google also showed the profiles of some Ghanaians on various websites of some New Zealand universities and organisations, where they were either studies or working. These Ghanaians were contacted to seek their participation in the study. In all, 44 email addresses were gathered. Emails were sent to each of them with a consent form and information sheets attached to the email to explain the purpose and objectives of the study. A link to the questionnaire was also embedded in the emails for those who agreed to complete. The questionnaire comprised 33 questions, focusing on information about participants' background, and their awareness of the various information institutions both in Ghana and in New Zealand. There were also questions about the trust, confidence, beliefs and values participants place in the information they use. Participants were also asked about the institutions that providing the information they need, the types of information they prefer and are willing to share among themselves. In all, 27 responses to the questionnaire were received, representing a 61% response rate. The responses are discussed in the findings section below.

The main intention of the questionnaire was to trigger qualitative conversations. Thus, at the end of the questionnaire, a question was added, requesting participants to give a contact number if they would be interested in the researcher calling them to discuss their responses further in an interview. Ten questionnaire respondents gave their phone numbers. All ten of them were interviewed face-to-face. Three interviewees living outside Wellington had their interviews through Skype and recorded, using a Skype call graph software. Each interview took approximately 1 hour.

Data analysis

The Survey Monkey software provided a basic level of analysis of the questionnaire responses on each of the questions in the form of tables and charts. This depth of analysis was enough to give a general overview of what the participants were doing in New Zealand, when they first arrived and how long that have lived in the country. It also gave a good impression of what sort information Ghanaians sought about New Zealand while they were still in Ghana and planning to come to New Zealand. These ideas made it easy to compare the information the respondents gave in their questionnaire responses, providing a level of understanding that helped in identifying further areas to discuss during the interviews. The discussion in this features mainly ideas from the interviews because of the in-depth understanding they provide to give a good appreciation of the information cultural patterns of Ghanaians living in New Zealand.

The interviews were all transcribed and analysed manually by reading through several times, using colour codes to identify ideas, themes and pattern clusters. Ideas from the transcripts together with the notes and the researcher's personal observations were analysed as data to obtain the findings discussed below. Interviewees were labelled, P1 - for the first interviewee, P2 - for the second interviewee, P3 - for the third ..., up to P10 - for the tenth interviewee. This was to enable easy references to specific interviewee comments during discussions. Since participants' consent were sought through the information sheet the signing of consent forms before the interviews, it was assumed that attempts were made towards addressing ethical issues.

Findings

Majority of the participants in this study (13) were living in Wellington. Although most Ghanaians in New Zealand are known to be living in Auckland (Statistics New Zealand, 2013), only one participant in this study came from Auckland. The rest of the participants were living in Hamilton (6), Christchurch (5) and Palmerston North (2). Most of the respondents (18) were students, undertaking various postgraduate degrees, in different New Zealand universities. Nine respondents had come to New Zealand as students and as at the time of this research, had completed their university studies and were working in various New Zealand institutions. Nineteen participants were between 31-40 years. Most of the participants (18) have only been in New Zealand for less than 5 years. Seven people have been living in New Zealand between 10 and 20 years while 2 participants indicated that they have lived in New Zealand for over 20 years.

This study did not set out to find the reasons for the number of Ghanaians living in New Zealand. But, interviewees' indicated that many Ghanaians living in New Zealand did not take part in the 2013 census for various reasons. Some of them did not have the status that qualified them to take part in the census. Interviewees indicated that there used to be many more Ghanaians in New Zealand than the 207 found by Statistics New Zealand. However, between 2006 and 2008, a global economic recession affected New Zealand, Australia was not much affected by the recession as a result of a booming coal mine operation. Thus, most of the Ghanaian immigrants were part of a massive emigration of people from New Zealand to Australia at the time for economic prospects. The interview comments also showed that although most of Ghanaians were found to live in the Auckland Regions in 2013, the majority of them are moving from Auckland to other areas such as Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch, and Palmerstone North, as a result of a housing crisis in Auckland resulting from extreme high house prices.

