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PATTERN OF INTERNET USE AMONG YOUTHS IN SELECTED RURAL COMMUNITIES OF YEWA NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OGUN STATE NIGERIA

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Youths living in rural communities have limited access to internet resources. Majority who have access to it have used it for limited purposes. The study investigated pattern of internet use among youths in the study area. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 245 youths for the study. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Result showed more males used internet more than female (i.e 73.5% and 26.5%) respectively. Many of them (86.4%) were within ages 18-22, above average were Christians (69.4%) while the remaining were Muslims respectively. Their variations in their use of mobile platforms and applications are as follows: 82.9% used 2go, 42.4% used facebook, 54.3% used SMS, while 8.2% used it for online transactions like purchase of products. Ranking their frequent usage, 2go ranked highest followed by SMS among others. It was found there existed a significant association between respondents' age and pattern of internet use. It was established that youths in the communities used the internet for various purposes ranging from social to economic and religious purposes.

Keywords: Pattern, Internet Use, Youths, Rural Communities, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian National Youth Policy (2001) defines youth as comprising all young people between the ages 18 and 35 years who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In addition, the African Youth Charter, which Nigeria ratified in 2009, defines youth as those aged 15 to 35. However, the earlier stated 18-35 years was adopted for this study. Youths make up a significant portion of the workforce in both rural and urban communities. They have assumed wider community development roles through formation of youth associations

(Adesope, Agumagu, and Nwankwo, 2007). Internet has a value when it becomes accessible and usable especially among youths of the present generation. Therefore, usability and effectiveness of information largely depends on the access to information. Momodu (2002) reported that rural populations in Nigeria have restricted access to information on the internet, though it is a vital necessity for development and civilization. Through communication, information that usually takes many days or weeks to disseminate now takes seconds or minutes. It is now possible for people especially youths to make

interpersonal communication with others to get desired information as quickly as possible from other areas of the country or from other countries with the use of social media without leaving their immediate environment (Laittos Projects World, 2013).

General Use of the Internet

The internet has become a prime venue for social interaction (O'keeffe, 2011). Through e-mail, chat room, instant messaging, news-groups and other means, people are sharing aspects of their daily lives, talking about interests with likeminded others, and keeping in touch with family and friends. Social interaction has become the primary use of home computers (Moore, 2000). In the midst of all this social activities, people are forming relationships with those whom they meet on the Internet- especially those with whom they interact on a regular basis. In many if not most ways, social interaction on the Internet resembles that in traditional, face-to-face venues (McKenna and Bargh, 1999). Social media is a form of electronic communication which facilitates interaction based on certain interests and characteristics. Social media are media for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Social media use web-based technologies to transform and broadcast media monologues into social dialogues (Laitto Projects World, 2013). Social media has four platforms: facebook, 2go, twitter and whatsapp. Facebook started as a local social network made for the students of Harvard. It was developed by a sophomore, Mark Zuckerberg. Facebook was actually made by hacking Harvard's data base containing identification images of students. The initial idea was actually to compare the faces of students with images of animals, for entertainment purposes. However, due to the potentially damaging

contents of the site, the creators decided to put it down before it caught the attention of school authorities. Facebook has grown to become the biggest and most popular social networking site today with a population of above 500 million active users. (Facebook statistics, 2012).

Advancement in technology in this era has reshaped all human activities on earth to include communication. Social media is among the numerous means which the people interact and communicate online. In the past decades, people communicate and interact on face to face basis, businesses were done on one and one levels, but with the vast increase in gadgets available in the market, communication process had been made easy and businesses can also be transacted on the internet thereby improving individual socio-economic development. Critically, millions of people especially youths have employed the use of internet resources as a means of getting connected to the internet and a way of interacting with friends. Social media such as facebook, 2go, twitter and others had made the communication process easier (Laitto Projects World, 2013).

Problem Statement

However, in most rural communities, it was observed that majority of youths lack technicality in using the internet as a means of incurring social and economic development. In view of this, the study was conceived to investigate on how youths living in rural communities particularly Yewa North Local Government Area of Ogun State use internet, what for and for which purpose?

The objective of the research is to investigate the pattern of usage of the internet by youths in the area. Specifically, the objectives are (1) to assess the regularity of internet use, (2)

ranking of respondents by their pattern of use and (3) factors associated with internet use by the youths in the area.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested for their significance

H₀₁: There is no significant association between respondents' sex and internet use.

H₀₂: There is no significant association between respondents' age and internet use.

