

Patterns of Online Media Exposure among Young People in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated *Patterns of online media exposure among young people in Anambra State, Nigeria*. The rationale behind the study was to ascertain the ways young people in Anambra State access social media networks and to determine the reasons why they use the various online media platforms. Pegged on the Technological Determinism and the Uses and Gratification theories of the mass media, the study adopted quantitative research design and employed the questionnaire for data collection. The paper used a sample size of two hundred youths purposively drawn from Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi (all major cities in Anambra State) and adopted the percentage method in data analysis. Findings of the study show that many young people in Anambra State expose themselves to online media mainly through the use of their cell phones/handsets/smart phones and laptop/PC and that they use the various online media platforms for academic research purpose, for making and maintaining friendship, for entertainment/amusement and relaxation, chatting and for other purposes. The paper concluded that social networking sites are very useful platforms for interactive communication among young people and recommended more proactive use of online media for better academic attainment of young people.

Keywords: Patterns, Online, Media, Exposure, Young, People, Anambra State.

1.0 Introduction and justification for the study

The 21st century revolution in information, communication and technology has opened-up new media platforms unmatched in history in terms of interactivity, interconnectivity, multiplicity and accessibility (McQuail, 2005, p.38). The transformation has provided a variety of media options which supply unlimited and vast amount of information on different subjects to all categories of people including youths, particularly students at all levels of education.

Social media essentially refer to a category of online media where people are talking, participating, sharing, networking and bookmarking online (Dow, 2012, cited in Edegoh and Asemah, 2014). Social media networks include but are not limited to Facebook Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, Google+, BlackBerry Messenger, Twitter, LinkedIn, iPhone, Android and so forth. According to Ward (2013), cited in Edegoh and Samson, (2013), the greatest potential of social media lies in the opportunity they bequeath to mankind – a chance to be engaged and engage others. Edegoh and Asemah (2014) aver that social media are useful to everyone – scholars utilise them for research, knowledge acquisition and promotion, business people use social networking site for commercial, business motive which necessary involves buying and selling of goods and services. Advertisers utilise the vast business opportunities made available by online media to advertise goods, services, ideas, events, etc. Politicians market themselves to potential electorate through the social media. Students log in to social platforms in order to seek academic gratification, keep in touch with friends, chat and make new friends.

The internet provides young people with the opportunity to seek for materials, conduct research, connect with other students from different countries, and share vital information among them (Santas, 2013). A lot of evidence abound on young people's use of social media networks. According to Kist (2008), cited in Mehmood and Taswir (2013) approximately 90% of Teens used the internet more than once per day. Kist also reports that most young people today, use social networking platforms and the internet to socialise with friends. Social networking sites such as Bebo, Facebook, MySpace and Google have made significant impact on young people's online social interaction since the advent of MySpace in 2003 (Davis and Clanston, 2008).

The use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter has become an important part of modern adolescence. This is because 90% of American Teens use social media, three quarters of them have social networking sites, and nearly one in three Teens visit their social networking profile several hours per day (Kerlin and Farrington, 2011, cited in Emmanuel, 2013).

Young people and, of course, all users of social media access the platforms through several ways and for all kind of reasons. It is against this backdrop that this study investigated Patterns of online media exposure among young people in Anambra State, Nigeria.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To find out the level of exposure to social media among young people in Anambra State.
- ii. To ascertain the number of hours they spend on social media networks per day.
- iii. To determine the ways young people in Anambra State access social media.
- iv. To assess the social networking site that appeals most to young people in Anambra State.
- v. To ascertain the reasons why young people in Anambra State use online media.

1.2 Research Questions

Pursuant to the identified objectives of the study, the following questions were posed for investigation:

- i. What is the level of exposure to social media by young people in Anambra State?
- ii. How many hours per day do young people in Anambra State spend on social media?
- iii. What are the ways young people in Anambra State access social media?
- iv. What social networking site appeals to young people most?
- v. What are the reasons why young people in Anambra State expose themselves to online media?