Types of information

The types of information described by participants focus on disciplinary area types, consistent with the types of information described in the literature by Bickley (2014). Interviewees also described their types of information based on the type of format the information comes in. Most of the interviewees like information in electronic formats when they want to access them. But when it comes using any type of information for specific purposes, then they will go for those in physical forms. Further discussion is provided about these types of information in the section title *information preferences*.

Interest in specific topic areas and the formats of information determine the specific types of information preferred. To understand the types of information participants used, participants were asked to indicate the various topic areas they usually search for information on when they were in Ghana and which ones they use having moved to New Zealand. Participants prefer similar types of information both when in Ghana and when they moved to live in New Zealand. However, the preferences for the information used while in Ghana differed slightly from those used in New Zealand. Common areas of information preferred include education and health. A majority of the participants moved to New Zealand for educational purposes. According to interviewees' comments, most Ghanaians would not have considered moving to New Zealand, had it not been an attractive scholarship offered by some New Zealand universities, for postgraduate studies. Thus, information about educational issues such as courses of study, which university has the most attractive scholarship, which university has a high reputation and which university has high completion rate, become very useful for most of the interviewees to share with other Ghanaian both living in New Zealand and with family and friends back in Ghana. Interviewees revealed that the sharing of information about New Zealand higher education has contributed to the increasing number of Ghanaians moving into the country in recent times. Table 1 shows a summary of the various topic areas and the level of preferences of participants.

Main areas of information preference and used			
When in Ghana		In New Zealand	
<i>Area of information</i>	<i>Number of preferences (out of 27)</i>	<i>Area of information</i>	<i>Number of preferences (out of 27)</i>
Education	23	Education	21
Health	15	Health	16
Environmental issues	12	Environmental issues	13
Politics	11	Politics	12
Sports	9	Sports	10
Culture	9	Culture	9
Entertainment	1	Entertainment	9
Economy	1	Economy	7
Religion	1	Religion	1
		Agriculture	1

Table 1: Main areas of information preferences and use

Health information is also very important because New Zealand requires very strict health examination before they allow immigrants to live in the country. Interviewees revealed that this idea motivated them to take good care of themselves while in Ghana so that they do not get their visas refused based on any health issues. They, therefore, continue to seek and share appropriate information on health issues and their immigration requirements. Once in New Zealand, they take care to stay fit as Ghanaians find health care services to be very expensive.

Interviewees described the New Zealand environment as very beautiful, green, clean, and life sustaining. However, these are not the type of information they are interested in hearing about the environment. They are concerned about natural disasters such as earthquake and tsunami. Majority of Ghanaians did not know about these specific environmental conditions of New Zealand before moving to the country. One interviewee said:

Brother, I never knew there were so many earthquakes and about 500 aftershocks almost every day. If I knew I wouldn't come. But when I consider the money I have spent to come here and sometimes you think about some of the conditions at home too and you think it is still better here. (P6)

Although most participants searched for environmental information about New Zealand before moving to the country, the interview comments revealed that they focused on the weather conditions more than other natural disasters like earthquakes and tsunamis. These natural occurrences worry interviewees a lot and they share a lot of information about these issues among themselves and with other Ghanaians within New Zealand in terms of what they need to do to support one another in an unlikely event.

Factors influencing participants' behaviour around the information they use and share in New Zealand were consistent with the elementary factors found at the base level of the information culture framework.

Value accorded to information as a record

The interview comments revealed that Ghanaians in New Zealand attach a very high level of respect for information that is required to enhance either their work or study. When it comes to interpersonal communication, they accord greater significance to oral information than documentary types. For instance, what interviewees described as serious issues or important matters are discussed *face-to-face* than through other media, such as email or phone.

