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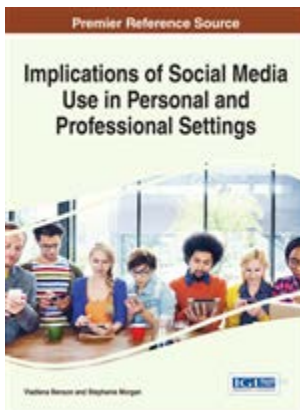More Information

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The Prevalence, Effects, and Reactions to Use of Short Message Services in University Settings in South West Nigeria

Amos A. Alao (Covenant University, Nigeria), Taiwo O. Abioye (Covenant University, Nigeria) and Kikelomo I. Evbuoma (Covenant University, Nigeria)

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Abstract

This chapter focuses on the extent of the usage of Short Message Services (SMS) in three universities in Southwest Nigeria, with 243 participants drawn from Covenant University, Bells University, and Lagos State University, who responded to a questionnaire on SMS. Data generated from the study confirmed the high usage of SMS among subjects in general and males in particular, within the age range of 31 to 40 years; a large number of subjects, especially those in administrative positions, were affected by the usage of SMS; most of the subjects are more tolerant when the messages are related to religion, are work-related, or are from family members. Subjects expressed concern when the contents of the SMS are related to adverts, when SMS are used when there are network problems, and the possible exploitation of recipients. Steps to minimize the disadvantages of the use of SMS are discussed.
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Introduction

The general goal of technology is to assist man to accomplish tasks faster and with high productivity, and to accomplish a task better and with ease. While acknowledging the positive effects of technology, it is equally important to be conscious of any negative effects of its use. The awareness of any discomfort in usage can enable the user to maximize benefits and minimize possible harmful effects. The recognition of possible dangers inherent in the use of any technological tool can boost confidence in its usage, assist in appreciating the beneficial effects, and highlight any possible negative consequences.

Sheldon (2012) noted that news of cybercrimes such as bullying, extortion and pornography and other forms of fraud are reported daily, sensitizing everyone to the good and bad sides of web sites. According to him, this is the key to navigating the internet in today's fast paced technological society. Sheldon (2012) also refers to the generation born between 1980 and 1994 as ''digital natives'' or the "Net generation", with their lives immersed in technology; surrounded by cell phones, computers, video games, digital music players and video cameras. She further asserted that "we need to understand not just how they use these new tools but how they are attached to them" (Sheldon, 2012).

Lickerman (2010) reiterates that the general effect of technology and the various forms of electronic ways we connect with each other have not come without cost. It has been noted that the recent explosion in electronic and wireless communication technology has revolutionized the way we send messages via e-mail, mailing list, text messaging, "tweets," Facebook, blogs and vlogs, chat rooms, and video conferencing in addition to the use of face-to-face interactions (Weiten, Hammer & Dunn,2012).

The short message service "SMS" has been described as a miniature and abridged style of transmitting information (Taiwo, 2009). Various names have also been given to this style of sending messages such as text or texto in North America, an SMS in the United Kingdom and most of Europe, TMS in the Middle East, Asia and Australia (Ochonogor, Alakpodia & Achugbue, 2012). Short message services or short message systems (SMS) are frequently used to send short messages in preference to e-mail which are longer and where internet services are required. Short messages could be relayed from anywhere, and one may not need the elaborate equipment usually utilized when communicating by e-mail, especially for those who do not have e-mail services on their mobile phones.

Electronically mediated communication that takes place via technology such as cellphones, computers and hand held devices are available today and a new type of slang ("net lingo") has been developed to facilitate quick and easy use in text messaging (Weiten, Hammer, & Dunn, 2012). The SMS style of communication is fast becoming a universal phenomenon commonly used (Njemanze, 2012). In developed countries and to a lesser extent in developing countries, all ages are affected by the recent developments in media technology.

Today, media technology has reached the nooks and crannies of rural settings in the developing world. In rural settings in Nigeria for example, it is not uncommon to see market women display cell phones, and they answer calls and send SMS with excitement. However, users with low levels of education are likely to be susceptible to fraudulent acts, perpetuated through the short message service (SMS). The short message service for example was observed to have become prominent in Nigeria during the introduction and advent of mobile

phones (handsets/GSM), and the explosion of the use of SMS to the licensing of two GSM service providers in the country in 2001, namely MTN and ECONET (Chiluwa, 2008;Taiwo, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010).