2.1 Theoretical Underpinning

The importance of theories in academic endeavours is premised on the fact that they lend themselves to various texts and analyses such that the phenomenon central to the research activity get explained, clarified and even predicted as the case may be (Edegoh and Asemah, 2014). This study finds expression in two theories of mass communication, namely: the Technological Determinism theory and the Uses and Gratification theory.

2.1.1 Technological Determinism Theory

Technological Determinism theory was propounded by Marshal McLuhan in 1962. The theory states that man's feelings, actions and thoughts are shaped by evolving technologies. In the thinking of the founding father of the theory, the "medium (technology) is the message" because human beings act, learn, feel and think the way they do due to the messages they receive through the current technologies (McLuhan, 1965). Technological determinism theory ascribes absolute power of influence to the technology that propels the mass media. The theory holds that the media not only alter their environment but the very message they convey. This is because the media bring about new perpetual habits and their technologies create new environments (Edegoh and Samson, 2014). The theory asserts that technology decisively shapes how human beings think, feel and act and how societies organise themselves and operate.

The patterns of social media exposure among young people are determined by evolving social media technologies which also influence them towards certain behaviour. Thus, current, accessible and available social media technology shapes, influences and dictates the way young people interact and communicate with one another. Technological determinism theory has one major limitation, namely: its failure to recognise that users reserve the right to make the ultimate decision of whether to or not to source information through technological borne communication channels. Thus, the theory lacks the required academic adequacy to be used alone to explicate the variables being investigated in this study. For this reason, we turn our attention to another theory of communication.

2.1.2 Uses and Gratification Theory

The Uses and Gratification theory was formulated by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch in 1974. The theory calls attention to what people do with the media rather than what the media do to people (Edegoh, Ezeh and Samson, 2015). The theory holds that people are not just passive receivers of media messages but actively influence the effects such messages have on them. In other words, people influence the effects mass media messages have on them. This is because users of media products use them to fulfil, gratify and/or satisfy their specific needs.

As beautiful as the Uses and Gratification theory appears to be, it cannot adequately be used to explain the variables under consideration because it has an obvious limitation of not considering the possibility that the mass media could exert unconscious influence on recipient's way of life and manner of thinking. To make up for this inadequacy, the researchers used the Technological Determinism theory to complement the lapses of the Uses and Gratification theory, and relied on the Uses and Gratification theory to augment the inadequacies of the Technological Determinism theory. Used together, the two theories could adequately explain the patterns of social media exposure among young people: whereas the Technological Determinism theory explains the evolving unconscious power of the mass media on humans, the Uses and Gratification theory explains the power of the user to determine whether to use or not to use the mass media offerings based on the user's perceived needs.

2.2 Review of Literature

2.2.1 Overview of Social Media

Social media are a group of internet – based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Thus, social media guarantee greater interactive conversation between and among users. Nwamuo (2013, p.4) observes that social media refer to “web and mobile-based technologies which are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue among individuals, organisation and communities”. According to Olise (2014, p.28) “social media is a shift in how people discover, read and share news, information and content. Social media involve a fusion of sociology and technology transforming monologue (one-to-many) into dialogue (many-to-many)”. Thus, social media enable users to talk, participate, share, network and bookmark online.

The concept of social media finds greater expression and meaning in the ability of users to generate, interpret restructure and disseminate content. The phenomenon enables users to create and share experiences, information or ideas based on the pervasive technology of the internet and the World Wide Web (www) (Edegoh and Asemah, 2014).

Social networking websites include, but are not limited to Facebook Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, BlackBerry Messenger (BBM), Google talk, Google+ Messenger, iPhone, Twitter, Ning, Flickr, LinkedIn, StumbleUpon and Reddit (Edegoh and Samson, 2014); Edegoh, Asemah and Ekenem, 2013). Thousands of social media networks are in existence and they appeal to different groups for so many reasons. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), cited in Edegoh and Asemah (2014, p. 104) classify social media into six categories, namely:

1. Collaborative projects (Wikipedia);
2. Blogs and Microblogs (Twitter, etc);
3. Content communities (YouTube, etc);
4. Social networking sites (Facebook, etc) ;
5. Visual game worlds (world of wear craft, etc); and
6. Visual social worlds (second life, etc).

