THE USE OF INTERNET BY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined undergraduate students' use of Internet in some selected universities in Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined the undergraduate students' point of Internet accessibility, how often they use the various resources on the Internet and the challenges experienced in using the Internet. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and data were collected by administering questionnaires to four hundred respondents randomly selected from five faculties; Faculties of Education, Science, Agriculture, Art and Social Science out of which three hundred and fifty two were retrieved and analyzed. The results showed that undergraduate students do not have adequate access to Internet in the universities under investigation. The result on the use of Internet resources by the undergraduate students showed that they very often used some Internet resources such as Face-book, World Wide Web and Search engines. Other resources such as Youtube, Skype, Twitter, Internet video, Internet audio and Scientific and satellite imaging were seldom used. The results on challenges encountered by the undergraduate students showed that they lacked basic Internet search skills and experienced high cost of usage. It is therefore recommended to the universities concerned and Federal government to make Internet accessible to undergraduate students through supplying them with personal laptops and access code to the universities network service provider or making it a pre-requisite for admission; students should be required to take computer as a course training, awareness or workshops on the use of Internet resources in research and academic activities should be given.

Introduction

Due to increase in world population and globalization, higher education is growing amazingly at a tremendous pace in Nigeria and other countries and the world at large has witnessed rapid growth in their educational sector (Griffin, 2004). JAMB (2009) as cited by Bola and Ogunlade (2012) found Students' enrolment in higher education in Nigeria to have increased since year 2000 when the establishment of many states and private Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education relatively increased Similarly, Scott (2008) reported that as at April 2004, there were 27million higher education students in European Union and United States of America.

However, both the developed and developing countries endeavour to improve the quality of their higher education programmes. But the developing countries are faced with more challenges in providing quality higher education programme than their counterparts in the developed world. Hence, most of the institutions of higher learning are adopting the information and communication technology as embodied in the Internet as a source of information acquisition and a medium of disseminating knowledge to their students. Hence, this study seeks to examine the use of the Internet facilities in the universities selected for this study and undergraduate students' response to the utilization of the vast arrays of resources available on the Internet for their research and academic work.

The Concept of Internet
Internet has been defined as a global network of computer networks (Adegbija, 2006). Conceptually, however the Internet has become a universal publishing, distribution, real-time communications and broadcasting medium. It can also be used to gather information from users and the World Wide Web is seen as a mainstay of Internet. This now offers streaming multimedia play back and may include streaming video, graphics, photographic, images texts and so on (Botto, 1999). In the study conducted by Adeogun (2003), he reported that the convergence of computers and telecommunications technologies has made possible the activities which were considered impossible in the past. Those activities include information retrieval and transfer which were hampered by time and distance. With wider Internet connectivity, universities in developing countries are now beginning to tap the many opportunities offered by today's information societies by providing the platform to locate, download, and share world knowledge and learning materials (INAS, 2003).

Uttor (1999) explained information to mean data value in planning, decision making and evaluation of any programme. He further added that data are usually subjected to processing, which is then capable of providing answers to user's questions be it recorded, summarized, or simply collected for future decision making.

However, from the above definition, it is apparent that man could be likened to be information carrier and information seeking animal as this is crucial to his survival.
In order to utilize the growing range of Internet facilities, students must acquire and practice the skills necessary to exploit them. For undergraduate students using a variety of Internet resources, it is as though they were parking lot attendants, where every vehicle is not only a different make and model but has a different configuration (Blandy & Libutti, 1995). As Dutton (1990) suggested, the skills required to maximize the potentials of Internet facilities are much greater than those required for searching printed sources. These skills include the following: knowledge of the structure of the database, the knowledge of instructions which must be input into the computer by the searcher and understanding of the ways in which the instructions are linked with one another.

The Importance of Ict As Embodied In The Internet To Research
The use of the Internet for research, training and other academic activities has been embraced by many higher institutions in Nigeria, and abroad and both corporate organizations and individuals have adopted it based on its potentials to meeting their information need. Yusuf (2006) as cited by Adegbija, Bola & Ogunsola (2012) opined that the Internet provides wide range opportunities for easy access to relevant and current literature, wide range of instruments, online opportunity for validation of instrument, simulation of an on-going research, and so on. Luambano & Nawe (2004) in their study found Internet to be an important component in academic institutions as it plays pivotal role in meeting information and communication needs of undergraduate students, researchers and lecturers' needs. They further added that the Internet makes it possible to access a wide range of information that is up-to-date. Similarly, Akintunde (2002), asserted that any attempt to have meaningful academic communication can be successful only by the use of ICT which presents information in real time and space. While Massaquoi (2006) also confirmed that 84 percent of journal articles and 97 percent of completed research works are now available on the Internet. He further added that making use of the Internet helps in conducting research, publishing articles and exchanging ideas. The Net enables scholars and academic institutions to

disseminate information to a wider audience through hosting websites and search facilities (Luambano & Nawe, 2004, Adegbija, 2003).