If you want to discuss an important matter with an elderly person, for instance, it would be disrespectful to use the email or phone. The best approach would be to inform the person that you have something to discuss with them, then go personally to talk with them face-to-face. (P3)

Despite preferences for oral discussion on important matters, Ghanaians regard recorded information as important evidence of interactions or activities. Each person has a way of keeping records of their activities relating to both their personal lives or about the formal role they have come to perform in New Zealand. Personal dairies are mostly used to keep personal records, while electronic files and folders are created to keep records on studies and work. Some of the interviewees indicated that they keep special backups of work related records at home with the intention of referring to them when they have to perform similar roles in the future, especially when they later return to Ghana. Others also indicated that while still performing their roles or studying in New Zealand, they share information on relevant skills and knowledge learnt either on their job or studies with colleagues back home to contribute to

improving the performance of similar roles back home. So, they keep records for future reference. A significant number of the interviewees, however, indicated that they do not like the idea of keeping records. An interviewee explained why they do not like keeping records in the following words:

I am a poor recordkeeper. But it is because I do not see any need... I am always trying to do something new so I do not see the need to keep a record of the old things. I lose interest in keeping records. If what you have done yesterday still excites you, then you have not achieved something new. (P7)

This comment indicates that even though people may complete higher education, or may be working in reputable institutions and be very organised, their attitudes towards recordkeeping and information sharing are likely to be different from what would generally be expected in the information management field.

Information preferences

Information in digital media and formats are predominantly preferred because they are found to be easy to use and share. Preferred information sources include the use of libraries' catalogue, academic databases and the World Wide Web. How any of these places or collections are used depends on where the Ghanaian finds themselves. Participants indicated that when in Ghana, the library is the most preferred place to search for information. But, in New Zealand, they prefer to use the World Wide Web. Interestingly, almost all participants were not sure whether Ghana has public libraries nor were they aware of any institution performing national library functions in the country. Participants indicated that they only know of academic libraries in Ghana. Even though there are public libraries in Ghana and the Ghana Library Board plays the role of a national library, many Ghanaians living in New Zealand were not aware of this. An explanation to this low awareness may be because these institutions are not effective in Ghana. Participants in this study were however very much aware of the national and public libraries in New Zealand although they do not feel the need to use them.

Very few Ghanaians visit the library physically in New Zealand. Interviewees explained that New Zealand libraries are very noisy. They also do not see the need to travel to the library when they can find all the information they need from the web. When they visit a public library in New Zealand it is only to use other services such as looking for a *justice of the peace* to endorse some documents. All interviewees indicated that if they need information from the library, they would rather visit the library's website from their rooms as they do not have time to go to the library physically. It was also found that the use of web search engines, particularly Google, were broadly referred for searching general information. All study participants also indicated that they would prefer information from a friend or family member, especially if these members are known to be knowledgeable or experienced in a specific topic. Majority of Ghanaians are aware of the usefulness of institutions providing practical information such as the New Zealand website which talks about life in the country, immigration New Zealand contact centre, citizenship bureau and the Ghana high commission. But, they do not use information from these places. About half of the interviewees explained that they do not trust these institutions, while the rest indicated that they just do not need such information. They rather trust and prefer to use information from colleagues, especially these they have seen to have worked for other Ghanaians.

Language considerations

Although there are different languages in Ghana, participants prefer information that is documented in only the English language. When sharing information, however, they share certain aspects in some Ghanaian language mainly in the Akan language, especially when it during oral conversations. Ghanaians sometimes find technical language in certain fields as a barrier to specific information in those areas, especially when they visit various information institutions to search for information.

Information related competencies

Despite a high preference for the library as the ideal place of information, participants lacked understanding of specific search strategies used to search library catalogues and other search tools. All interviewees had no idea of what a search feature is. The only search strategy they inadvertently practiced were *keyword search* and *phrase search*. The most of the interviewee did not understand search like *truncation*, *Boolean logic*, *wildcard* and *subject headings* that are also used to refine search strategies.

The various elements identified to describe the information related competencies are consistent with the level 2 factors of the information culture framework. The lack of awareness of specific search strategies is an indication of inadequate information related competencies. That notwithstanding, participants have a very high awareness of the need to share and transfer practices information among themselves, through the electronic mail system, phone and face-to-face. Participants also have a high awareness of online information retrieval using mainly the Google search engine and online library catalogues. There is also awareness of the need to keep records of work on hard drives, cloud storage, email folders and in print or hard copy.