These social media forms make use of technologies such as blogs, picture sharing, V-logs, wall posting, e-mails, instant messaging, music-sharing and Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) (Nwammuo, 2013, p. 5; Edegoh and Asemah 2014, p. 104). According to Olise (2014, p.30) social media applications can be classified into three broad platforms, namely:

1. Social Networking;
2. File sharing/storage; and
3. Web publishing

Olise (2014) further notes that social networking sites are further divided into three types: Social Networking sites (Facebook and LinkedIn, etc), Social Bookmark (delicious and Digg, etc); and Virtual World (Opensim and Second life). He identifies file sharing/storage media to include photo libraries (Flickr and Picasa), video sharing sites (YouTube and Vimeo), storage sites (Google Doc and Drop 1.0), and content management system (Share Point and Drupal). He provides the types of web publishing/web blogging to include Microblogging (Twitter and Pherk), Blogs (Nicheblog, World press and blogger), Wikis (wiki space and PB wiki), and Mash Up (Google maps and pop URLs).

It is evident from the foregoing typology that social media are internet-based tools and services that allow users to engage with each other, generate content, distribute and search for information online (Arthur, 2012). It is also clear that the platforms make communication, participation and interactivity possible. Social media are technologies that facilitate social interaction, make possible collaboration, and enable deliberations across stakeholders.

2.2.2 Related Studies

The popularity of social media as tools for communication, interaction, and participatory collaboration among youths is overwhelming. This has triggered off a lot of research by scholars and researchers to ascertain the use into which the many opportunities provided by the social media are put. While very many people have conducted studies to determine the extent to which users of social media used the platforms to improve their academic performance, many scholars have also investigated other positive uses of social networking sites among young people. Empirical studies show that adolescents and young people are the heaviest computer and internet users, primarily making use of it for carrying out school assignments (46%), e-mail instant messaging (36%), playing computer games (38%), and chatting (deBell and Chapimary, 2006, cited in Ogedebe and Musa, 2012).

Shiu and Dawson (2004), cited in Edegoh and Samson (2014, p.209) conducted a multinational survey of internet users in the UK, Germany, Japan, and Taiwan and reported that teenagers use the internet more for communication and playing games, while older people use it for purchasing goods and services. Mutula (2003) found that students use internet cafes mostly for educational purposes and business people use the internet cafes mostly for business and electronic money transfers. Odero (2003) reported that postgraduate students in Pretoria,

South Africa used internet cafes more often for educational purposes and undergraduate students used it to chat, listen to music, and/or other forms of entertainment. The position of the study conducted by the American Educational Research Association in 2009, cited in Tseguy and Danjuma (2014, p.5) indicated that users of social networking sites study less and generate lower grades eventually.

Tseguy and Danjuma (2014) conducted a study on the impact of social media networks on the academic performance of mass communication students of Ibrahim Babangida University, Lapai and reported that 53.5% of the respondents used social media for academic purposes to a very great extent, 25% to a great extent, 7.1% to a low extent and 3.6% to a very low extent. The authors, however, found that 10.7% of the students did not use the social media. On the respondents preferred social media network, Tseguy and Danjuma (2014) found that Facebook was the most preferred (39.3%), followed by Twitter (25%), Google and MySpace (12.5%) each and YouTube (10.7%). The researchers further reported an overwhelmingly positive influence of social media networks on the academic performance of students (75%).

