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## AWARENESS AND USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA: A STUDY OF ICT STUDENTS AT KWARA STATE UNIVERSITY, NIGERIA

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**AWARENESS AND USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA: A STUDY OF ICT STUDENTS AT  
KWARA STATE UNIVERSITY, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

The use of social networks among students at higher institutions has become popular and is widely celebrated amid criticism. This is because these social networks are changing the way people communicate, interact, and socialize. The purpose of this paper is to explore students' awareness and use of social media: a study of ICT students at Kwara State University, Nigeria. This study used a survey research method. The respondents were students' faculty of information and communication technology, and the results reveal that the majority of respondents (91.4%) are familiar with social networks, have access to the Internet, and regularly use mobile phones for social networking. Less than half (8.6%) of them speak and share information on social media. While results also show that participants intentionally use social networks for academic purposes, self-expression, and to establish global friendships,

**Keywords:** ICT, social media, social networks; applications, and saturation theory use of social media. Share news and information.

## 1.0 Introduction

The emergence of new media (the Internet or digital technologies) is changing the way people communicate with each other (Balaban-Sali, 2012), access and share information. Unlike the old days where people had to rely only on traditional media or interpersonal communication; People now have the opportunity to find, read, view and share the information they love, anywhere, anytime and on any topic (Popoola, 2014). In this way, the power and influence of mass media channels of information on the public diminishes. This development has also led to the proliferation of many new communication channels which include: bulletin boards, forums, social media sites and many popular and unpopular search engines (McQuail, 2011).

Social media technologies are quickly becoming an important part of people's lives. People use them to communicate, read, comment, share, like, and create content (Chen and Sakamoto, 2013; Ma et al., 2014). Similarly, it is millions of young people (Pempek et al. 2009), especially students, who are highly dependent on these social networking sites (Edegoh et.al. 2013). The widespread use of these new communication platforms, especially among students at higher institutions, is gaining momentum and is gaining the attention of researchers. According to Lewis (2009), Sponcil and Gitimu (2013), and Yoo and Kim (2013), students of higher institutions are the main users of social networks. With Internet access, students can use social networking sites such as Facebook to create, verify and interact with friends (Edegoh et al., 2013; Pempek et al., 2009), a blog to write, edit, and publish information (Hodgson and Wong, 2011); Podcast for listening to and sharing music with peers (Swanson, 2012); Twitter to share information, and (Olaniran, 2014); Wiki for updating information (Ma and Yuen, 2008).

However, students' use of social networks is not just limited to socializing and entertainment; sharing information about events (including surprising or breaking news) happening in and around their communities is one of the most popular activities on social media. Lin, Lu (2011), Lewis (2009), and Wilson (2012) assert that over the past decade, the availability, licensing, and development of social media has been allowing individuals (including students) to use their cameras and mobile phones to create and share images, text, and images to online communities through Facebook and YouTube. Ma et al. (2014) adds that people prefer using social media to report and share information when compared to print and broadcast media respectively. According to Popoola (2014), this journalist-like act on digital media now supports citizen journalism theory. Given this broad global culture, it is therefore necessary to investigate and explore the types of social networks that ICT students know and why they use.

## **2.0 Statement of the problem**

The use of social networks is now a global phenomenon and, according to Hussain (2012), its use and dependence by and among students is growing rapidly. Despite this, very little is known about what, why, and how people use these sites (Pempek et al., 2009). Likewise, studies appear on social media on a daily basis. But many of these studies to date, according to Bosch (2009), are centered in Europe and the United States. This indicates relatively insufficient data on awareness and use of social networking sites among students at higher institutions in Africa. Moreover, in Nigeria, there are ongoing studies on the use of social media, but according to Popoola (2014), there are quite limited studies on the use of social networks by students of ICT and journalism. Balaban and Sali (2012) argue that ICT students are expected to know and use social media more than students from other disciplines. Therefore, for this reason, this study

aims to explore and explore the social media sites that ICT students of Kwara State University know, access, use, and benefit from.