Methodology

During the time of this research, Network service providers, a campus-wide network linked to the Internet through a V-SAT and linked to other faculties through radio was in existence in the Universities used for this study. Four universities in Southwest, Nigeria, that is, University of Agriculture, Abeokuta; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; University of Lagos, Lagos and University of Ibadan, were purposively selected for the study because they are among the federal universities in the Southwest, Nigeria that have the Internet connectivity.

In order to achieve the specific objectives, the research instrument used was adapted from existing research carried out by Adegbija, Bola & Ogunsola (2012). The designed questionnaire which contained three sections was administered involving one hundred respondents (undergraduate students) from each university, making a total of four hundred. However, three hundred and fifty-two responses were retrieved and used for this study. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the data collected.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to examine undergraduate students' use of Internet in some selected universities in Nigeria. It specifically focused on the following objectives:

1) To find out undergraduate students' sources for accessing Internet facilities in the selected universities in Nigeria?
2) To find out the extent to which undergraduate students use the Internet resources?

3) To investigate the major challenges encountered by undergraduate students in using the Internet facilities?

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

The results of this research are presented in the tables that follow:

Table 1: Sources of Accessing Internet Facilities by the Undergraduate Students in the selected Southwest Universities in Nigeria

S/N	Sources of Internet Facilities	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
1	University Internet Laboratory	113 (32.1)	200 (56.8)	15 (4.3)	19 (5.4)	5 (1.4)
2	Office	155 (44.0)	80 (22.7)	19 (5.4)	96 (27.3)	2 (0.6)
3	Cyber café	174 (49.4)	105 (29.8)	60 (17.0)	13 (3.7)	0 (0.0)
4	Faculty Internet laboratory	134 (38.1)	177 (50.3)	39 (11.1)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.6)
5	Hostel	109 (35.5)	29 (8.2)	125 (31.0)	86 (24.4)	3 (0.9)
6	Library Internet	132 (37.5)	151 (42.9)	50 (14.2)	18 (5.1)	1 (0.3)
7	Personal laptop	20 (5.7)	127 (37.1)	45 (12.8)	160 (45.5)	0 (0.0)

No. = 352

The result of the table 1 revealed that the undergraduate students strongly agreed and agreed that they access Internet in through the following locations: universities Internet laboratory (32.1%, 56.8%), office (33%, 22.7%), cyber café(49.4%, 29.8%), faculty Internet laboratory (38.1, 50.3) and library Internet connectivity (37.5%, 42.9%) respectively. While the respondents strongly disagreed that they accessed Internet facilities through the hostels (31%, 24.4%) and their personal laptops (12.8%, 45.5%) which may be attributed to lack of access code to the universities network services or as a result of lack of personal laptops.

Table 2: The extent to which undergraduate students use the Internet Resources

S/N	Resources on the Internet	Very Often	Often	Seldom	Never	Undecided
1	Instant messaging	102 (29.0)	163 (46.3)	21 (6.0)	60 (17.0)	6 (1.7)
2	Facebook	280 (80.0)	52 (14.8)	20 (5.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
3	World Wide Web	200 (56.8)	130 (37.0)	22 (6.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
4	Search engines e.g. Google, AltaVista, yahoo etc	265 (75.3)	67 (19.0)	11 (3.1)	7 (2.0)	2 (0.6)
5	File transfer protocol	88 (25.0)	114 (32.4)	109 (31.0)	34 (9.7)	7 (2.0)
6	YouTube	36 (10.2)	55 (15.6)	186 (52.8)	71 (20.2)	4(1.1)
7	Skype (Internet video telephone)	62 (17.6)	48 (13.6)	170 (48.3)	51 (14.5)	21 (6.0)
8	Twitter	63 (17.9)	6 (1.7)	212 (60.2)	56 (15.9)	15 (4.3)
9	Internet video	36 (10.2)	108 (30.7)	161 (45.7)	43 (12.2)	4 (1.1)

| 10 | Internet audio | 50 (14.2) | 94 (26.7) | 158 (44.9) | 44 (12.5) | 6 (1.7) |
| 11 | Scientific and satellite imaging | 80 (22.7) | 8 (2.3) | 134 (38.1) | 120 (34.1) | 10 (2.8) |

No.= 352

Table 2 showed the extent to which undergraduate students under investigation use the Internet resources. The result of the findings showed that the undergraduate students very often and often use the following resources: Instant messaging (29%, 46.3%), Facebook (80%, 14.8%), World Wide Web (56.8%, 37%), Search engines (75.3%, 19%), and the others such as File transfer protocol, YouTube, Skype, Twitter, Internet video, Internet audio and Scientific and satellite imaging are seldom or never used.