In a related study, Edegoh and Asemah (2014) studied social media use among students of Private Universities in Anambra State, Nigeria in which they investigated the students' frequency of exposure to social media, their most frequently visited social medium, and ways through which they access social media networks, among others. The researchers found that 50% of the students investigated accessed social media often and 26% did so very often, 17.5% rarely accessed social media while 6.5% displayed lack of knowledge of the question. Edegoh and Asemah (2014) also found that Facebook and Wikipedia were the most visited social networks (50% and 26% respectively) while YouTube (9%) and MySpace (7%) followed. On the ways through which students accessed social media, Edegoh and Asemah (2014) reported 52% access through handheld devices/cell phones, 34% through cyber cafes and 13% through PC/Laptop, among others.

Findings of these studies support the submission of Boyd (2007), cited in Mehmood and Taswir (2013) that teenagers and young adults have embraced social media sites as a way to connect with their peers, share information, and reinvest their personalities and showcase their social lives. These positions also reveal that social media have profound influence on heavy users of the platforms, although there is a sharp disagreement among scholars as to whether the influence is positive or negative.

3.0 Method

This paper adopted the survey research method. As noted by Babbie (2010, p. 259), "survey is an excellent method for the measurement of attitude and opinion of people within a large population". According to Ohaja (2009, p.11), the survey is "a study of the characteristics of a sample through questioning that enables a researcher to make generalisations concerning his population of interest". Thus, the survey method was considered adequate and was adopted for this study. The use of survey in this study was further justified by its capacity to provide a platform on which the researchers can assess patterns of online media use among young people.

The population of this study consists of all the young people in Anambra State. For the purpose of this study, the researchers studied young men and women who were within 18 – 35 years age bracket as young people. The study adopted a sample size of 200 respondents purposively drawn from Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi (the three major urban cities in Anambra State). The reason for using the purposive sampling technique was to ensure that only young people who were within the ages of 18 – 35 and who had account with one or more social media platforms were sampled. The sample size was justified by the recommendation of Comrey and Lee (1992), cited in Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p. 101): "One guideline recommended for multivariate studies is as follows: 50 = very poor; 100 = poor; 200 = fair; 300 = good; 500 = very good; and 1000 = excellent". The adoption of 200 respondents as sample size for this study was further justified by the position taken by Nwana (1981), cited in Edegoh, Ezeh and Samson (2015, p.65) that "if the population is a few hundreds, a 40% or more sample will do; if many hundreds, a 20% sample will do; if a few thousands, a 10% sample will do; and if several thousands, a 5% or less will do".

This paper used an 18 – item questionnaire (containing more close-ended items and a few open-ended items) to collect data. The data gathering instrument was divided into two sections: while section A was designed to obtain information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, section B was carefully designed to elicit data to answer the research questions. Data obtained through the questionnaire were analysed using the percentage method.

4.0 Results

Table 1: Sex of the respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	100	50
Female	100	50
Total	200	100

Table 1 contains data obtained to determine respondents' sex characteristics. As could be gleaned from the table, participants in the study were made up of equal number of male and female participants (50% each). The reason for equal representation of male and female respondents was to guarantee balanced assessment of the issues being investigated.

Table 2: Age characteristics of the respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 25 years	62	31
26 – 30 years	70	35
31 – 35 years	68	34
Total	200	100

Data on respondents' age distribution as shown in table 2 reveal that the age bracket "26 – 30 years" had 70 respondents, representing 35% of the sample. This was followed by the age range "31 – 35 years" which got 68% respondents, equivalent to 34%, while those who were aged between 18 – 25 years were 62, corresponding to 31%.

Table 3: Marital status of the respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	88	44
Single	112	56
Total	200	100

Table 3 on marital status of respondents shows that more respondents were single (112 or 56%), while fewer respondents were married (88 or 44%). It is evident that single young men and women constituted the majority of the study's participants.

Table 4: Occupation of the respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Traders	60	30
Civil servants	26	13
Students	90	45
Unemployed	20	10
Others	4	2
Total	200	100

Occupational distribution of respondents as shown in table 4 indicates that students were the majority (45% or n = 90), followed by traders (30% or n = 60), civil servants (13% or n = 26), the unemployed (10% or n = 20), and "others" response category (2% or n = 4). It could, therefore, be inferred that majority of the participants in the study were students and businessmen and women.