Most of the interviewees indicated that they do not understand certain information management terms or lack the skills and competencies. So, they find it difficult to develop efficient search strategies to enable easy retrieval of relevant information that effectively suits their purpose. This makes it difficult for them to search academic databases and library catalogues. They, therefore, resort more to the open web, using mainly Google search. Sometimes when it becomes necessary, they go to libraries and other information institutions to seek help from staff. Even so, because they find it difficult to clearly describe their information need, most of the staff in New Zealand information institutions do not understand their information need to offer the required help. One interviewee expressed this challenge in the following words: *Sometimes they will refer you to a specific person who appears to know almost everything in the institution before they can understand what you actually want and find it for you (P6)*. New Zealand library and information management staff, therefore, need time enough time to delve deeper to understand users', (especially immigrants) specific information needs. Interviewees believe that this can help the New Zealand information industry to be more customer oriented.

Trust

Most of the Ghanaians who took part in this study said they do not share digital information because they don't trust online systems. Although participants indicated that the use more online sources of information, most of them also said they place more trust in manual information systems than online information. This group of interviewees emphasised that they do not even have any social media accounts, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Skype, etc., as these will require you to put personal information *out there*. But, they all have email addresses. One interviewee who completed his PhD with a New Zealand university said, he once wanted a lecturer in Ghana to proofread his thesis. But because he was scared that part of the ideas in his work could be stolen online, he removed some aspects from the thesis before sending it for proofreading. The following interviewee comment also explained why some of

the Ghanaian in New Zealand do not trust electronic systems when it comes to information use and sharing:

I do not even want to hear about clouds. My boss once made me create a drop box account for a project we did. But, I deleted it after the project. These are some of the things they use to steal information about us. There are a lot of programs and malware that they can use to steal information from us. Even banks get stolen... I do not even like using pen-drives [USB] those are the stuff that can easily carry the viruses to your computer. I do not believe in antivirus. I do not move pen-drive [USB] from my PC, if you are conscious, you do not need any antivirus. I rather use email folders. (P7)

This comment is very consistent with one by a traditionalist cited in Boamah (2014, p.125) as shown in the section discussing Ghana and its people in the early parts of this paper. The fear of losing value in information and ownership of information resources through sharing is not entrenched in the minds of only the Ghanaian traditionalist is also rooted in the heart of some Ghanaian elites and this belief affect the way they behave towards online information in New Zealand. For instance, most Ghanaians in New Zealand use immigration information a lot. Even though they can read the information they need from the official website of Immigration New Zealand, they will still physically go to the immigration office to verify the same information face-to-face with a staff and to be doubly sure of how such information works, they will find out how it has worked for a colleague before they fully act on it.

Willingness to share information

There is a high motivation to share information with participants. But according to the interview comments, this depends on the type of information and who they are sharing with. Interviewees revealed that Ghanaians are very cautious when it comes to sharing personal information even with very close friends. They explained that sharing personal information such as issues affecting one's family, health, finance and work place dynamics require a high level of trust. Information relating to general practical issues that affect daily life in New Zealand, such as accommodation, immigration issues and where to find common African food and other related items to buy are easily shared, even on the first acquaintance. Some of the interviewees from Wellington, Christchurch and Hamilton revealed that to enhance the easy sharing of issues of trust, Ghanaians in various regions have created association and elected leaders who are respected and trusted to keep personal issues confidential and apply proper traditional procedures to address issues that affect people personally that and which they cannot share with just anybody else. These regional associations culminate into a national Ghanaian association in New Zealand, with its head office in Auckland. These associations according to interviewees, help Ghanaians to support one another in many areas of their lives in New Zealand. However, interviewees from Wellington intimated that they wish their association would have a more face-to-face gathering. They indicated that they are more willing to discuss their issues when they meet face-to-face with the elders than to discuss them on the group's WhatsApp discussion platforms.