H₀₃: There is no significant association between respondents' marital status and Internet use.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Multi-stage technique was used to select 245 youths in rural communities of Yewa North Local Government Area of Ogun State. Stage 1: Random selection of 2 out of 5 divisions that constituted the Local Government. Stage 2: Random selection of one village each from the 2 divisions. Stage 3: Purposive sampling of all youths using internet which constituted the subjects for the study. Instrument used was questionnaire.

Measurement of Variables

Section B of the instrument consists of 12 items which described pattern of Internet use among the respondents. The 12 items were measured on a 3-point rating scale (Regularly, Occasionally and never). Each of the platforms used was measured on 1 per point giving a maximum of 12 points and minimum of 1 point. The respondents were ranked based on their score and hence were categorized into low users (1-4 points); average users (5-8 points); and high users (9-12 points). To ensure validity and reliability of the instrument, contents validity was done and split-half method was used to generate Cronbach's Alpha reliability co-

efficient of 0.73. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (such as frequency counts, percentages, mean, standard deviation and ranking), while inferential statistics (Chi-square) was used to test for relationship between variables.

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The result in Table 1 shows that 73.5% of the respondents were male while 26.5% were female. Majority of the respondents (86.4%) were within the age bracket of 18-22 years, 9.2% within 23-28 years, and 4.0% within 29-35 years respectively with the mean score age of 20.38 years. As a matter of fact, 85.3% were single, 13.9% were married and 0.8% was divorced. As revealed in the Table, 80.8% were not employed, 11.0% were self-employed and 8.2% were formally employed. It was also shown that 66.5% of the respondents were living with their parents, 15.1% with their relatives, 1.2% with their friends and 17.1% living alone. In considering their religion, 69.4% were Christians while 30.6% were Muslims. Lastly, about 50% of the respondents said they belong to youth association while 49.8% said they do not.

Result presented in Table 2 shows pattern of Internet use which cut across what youths living in rural communities use the internet for social purposes as well as economic. The regularity of different platforms used by the youths showed Twitter and e-mailing as those not used while majority (82.9%) of the youths regularly use 2go platform to communicate with their friends on common happening in the community and some use it as an avenue to gossip. It is also one of the social networking services that enable users to send and read text based messages of up to 140 characters. Also, 54.3% had regularly

used their devices for the purpose of sending Short Message Services (SMS), 42.4% of the respondents had regularly used their devices to assess facebook.

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentages	Mean	Std. D
Sex				
Male	180	73.5		
Female	65	26.5		
Age				
18-22	212	86.4		
23-28	23	9.2	20.38	3.205
29-35	10	4.0		
Religion				
Christianity	170	69.4		
Islam	75	30.6		
Marital Status				
Single	209	85.3		
Married	34	13.9		
Divorced	2	0.8		
Employment Status				
Self employed	27	11.0		
Employed	20	8.2		
Not employed	198	80.8		
Level of Education				
Primary	11	4.5		
Secondary	216	88.2		
Tertiary	18	7.3		
Others	0	0.0		
Person Lived with				
Parents	163	66.5		
Relatives	37	15.1		
Friends	3	1.2		
Alone	42	17.1		
Belonging to Youth Association				
Yes	123	50.2		
No	122	49.8		

Table 2: Pattern of Internet use among Youths in the Area

Internet Resources	Regularly		Occasionally		Never		Mean	Std. D	Rank
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%			
Social Purposes									
E-mail	34	13.9	32	13.1	179	73.1	1.41	.723	8
Facebook	104	42.4	104	42.4	37	15.1	2.28	.712	3
Twitter	26	10.6	41	16.7	178	72.6	1.38	.671	9
2go	203	82.9	27	11.0	15	6.1	2.77	.550	1
Whatsapp	44	18.0	51	20.8	150	61.2	1.57	.781	7
Internet games	50	20.4	69	28.2	126	51.4	1.70	.791	6
Download music/ movies	87	35.5	110	44.9	48	19.6	2.16	.728	4
Make voice calls	83	33.9	40	16.3	122	49.8	1.85	.903	5
SMS	133	54.3	67	27.3	45	18.4	2.35	.776	2
Economic Purposes									
Buy products	20	8.2	19	7.8	206	84.1	1.24	.593	11
Advertise Skills	15	6.1	15	6.1	215	87.7	1.19	.527	12
Search for custom- ers	22	9.0	17	6.9	206	84.1	1.25	.610	10