Table 5: Academic qualification of the respondents

Academic qualification	Frequency	Percentage
First School Leaving Certificate	22	11
Senior School Certificate	70	35
OND/NCE	40	20
HND/First Degree	58	29
Post Degree Certificate	10	5
Total	200	100

Table 5 contains data designed to ascertain the academic qualification of the participants. As could be gleaned from the table, 70 respondents (35%) were holders of senior school certificate and 58 respondents (29%) had HND/first degree training while 40 participations (20%) had OND/NCE training. Others include 22 respondents (11%) that had primary school education and 10 respondents (5%) whose level of training exceeded first degree. It is therefore clear that participants in the study were made up of mainly school certificate holders, HND/First degree graduates and OND/NCE holders.

Table 6: Respondents' town of residence

Town of residence	Frequency	Percentage
Awka	67	33.5
Onitsha	67	33.5
Nnewi	66	33
Total	200	100

Data in table 6 reveal that the place of residence of the participants in the study include Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi with 67 or 33.5%, 67 or 33.5%, and 66 or 33% respondents respectively.

4.1 Answers to Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the level of exposure to social media by young people in Anambra State?

Table 7: Level of exposure to social media by the respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	66	33
Often	102	51
Sometimes	24	12
Don't know	8	4
Total	200	100

Data in table 7 were obtained to determine the level of exposure of the participants in the study to the social media. As evident in the table, 102 respondents, representing 51% indicated that they often expose themselves to social media while 66 respondents, corresponding to 33% expose themselves very often to social media and 24 respondents, equivalent to 12% indicated "sometimes" as their response to the question. However, eight respondents (4%) returned the "don't know" verdict.

It is clear that 84% of the respondents (n = 168) were regular users of social media while 12% occasionally used the platforms. The inference that could be made from this research question based on data presented is that very many young people in Anambra State are heavy users of social media.

Research Question Two: How many hours per day do young people spend on social media?

Table 8: Number of hours that young people spend on social media per day

Response	Frequency	Percentage
4 hours and above per day	13	6.5
2 – 3 hours per day	88	44
1 hour per day	91	45.5
Less than 1 hour per day	4	2
Don't know	8	4
Total	200	100

Table 8 contains data designed to establish the number of hours young people spend daily on social media platforms. The table indicates that 91 respondents (45.5%) exposed themselves to social media at least 1 hour every day, 88 participants (44%) had 2 - 3 hours exposure daily, 13 respondents (6.5%) were the heaviest users of the social media who hook on to social networking sites for up to 4 hours or more per day, while four respondents (2%) browse the net for less than 1 hour daily. However, eight respondents (4%) were neither here nor there.

It follows, therefore, that young people spend a lot of hours on social media on daily basis.

Research Question Three: What are the ways through which young people in Anambra State access social media?

Table 9: Ways of accessing social media by young people

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Cyber cafe	24	12
Laptop/PC	37	18.5
Cell phone/handset	110	55
iPad/iPhone & Android	21	10.5
Don't know	8	4
Total	200	100

Data in table 9 were obtained to determine the various ways through which young people access social media. As indicated in the table, 110 respondents (55%) accessed the web through cell phone/handset, 37 participants (18.5%) accessed social media through their laptop/PC, 24 respondents accessed social networking sites through cyber cafe and 21 respondents (10.5%) used iPad/iPhone/Android to access the platforms. However, eight respondents (4%) indicated "don't know" as their response to the question.

We deduce from data before us that very many young people in Anambra State go online by using their cell phone/handset and their laptop/PC.

Research Question Four: What social medium network appeal most to young people in Anambra State?