Table 3: The challenges encountered by the undergraduate students in the use of

Internet resources

S/N	Challenges encountered by undergraduate students	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
1	Lack of search skills	72 (20.5)	133 (37.8)	94 (26.7)	48 (13.6)	5 (1.4)
2	High cost of usage	150 (42.6)	124 (35.2)	68 (19.3)	10 (2.8)	0 (0.0)
3	Power outages	156 (44.3)	104 (29.5)	55 (15.6)	35 (9.9)	2 (0.6)
4	Information overload (or too many information)	52 (14.8)	167 (47.4)	100 (28.4)	29 (8.2)	4 (1.1)
5	Download delay	190 (54.0)	84 (23.9)	50 (14.2)	12 (3.4)	16 (4.5)
6	Problem with credibility of information	69 (19.6)	64 (18.2)	130 (36.9)	52 (14.8)	37 (10.5)
7	Inaccessibility of some websites	100 (28.4)	138 (39.2)	72 (20.5)	35 (9.5)	7 (2.0)
8	Difficulties in navigation of some websites	106 (30.1)	110 (31.3)	85 (24.1)	39 (11.1)	12 (3.4)
9	The need to filter the results from search	119 (33.8)	130 (36.9)	63 (17.9)	36 (10.2)	4 (1.1)

| 10 | Irrelevant information | 72 (20.5) | 100 (28.4) | 94 (26.7) | 83 (23.6) | 3 (0.9) |

No.= 352

The result of the analysis on table 3 on challenges experienced by undergraduate students in using Internet facilities shows that they strongly agreed (20.5%) and agreed (37.8%) that they lack basic Internet search skills. Other challenges the undergraduate students strongly agreed and agreed that they experienced are: high cost of usage (42.6%, 35.2%), power outages, lack constant or adequate electricity supply (44.3%, 29.5%) information overload (14.8%, 47.4%), download delay (54.0%, 23.9), inaccessibility of some websites (28.4, 39.2), difficulties in navigation (30.1%, 31.3%) and the need to filter the results from search (33.8%, 36.9%).The respondents did not consider irrelevant information and credibility of information challenges being experienced.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Nigeria, being a developing country is still struggling with the full incorporation (unlike the developed countries) of ICT in the universities where undergraduate students require it for academic activities. This paper thus, focused on the responses of undergraduate students to the use of Internet in selected universities in Nigeria. It considered the concept of Internet and the importance of ICT as embodied in the Internet to research and academic activities. Since quality education became an issue in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria and the developing countries as a whole, ICT as embodied in the Internet was adopted by institutions of learning to provide students and researchers information needed for their academic activities which cannot be taken for granted in order to ensure quality project, thesis writing, or research. A well articulated and sustained effort is required to equip students with basic ICT operation skills and also make the facilities more accessible to the students. It is therefore not inappropriate that the research of this nature be conducted in higher institutions of learning to determine the sources of Internet facilities, usage of Internet resources and the problems encountered by the undergraduate students in their quest for using the Internet facilities.

The result on Internet accessibility showed that undergraduate students could not access Internet through personal laptops, which may be due to lack of personal computer or access code to the university network service provider. It may also be due to poverty which could prevent some of the students from procuring their own laptops. The result on usage of Internet resources by the undergraduate students showed that some of the respondents very often used some Internet resources such as the Facebook, World Wide Web and Search engines. The results also showed that some of the respondents seldom used the YouTube, Skype, Twitter, Internet video, Internet audio and Scientific and satellite imaging. The responses further showed that some of the undergraduate students never used some of the Internet resources. The result on the challenges encountered by undergraduate students in using Internet showed that some of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they lacked basic Internet search skills and experienced high cost of usage, among others.

Based on the findings of this research the following recommendations are made:

1. Internet connectivity should be fully made available to undergraduate students so that they can access with their personal laptops which will make accessibility more personal. This can be achieved by supplying, loaning or making the acquisition of laptops a pre-requisite for admission in the universities.

2. Undergraduate students should be given training, awareness, exposure or workshops on the use of the various Internet resources in order to improve their use for researches or academic work. These could also improve their computer literacy and search skills.

3. Universities should include entrepreneurship policy of the Federal government in order to be in line with the global requirements for university education.

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