Ranking of Internet use by the Respondents

In ranking the respondents according to popular usage, 2go was ranked highest which indicated that many of the respondents used their mobile devices to access 2go platform which serve as a major means of communication in rural communities. The application (2go application) work with java small phones which are affordable and accessible by low income earners unlike smart phones or tablets that are sold at exorbitant rates which may not be affordable and accessible by the audience in question. The use of devices for SMS comes next to it which obtained the second position in the ranking which majority whether in rural or urban send to express their thought and feelings. Third on the ranking is using their devices to access facebook which is among the social medium platform available for use, the last on the ranking is using their devices to advertise skills on the internet. Based on the score obtained by the individ-

ual respondent on their frequency of internet use, they were categorised into three (low, average and high internet users respectively). The categorisation was represented by the figure shown below :

Figure 1: Categorization of the respondents based on level of frequency of Internet use

In view of result presented in Table 2, a three point rating score was used to categorize the respondents into three stages: high users, average users and low users of the Internet. An individual respondent who score between 1-4 points was categorized as low internet user; 5-8 points average internet user; and 9-12 points high internet user respectively. Based on the information provided, 122 (49.8%) of the respondents were found to be low internet users, 110 (44.9%) average internet users, and 13 (5.3%) high internet users respectively.

Categorization of the respondents based on level of frequency of Internet use

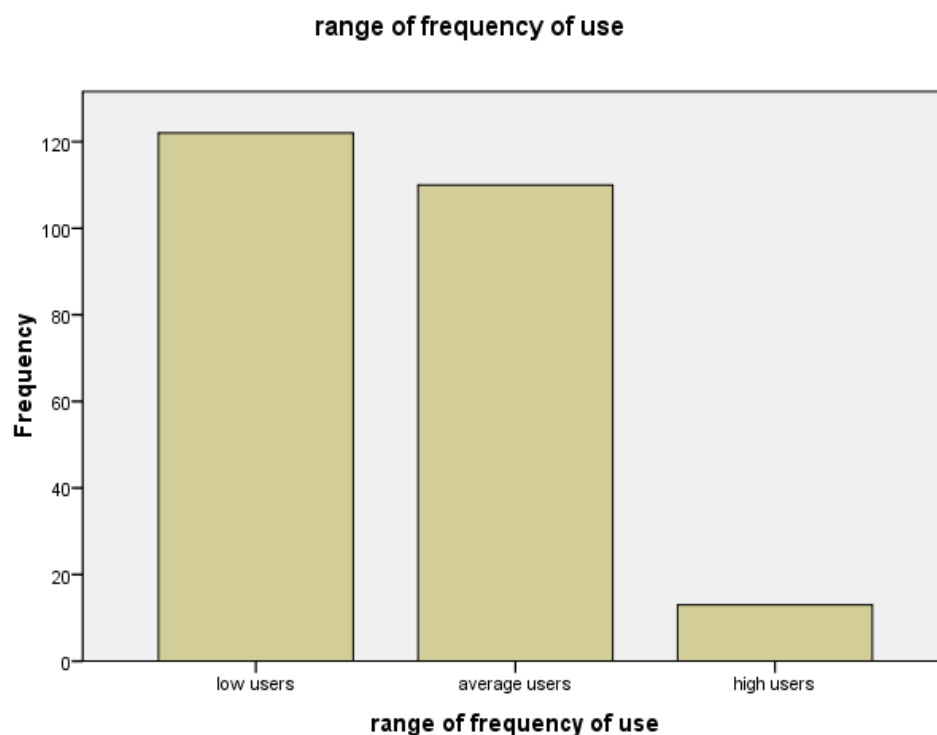


Table 3: Result of Chi-square analysis showing the relationship between respondents' Sex and their use of Internet

Sex	Frequency of Internet Use		
	High Users	Average Users	Low Users
Male	12 (4.9%)	85 (34.7%)	83 (33.9%)
Female	1 (0.4%)	25 (10.2%)	39 (15.9%)

$\chi^2 = 5.033$; $df = 1$; $p = 0.08$

Decision criterion is reject null hypothesis when $p < 0.05$

Table 3 shows the test of association between respondents' sex and frequency of Internet use. The null hypothesis was accepted because the p-value obtained was

greater than 0.05. Result shows that there was no significant relationship between respondents' sex and frequency of Internet use. This means that whether an individual is a male or female, has no influence on becoming high, average or low user of the internet i.e the helpline services apart from

reducing information gaps also serve in sharing community information.

H₀₂: There is no significant association between respondents' age and frequency of internet use.