### **3.0 The purpose of the study**

As the use of social media has become prevalent, the aim of this study is to investigate whether ICT students at Kwara State University know about social media, what they do with it, and the gratification they get next. We hope that the findings of this study will help students and lecturers in the field of ICT find ways to integrate social networks as part of ICT teaching and learning programs. Furthermore, a review of the literature reveals that research on social media use among ICT students in Nigerian higher institutions especially Kwara State University is relatively limited. To achieve this purpose, the following research questions should guide the course of this work.

### **4.0 Research questions**

1. How well do students aware about social media?
2. To what extent do students access social media?
3. To what extent do students use social media?

## 5.0 Review of Literature

This study is based on students' awareness, access and use of social networks and, for this purpose, the uses and gratification (U&G) theory of Katz et al. The year 1974 was used because it provides a systematic explanation of why people use and attend ICT programs. The basic assumption of U&G theory is that people choose, prefer, and use certain media at the expense of others to satisfy their ultimate needs, which will lead to some gratification. However, the advent of social media has transformed media users into active 'consumers' (Anaeto et al., 2008; Asemah, 2011), thus opening a new wave of investigation (Stafford et al., 2004 cited in Anaeto et al., 2008). Whiting and Williams (2013) believe that the U&G theory is relevant to social media because it helps explain its uses. Gallion supports that employing U&G in the study of social media today is imperative for ICT researchers as it reveals new ground compared to traditional media such as radio, television, and film.

The term "new media" refers to social media, but academic work (Pridmore, 2013) distinguishes the differences between them, although they are not separated in some aspects (Popoola, 2014). The main difference between them lies in their forms and techniques (Pridmore, 2013) of digital interaction in sharing content or meaning. Lewis (2009) defines social media as the platforms that connect people together to provide a means that allows them to create content and share it with others. Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, Wikis, Twitter, blogs, Pinterest, Tumblr, YouTube, Instagram, and Flickr are the popular examples of social media applications. There are more than 150 social media platforms included in the encyclopedia and they are also non-exhaustive (Lewis, 2009). Similarly, Edosomwan et al. (2011) argue that it is impossible to investigate social media without mentioning social networks. Social networking is the process of

communicating and sharing different types of messages with people of similar interests via social media platforms (Lewis, 2009). Moreover, Kirchner and Karpinski (2010) also argue that the rapid growth and popularity of social networking sites in the second half of the last decade is due to their extensive use by schools and higher-education students.

Social media technologies offer their users equal freedom (Wilson, 2012) in what they do with them. As social media platforms abound, so do their functions and uses. Osatuyi (2013) explains that social networks are categorized on the basis of how people use them. For example, social networking sites like Myspace and Facebook are used to share and update messages; microblogs like Twitter are used for SMS; wikis are mainly used for educational and informational purposes; blogs are usually personal or collaborative posting online notes; and online forums are an interactive space where participants discuss issues that are posted on the discussion board. Bilandzic et al. (2012) introduced three "social uses of media" as: interacting, recognizing, and sharing. People use social media for hard or soft issues or both. For example, some people use social media to play online games, while others use it to negotiate, create, maintain, and participate in political and cultural issues. Therefore, the popularity, availability, and accessibility of social media technologies make their use in almost every aspect of life possible. Osatuyi (2013) adds that people use social networks to organize campaigns (political or non-political), awareness creation, social interaction, marketing, and healthcare activities. But its use list goes beyond that. Edegoh et al. (2013) assert that many students at higher institutions in Nigeria are presumed to be using social networks, among which Kwara State University ICT students are among them.