Discussion

The various behaviour patens that influence the information use and sharing behaviour among Ghanaian living in New Zealand has explored and analysed in this study, helping to understand the main issues that impact on the information culture of Ghanaian immigrants in New Zealand who were interviewed. The concept of information culture relates to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that influence the ways in which information is identified, accessed, used to achieve desired results, shared and preserved for the future. As was revealed by the interviewees, in Ghana, the influence of the cultural norms, beliefs and values are very strong

in the ways people access, use and share information. Analysis of the interview data also revealed that Ghanaians easily carry these influences with them to impact on their activities in New Zealand. New Zealand has its own cultural norms and values which impact people's information culture. This study shows how Ghanaian immigrants who participated in the research have carried aspects of their information culture, such as secrecy, preference for oral information and face-to-face communication etc., into New Zealand to influence how they use and share information. Analysis of the literature showed that the New Zealand context also provide opportunities for different types of information and varying channels for communications and Ghanaian immigrant who took part in this study have shown that they take full advantage of these opportunity to enable effective using and sharing of information among themselves.

The study also found that most Ghanaian immigrant in New Zealand prefer to use information that can enable them to perform the roles for which they migrated to New Zealand, including education, work, entertainment and sports. There is very high awareness of tools and systems for accessing, using and sharing both physical and electronic information among Ghanaians immigrants in New Zealand. The World Wide Web is the most preferred place used for searching information. While the online digital format of information is highly sourced and used, more trust is placed in physical formats and also in information that is shared and communicated through face-to-face or phone. The use of the face-to-face channel is also to show respect for the person the information is being shared with and to attach value to the type of information being shared. The main types of information used are those concerning education and health. Ghanaians immigrants who took part in this study are also very much interested in sharing information about the New Zealand environment, particularly those relating to earthquakes, tsunami and other natural disasters among themselves. Practical information relating to immigration, health, accommodation and where to find common African food and other related items to buy in New Zealand are commonly shared.

Conclusion

Difference types and forms of information have been discussed in the literature, including the perception of information as the very basis of any living being's awareness that can be experienced. Other forms of information identified in the literature include information-as-a-thing, information-as-knowledge and information as-a-process. Information can also be classified according to the experience and skills, the content knowledge people have in particular fields or disciplinary areas. The main types of information used by Ghanaian living in New Zealand focus on this last category of information classification. They include information on education, health, information about New Zealand environmental issues and hazards such as earthquakes, tsunami and weather conditions etc. Some of the Ghanaians in this study also find information in areas like sports, culture, entertainment and the New Zealand economy, useful. The main perceptions that drive Ghanaians to use information in these areas are determined by personal or group interest, their willingness to share information to feel belong and the need to find the right information to solve specific issues they face as immigrants in New Zealand.

The various factors influencing the information use and sharing behaviour are consistent with the elements in the information culture framework. Ghanaian immigrants who took part in this study showed that they have high respect for recorded information and are willing to share information among themselves. The interviewees, however, reveal that there is a belief among Ghanaians that their success and quality of life in New Zealand depends on the types of information they use and how they use it. The study also found that the desire to share

information is motivation by a need to support one another. The main purpose of sharing is to help repackage contextual information in the New Zealand, in a way that can easily be understood and used by other Ghanaians immigrants (especially new immigrants) who are not very familiar with the New Zealand socio-cultural system. Information from formal information sources such as libraries, database and the World Wide Web is preferred, especially among students in the Ghanaian group. Nevertheless, the interviews discussions suggest that most Ghanaian immigrants lack the required information literacy skills and information management competencies to enable effective access and use information from these reliable sources. The interviews further revealed that the need for some Ghanaians immigrants to use certain technical and contextual language in some New Zealand information institutions, such as libraries, archives and museums hinders their ability to fully make use of information from such institutions.

Interviewees believe that New Zealand information institutions, such as libraries, can be more customer-oriented by developing more programmes that are suitable for the specific needs of immigrants. More time is needed to engage with an immigrant to listen to them using simple plain English language and less technical terms. Interviewees also indicated that there is also the need to create more quiet spaces in libraries as most immigrants are not yet used to the recent Western library spaces that appear to tolerate noisy learners. The interview discussions revealed that in addition to meetings by the regional associations, there is a need to create a Ghanaian forum, both on the online space and face-to-face, where all Ghanaians in New Zealand can meet together regularly to share and discuss issues affecting them in New Zealand and also to talk about developmental issues that can be diffused back to Ghana to enhance the development of their country.

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