Table 10: Most appealing social media network among young people in Anambra State

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	70	35
Twitter	36	18
My Space	30	15
Google	30	15
YouTube	8	4
Others	20	10
Don't know	6	3
Total	200	100

Data on the most appealing social media network among young people in Anambra State reveal that Facebook ranked first with 35%, followed by Twitter (18%), My Space and Google (15%) each, “others” such as wiki (10%), and YouTube (4%). However, six respondents (3%) ticked the “don’t know” response option.

The inference that could be drawn from data presented in table 10 is that the most preferred online media network by young people in Anambra State is Facebook, followed by Twitter, My Space and Google, in that order.

Research Question Five: What are the reasons why young people in Anambra State use online media?

Table 11: Reasons for using online media

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Academic reasons	60	30
Making and maintaining friendship	34	17
Entertainment/relaxation	32	16
Chatting	40	20
Others	26	13
Don't know	8	4
Total	200	100

Data in table 11 were obtained to provide answer or reasons why young people in Anambra State use online media platforms. Indications from table 11 are that young people use social media mainly for academic purposes (30%, n = 60), chatting (20%, n = 40), making and maintaining friendship (17%, n = 34), entertainment/relaxation (16%, n = 32), and others such as information seeking and as a way to stay out of boredom (13%, n = 26). However, eight participants returned the “don’t know” verdict as their response to the question.

We infer from data before us that academic reasons, chatting, friendship purposes, and entertainment represent the major reasons why young people in Anambra State use social networking sites.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

Findings of this study are both revealing and interesting. First, the researchers found that the level of exposure to online media platforms by young people in Anambra State was very high. This is to say that many young people in Anambra State use the social media heavily, or better still, a lot of young people in Anambra State are regular users of social media networks.

This finding is in line with the positions taken by earlier studies done by deBell and Chapimary (2006), cited by Ogedebe and Musa (2012); Edegoh and Samson (2014); Edegoh and Asemah (2014); and Tsegysu and Danjuma (2014). For instance, Edegoh and Samson did a study entitled *An Assessment of the Utilisation of Facebook for Socialisation by Youths in Awka, Anambra State* and reported that 147 (50%) of the 294 respondents they investigated often expose themselves to Facebook while 88 (30%) indicated that they expose themselves to Facebook very often. Thus, the researchers reported 80% exposure to Facebook platform among the respondents they studied. Again, deBell and Chapimary (2006), cited in Ogedede and Musa (2012) reported that adolescents and young people were the heaviest computer and internet users. The position of these studies and many more is an indication that many young people are heavy users of social networking sites.

On the number of hours young people spend on social media platforms per day, this study found that young people spend a lot of hours on social media on daily basis, ranging from the heaviest users (those who use the platforms 4 hours or more per day) to heavy users (those that stay on the internet for 2 – 3 hours per day) to light users of social media (those who use the platforms for more or less than 1 hour daily). This finding is in tandem with the outcome of studies conducted by Edegoh, Asemah and Ekanem (2013); Edegoh and Samson (2014); and Tsegysu and Danjuma (2014). For instance, Tsegysu and Danjuma (2014) reported that 140 (50%) of the participants in their study, spent 3 – 4 hours on the social media on a daily basis, 20 (7.1%) spent 2 – 3 hours while 40 (14.3%) stayed online between 1 – 2 hours every day. This position has been confirmed by the result of this study.

The third objective of this study sought to determine the ways through which young people in Anambra State accessed the different social media networking sites they use. The researchers found that very many young people in Anambra State access social media networks by using their cell phones/handsets while many others gain access using the laptop/PC and cyber cafe. This result both supports and reinforces the outcome of the work of Edegoh and Asemah (2014) and Edegoh and Samson, (2014). Edegoh and Asemah (2014) found that so many students in private universities in Anambra State access social media using hand-held devices cell phones (52%), cyber cafe (34%) and PC/laptop (13%).