## **5.1 Use social media to spread news and information.**

According to Olaniran (2014), with the advent of social media technology, the process of sharing intermediate information is changing. With the help of social networking sites, people share what they find interesting with others via the internet and mobile-based technologies. Osatuyi (2013) states that nowadays, social networks are useful sites where people, governments, and organizations share information with target audiences. Ma and Chan (2014) support that social networks, especially Twitter and Facebook, have become exceptionally popular platforms for sharing millions of videos, phrases, photos, audio files, and articles. Osatuyi (2013) asserts that social networks are rapidly replacing print and broadcast media in sharing information. The results cited in Ma et al. (2014) supported the finding that people found social networks to be the most preferred medium for sharing news stories. This led to the emergence of citizen journalism. However, the issue of credibility, reliability, and professionalism that appears in the source and the way information are shared on social media remains the biggest issue that deserves investigation.

## **5.2 Related Studies**

The rationale behind this study is the response to the prevalent use of social media, particularly among ICT students and the gratification they get. Previous studies provide compelling explanations about which social networks students use or prefer to use, why they use them, how to access them, and their advantages. The following studies, in sequential order, are relevant to the focus of this study.



Hussain (2012) studied social media trends among undergraduate students at the Islamic University of Pakistan. Appropriate sampling was used to select 600 respondents using the survey method. The results revealed that 90% of the respondents have an account on Facebook; LinkedIn, 53%; and Twitter, 25%. The majority (92%) use social media to get information, 87% to communicate, and 76% to learn. Ezeah et al. (2013) examined social media use among students at three Nigerian universities. 300 respondents were randomly selected using the survey. The main findings revealed that 89% of the respondents used social media, while 11% did not. The majority (131) used social networks for entertainment, 88 for information, and 105 for academic purposes. Ndaku (2013) investigated the impact of social media on students' academic performance. 50 respondents were randomly selected through the survey. The results indicated that 92.3% are aware of social media and 96.2% have an internet connection. Similarly, the majority (46.1%) used cell phones to access the Internet, and Facebook was very popular among the respondents. In 2014, Omeko et al. explored the use of social networks among students at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). A descriptive survey was used, and 150 respondents were randomly selected. The results showed that Facebook (mean = 3.72), YouTube (mean = 3.01), and WhatsApp (mean = 3.00) were the most used social networks among the respondents. Furthermore, students used social media for interaction (mean = 4.56), entertainment (mean = 3.56), and academic purposes (mean = 3.02). Papoola (2014) surveyed social media use among students of journalism and mass communication in Oyo State, Nigeria. The mixed method was used, and 150 respondents were intentionally selected. The results revealed that 98.5% of the respondents were familiar with social media. Facebook (78.5%), Twitter (71.9%), and WhatsApp (73.3%) were the most used social networks among respondents. The majority (91.9%) used social networks using their mobile phones; 32.6% used laptops; and 4.4% went to coffee shops.

Similarly, 71.9% used social media for interaction; 54.8% for academic purposes; and 48.1% for entertainment.

## 6.0 Methodology

Survey research methodology was used for the study. The study population consists of approximately 9,500 ICT users at Kwara State University. A total of 300 students from the cohort were sampled using random sampling techniques. Of these, 300 of these questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, of which 280 (93%) were duly completed. The approved instrument for the study was a two-part questionnaire that was sent to on-campus respondents. Section A of the questionnaire collects basic information, while Section B measures awareness, access and use of social media among ICT students at Kwara State University. Validated, tested for facial validation, and personally administered by the researcher with the help of university community member. The data was analyzed using frequency tables and percentages.

### Research Question 1: To what extent are the students aware of social media? Table 1:

Do you know about social media?

| Respondents | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------|-----------|----------------|
| Yes         | 256       | 91%            |
| No          | 24        | 9%             |
| Total       | 280       | 100%           |

The above table reveals that, out of 93% respondents of the study, 91% aware about social media while only 9% was not. This shows that the majority of the respondents were aware of the existence of social media.