Table 4: Result of Chi-square analysis showing the relationship between respondents' age and their use of Internet

Age	Frequency of Internet Use		
	High Users	Average Users	Low Users
18-22	7 (2.9%)	97 (39.6%)	108 (44.1%)
23-28	3 (1.2%)	11 (4.5%)	9 (3.7%)
29-35	3 (1.2%)	2 (0.8%)	5 (2.0%)

$\chi^2= 17.733$; $df= 2$; $p= 0.001$

Decision criterion is reject null hypothesis when $p < 0.05$

Table 4 shows the result of the association between respondents' age and their frequency of internet use. The null hypothesis was rejected because the p-value obtained was less than 0.05. Result shows that there was a significant association between respondents' age and frequency of Internet

use. This implies that an individual who is between the ages of 18-22 uses the internet more. These are adolescents who are more inclined to innovations and modern technology.

H₀₃: There is no significant association between respondents' marital status and frequency of internet use.

Table 5: Result of Chi-square analysis showing the relationship between respondents' marital status and their use of Internet

Marital Status	Frequency of Internet Use		
	High Users	Average Users	Low Users
Single	10 (4.1%)	93 (38.0%)	106 (43.3%)
Married	3 (1.2%)	16 (6.5%)	15 (6.1%)
Divorced	0 (0%)	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.4%)

$\chi^2= 1.316$; $df= 2$; $p= 0.86$

Decision criterion is reject null hypothesis when $p < 0.05$

The result presented in Table 5 shows the test of association between respondents' marital status and their frequency of Internet use. As shown in Table 5, the null hypothesis was accepted because the p-value

obtained was greater than 0.05. Result shows that there was no significant relationship between respondents' marital status and frequency of Internet use. This implies that whether an individual is single, married or divorced, has no effect on frequency of Internet use.

DISCUSSION

The focus of the study was to investigate pattern of Internet use among youths in selected rural communities of Yewa North LGA, Ogun State, Nigeria. Majority 180 (73.5%) of the respondents were male and 212 (86.4%) fell within the age bracket of 18-22 which was known to be the active age range of individual in life time. Findings further revealed that 198 (80.8%) of the respondents were not employed and reason for this might be due to the environment in which the study was carried out where there were limited white collar jobs and another reason could be due to the fact that many of them are still in secondary school. Also, many of the subjects 163 (66.5%) were found to be in the custody of their parents and a little above average 123 (50.2%) belong to youths' association in the study area. Burell (2008) and Hudson (2006) argued that mobile phones improve the productivity of individuals within resource-constrained environments.

Pattern of Internet use among youths in rural communities of Yewa North Local Government cut across what they access on the internet and frequency of its access.

According to Harande (2009), internet has become a prime venue for social interaction. For example, it was discovered that many (Table 2) of the youths have used 2go platform to communicate and interact with their friends on common happening in the community and some use it as an avenue to gossip. This agreed with Goodman (2007) finding that there were links between mobile usage, rural communities and social capital in his study communities in South Africa and Tanzania and that mobile facilitated three types of social capitals: as an amenity and shared commodity; to mediate strong links with family and friends and

other community members; and to mediate weak links with individuals outside the community, e.g business men, government officials, tradesmen, etc. Also, above average (see Table 2) have used their devices for the purpose of sending Short Message Services (SMS), and some have used it to assess facebook- a platform which can be used to send facial expression and pictures to loved ones and peers.

Other purposes for which it has been used is similar to those identified by Robson and Fumoto (2009) who stated that Facebook is popular as it enables one to interact with friends on a wide scale. Findings further identified factors that could have influence on the use of internet by the respondents. Such factors include sex in terms of male and female, age in number and marital status in terms of single or married. Study established a significant association between respondents' age and their frequency of internet use and this implies that an individual in his or her early youthful age (18-22 years) is likely to use the internet more than someone in his late youthful age (29-35 years). In real sense or by observation, many of the aged in both rural and urban do not often seen using the computers to access the internet except few who are educated particularly, among academicians or bankers.

CONCLUSION

The study has established the fact that youths who had access to the internet in rural communities had used their devices for various purposes which the researchers classified as social and economic purposes. On the regularity of internet platform used, 2go was ranked first and the last was using the internet to advertise skills which was ranked twelfth. In general, findings shows that youths in the study area tend to use their de-

vices more for social purposes than they do for economic purposes which may be due to technicality and other factors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the investigation to pattern of Internet use among youths in the study area, the following recommendations are made:

- Specialised training should be organised to educate youths in using their devices for further social and economic purposes.
- Awareness of the importance of Internet should be stressed to rural youths most especially female youths as only a few of them participated in the study.
- Youth mobilizers and change initiators could take advantage of this to sensitize youths in the area on matters that affects them.

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