Edegoh and Asemah (2014, p. 109) explain the reasons for the high prevalence of the use of handsets/cell phones to access social media sites by youths to include the high rate of power failure in the land, the tendency of cyber cafe operators to hike service charges while using generator sets as power generating alternative, and the low economic state of most students (young people) which makes it impossible for them to purchase and own laptop computer. Other reasons that account for the predominant use of cell phones among youths are that “cyber cafe outfits are few and cannot adequately cater for the teeming number of students (youths) that want to make use of them” (Udende and Azeez, 2010, cited in Edegoh and Asemah, 2014, p. 109).

Findings of the study further, reveal that the online media mostly used among young people in Anambra State include Facebook (in the main), Twitter, Myspace, and Google. This position is not different from the results of previous studies conducted by Nwamuo (2013), Tsegysu and Dajuma (2014), and Edegoh and Asemah (2014). Specifically, Tsegysu and Danjuma (2014) reported that the preferred social media networks among the respondents they investigated were Facebook (39.3%), Twitter (25%), Google and My Space (12.5% each), and YouTube (10.7%). The result obtained by Edegoh and Asemah indicated that Facebook and Wikipedia were the most visited network among the participants in their study while YouTube and My Space followed. There is therefore, sufficient empirical evidence to show that Facebook is the predominant social media platform most visited or preferred by Nigerian youths. This upholds ‘the medium is the message’ mantra of the technological determinism theory.

Finally, on the study’s fifth objective which sought to ascertain the reasons why young people in Anambra State use online media networking sites, this study found academic reasons, chatting, friendship reasons and entertainment as the main reasons. This outcome is a confirmation of the positions adopted by earlier studies, namely: Edegoh, Asemah and Ekanem (2013), and Tsegysu and Danjuma (2014). The result of this finding also agrees with the major arguments of the Uses and Gratification theory which this study has reviewed. In summary, the theory holds that people have specific reason/gratification which they use the media to satisfy/gratify. Thus, as noted by Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008, p. 71) “There are as many reasons for using the mass media as there are media users”.

The position of this study is also in consonance with the basic tenets of the theory of Technological Determinism. The theory argues that the media bring about new perpetual habits and their technology creates new environments. This is because technology decisively shapes how human beings (in this case, young people) think, feel and act and how societies organise themselves and operate. Young people consciously or unconsciously weave their lives around social media networks and operate through these social media platforms to reach the world.

5.0 Conclusion

This study entitled *Patterns of online media exposure among young people in Anambra State, Nigeria* was conducted to establish the various ways through which young people in Anambra State access or gain access to the many online media platforms and to determine their reasons for using online media, among others. The paper adopted quantitative research design, used a sample size of 200 respondents, employed the questionnaire for data collection and adopted the percentage method to analyse data generated. The major findings of the study were that:

- i. The level of exposure to online media among young people in Anambra State are very high;
- ii. The majority of young people in Anambra State spend between 2 - 4 hours on social media platforms on daily basis.
- iii. Young people in Anambra State access online media networks mainly through the use of their cell phones/handsets and laptop/PC.
- iv. The social media that appeal most to young people in Anambra State include Facebook (in the main), Twitter, My Space and Google, in descending order of appeal.
- v. The reasons why young people in Anambra State use the online media platforms are for academic purpose, chatting, making and maintaining friendship, and entertainment /amusement/relaxation purposes.

The study therefore concluded that young people in Anambra State expose themselves to online media using their handsets/cell phones and laptop/PC for the purposes of academic pursuit, chatting, friendship making and maintenance, and entertainment. Thus, social networking sites are very useful platforms for participatory and interactive communication, particularly among young people.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the inevitable conclusion, we recommend that:

- i. Young people should not only be mindful of the materials they surf on daily basis but also they should regulate the number of hours they spend on social media activities as excessive devotion to social media could hamper their academic well being.
- ii. Young people should be adequately and properly guided on how best to make use of social media networks for better intellectual and social benefit. This could be done through seminars and workshops by government agencies such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and/or non – governmental organisations (NGOs).
- iii. Government should both empower young people economically and invest heavily on social media infrastructural facilities in such a way that both urban and rural young people could benefit from and use social media networking sites.

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