**Table 2:****Which social network are you aware of among the following?**

| <b>Social Networks</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Facebook               | 45               | 16%                   |
| Twitter                | 31               | 11%                   |
| YouTube                | 39               | 14%                   |
| WhatsApp               | 44               | 16%                   |
| LinkedIn               | 30               | 11%                   |
| Instagram              | 26               | 9%                    |
| Google                 | 46               | 16%                   |
| 2go                    | 19               | 7%                    |
| Total                  | 280              | 100%                  |

The above table reveals that, out of 93% respondents of the study, 16% was aware of Facebook, 16% aware of WhatsApp, and 16% aware of Google respectfully. This implies that Google, Facebook and YouTube were the most popular while 2go 6% and Badoo 5% were the least popular among the students.

**Table 3:****Which social network do you use among the following?**

| <b>Social Networks</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Facebook               | 49               | 17.5%                 |
| Twitter                | 25               | 8.9%                  |

|           |     |       |
|-----------|-----|-------|
| YouTube   | 35  | 12.5% |
| WhatsApp  | 50  | 17.8% |
| LinkedIn  | 37  | 13%   |
| Instagram | 33  | 11.7% |
| Google    | 45  | 16%   |
| 2go       | 5   | 1.7%  |
| Total     | 280 | 100%  |

The above table indicates that, out of 280 respondents of the study, 17.5% used Facebook while 17.8% used WhatsApp. This also demonstrates that Facebook and WhatsApp were the most popularly used social networks among the students while 1.7% of them was using 2go.

**Research Question 2: To what extent do the students access social media?**

**Table 4:**

**Do you have access to social media?**

| Respondents | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------|-----------|----------------|
| Yes         | 249       | 89%            |
| No          | 31        | 11%            |
| Total       | 280       | 100%           |

The above table shows that, out of 280 respondents of the study, 89% had access to social media while 11% students had no access to social media. This indicates that the majority of the respondents had access to social media

**Table 5:**

**If yes, how do you access social media?**

| Network Connection | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Subscribed data    | 178       | 64%            |
| cybercafé          | 84        | 30%            |
| Both               | 18        | 6%             |
| Total              | 280       | 100%           |

The above table reveals that, majority of the respondents, 64% subscribed data to access social media while only 30% went to cybercafé. This implies that majority of the respondents used data subscription to connect social media.

**Table 6:**

**How do you access social networks?**

| Assessment       | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Computer Laptop  | 50        | 18%            |
| Computer Desktop | 50        | 18%            |
| Mobile Phone     | 175       | 62%            |

|             |     |      |
|-------------|-----|------|
| Smart Phone | 5   | 2%   |
| Total       | 280 | 100% |

The above table shows that, majority of the respondents, 62% accessed social networks using mobile phones while only 18% used Computer Desktop/computer laptop while 2% access through smart phone. This reveals that the majority of the respondents accessed social networks using their mobile phones while very few used other computers.

**Research question 3: To what extent do the students use social media?**

**Table 7:**

**Do you report or share news on social media?**

| Report | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------|-----------|----------------|
| No     | 198       | 71%            |
| Yes    | 82        | 29%            |
| Total  | 280       | 100%           |

The above table indicates that, only 29% of the respondents used to share information on social media while 71% was not. This shows that majority of the respondents were not sharing information on it.

**Table 8:**

**How often do you share information on social media?**

| <b>Period</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Very Often    | 23               | 8%                    |
| Often         | 9                | 3%                    |
| Rarely        | 248              | 89%                   |
| Total         | 280              | 100%                  |

The above table reveals that, out of 280 of the respondents, only 8. % used to share information on social media. This indicates that majority of the respondents 89% who use social media rarely share information with it.

**Table 9:**

**Through which of the following do you frequently share information?**

| <b>Usage</b>    | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Broadcast media | 64               | 23%                   |
| Print media     | 21               | 7%                    |
| Social media    | 195              | 70%                   |
| Total           | 280              | 100%                  |

The above table shows that, out of 280 of the respondents, only 70% of them were frequently using social media to share information, 23% used broadcast while 7% used print media. This reveals that majority of the respondents were using social media to share information.



## 7.0 Discussion

Social networks have become a part of the lives of many students in higher institutions. The majority (98.2%) of the respondents in this study were familiar with social networks. This result was in line with those of Ezeah et al. (2013), Ndaku (2013), and Popoola (2014), where about 98% of respondents were familiar with social media. Very few respondents were unaware of the existence of social media. This indicates that social networking was very popular among Nigerian students. In addition, these social networks are many and varied. Lewis (2009) claimed that there are more than 150 registered social networks, many of which are still emerging. Some social networks are more attractive to some people and also to some countries than others. In this study, Facebook, WhatsApp, Google, Twitter, and YouTube were very popular, and respondents used them more than they used other social networks. This finding was also discovered in the studies of Buhari et al. (2014), Hussain (2012), Omekwu et al. (2014), and Papoola (2014), where the majorities of students used and were more aware of Facebook, Google, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube than other social networks. This also supports the idea of the use and gratification theory stated by Pupas (2001), that people prefer the use of certain media outlets at the expense of other means at their disposal.

Social networks are Internet-based applications (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010), so their use is related to the internet. In this study, the majority of respondents (86.5%) had access to social media. This result was in accordance with the results of Ndaku (2013), where the majority of respondents (96.2%) had access to internet service. This was also confirmed by the report that Nigeria has the largest number of internet users in Africa. Moreover, the majority (75.7%) of them used to buy data to subscribe to internet services.

Very few went to the cafe. This result was similar to that of Popoola (2014), where many (32.6%) of the respondents used to buy data to connect to social media, while very few of them accessed the internet by going to cafe. People use different technological devices to access social networks. In this study, the majority of respondents (70.3%) were able to access social media using mobile phones, while very few used smartphones, computers, or laptops. This finding was also echoed in Lenhart (2015), Ndaku (2013), and Papoola (2014), that the majority of respondents were able to access social networks using their mobile phones, while few used a computer/laptop.

Students' use of social media has become prevalent. The advent of social media allows them to report and share news and information on the pages or walls of their social networks. Many of the participants in this study used their social networks to make friends, chat with them, and conduct research, and share news or information. This finding was similar to the results obtained in Buhari et al. (2014) and Oyero (2013) in which several participants used social media to share news and information with citizens online. Likewise, it also proceeded according to the result Osatuyi (2012) that social media technologies are rapidly replacing traditional media as a means of sharing information. Along the same lines, this result of U&G theory in Whiting and Williams (2013) confirms that some of the reasons people use new media are communication and information exchange.

## 7.1 Conclusion

This study focuses on students' awareness, access and use of social media among ICT students of Kwara State University as a case study. The use of social networks among the students in higher institutions in Nigeria has become widespread such as Omekwu et al. (2014) claim that they are the primary means of group and personal communication. Nowadays, it is very difficult to find a student without awareness, access and/or using one or many social networking sites such as the results of this study as well as previous studies (Buhari et al., 2014; Edegoh et al., 2013; Olaniran, 2014; Omekwu et al., 2014). This indicates that these social networks have been established a lot of space in the lives of students. The results of this study contribute to both the theoretical framework and the literature review. The study shows that the uses and gratification theory is valid and relevant to the study of social media as respondents in this study use social media sites to make friends from faraway places, share information, conduct research and socialize in the learning aspect. It also means that social networks can be used in a useful way as respondents have also used them to support their academic activities. For this purpose, the study suggests that ICT educators should offer courses on social media in teaching as these social networks are used in the aspect of information sharing, strategic communication and advertising (Lewis, 2009), news and information sharing (Ma et al., 2014), public relations, and marketing research among others combined to form mass communication. The preference for social networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and YouTube over the rest also illustrates the functionality (Osatuyi, 2013), the benefits and freedom that users have in choosing and using the social networks available to them. Moreover, the priority given to some social networks over others is related to their availability and popularity in a particular niche.

In this study, social networks like 2go were also popular among the participants in this study which have not been found in other studies. As there is a dearth of social media studies among information and communication technology students of Kwara State University (Papoola, 2014), this study adds to the limited literature that is the main objective of the study.

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