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Use of Internet Among Riverine Dwellers in Burutu Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The survey explored internet use among riverine dwellers in Burutu local government area of delta state, Nigeria. It employed a descriptive survey design to execute the study. Data were collected with the use of questionnaires from 200 riverine dwellers. Frequency counts and simple percentages were used to analyze the data. Findings revealed that the respondents used internet but WhatsApp. Yahoo and Google were used respectively by most respondents and it is used for interaction and interview, it was discovered that 99% of respondent can only use the phone to access the internet and not the desktop or laptop. The respondents used internet for different reasons but a majority of them used it for interaction with friends, online examination registration, job searching and browsing the web respectively. It is recommended that the riverine dwellers should be encouraged to undergo ICT training to enable them acquire the knowledge and skill of internet use especially for business or trading.

Keywords: Rural, Internet Use, Burutu, Telecommunication

Introduction

Equitable access to information is an essential principle in a global information economy. No other country is a better example of the need for information technology than Nigeria (Meseret, Gebremichael & Jackson, 2006).

Rural communities in Nigeria, the most populous country on the African continent, have been victims of marginalization regarding Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that includes cell phones, personal computers, and Internet access (Hwang, 2006). Poor service caused by capacity constraints of the communication network, lack of infrastructure to support technology hardware and software, scarcity of financial resources, and an unreliable electric supply in Nigeria hinders ICT usage (Akanbi & Akanbi, 2012; Nwabueze, Nwabueze & Egbra, 2013). In 2009, Okwor reported that connectivity of mobile broadband from Nokia Siemens Networks in Nigeria had the lowest usage and accessibility out of the fifty African countries.

The inequalities for Nigerians in accessing the Internet and the World Wide Web, the lack knowledge of search engines, poor Internet connection quality, limited proficiency in English, and the diversity of socio-economic levels contribute to the digital divide (Ani, Uchendu & Atseye, 2007; Umukoro, 2014). Nigerians are deprived of information other developing countries have because of economic reasons and results in deprivation of political power and cultural skills (Nwabueze, 2010; Nwabueze et al., 2013). In 2010, 70% of Nigerians lived below the poverty threshold level of $2.00 per day (World Bank, 2011). In 2010, unemployment was 21% with the rate of youth unemployment increasing at a greater rate in urban areas than rural area (Akanbi & Akanbi, 2012).

The Nigerian digital divide signifies the disparity among individuals who have Internet accessibility and computers and those who do not. Computers and the Internet are present in the homes of the rich but not the poor because of the high cost of computers and expensive Internet access (Eke, 2011). The digital divide is a fundamental wedge separating the *have* and *have-nots* in Nigeria for gathering information, communicating, and competing in a global economy.

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The Telecom operators are providing and extending service using variety of technologies notably, the technology of Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA), Global System for Mobile (GSM). The private mobile operators and the national carriers are intensifying their efforts in ensuring network capacity is spread to different part of the country including rural areas (NCC, 2009). Presently, there are five digital mobile cellular and Five CDMA mobile cellular service providers and sixteen fixed wire and wireless telecommunication companies operating in Nigeria. The teledensity had risen from 0.4% in 2000 to 53% in 2009 (NCC, 2009). Seventy four million active subscribers were reported as at December, 2009 (NCC, 2009). The bulk of subscribers were 88.14% GSM Cellular, 9.94% CDMA and 1.91% fixed wired wireless subscribers. The usage of 0.9 per 100 for fixed lines and 41.6 per 100, as at December, 2009 was reported (NCC, 2009). Studies conducted by the NCC projected that by 2011, the subscription and penetration rate will be over 80 million and 50% respectively.

In spite of the government efforts in extending access of ICTs to rural areas, many rural and remote areas still remain unreached. Some of the rural areas still have teledensity that is less than 5% (Akinsola et al., 2005). Other communities are very remote to the extent that extending infrastructure is a challenge (Agyeman, 2007). The irregular power supply by the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) a monopolized electricity company owned by government poses a barrier to the rapid diffusion of ICTs. The situation is even made worse in most of the rural areas that are not connected to the National grid. Major limitations that contribute to the poor service by PHCN are lack of maintenance of existing infrastructure and upgrading of facilities, lack of competition combine with poorly motivated workforce. The consequences of this trend are technical and economic inefficiencies, which have resulted to inadequate and inefficient service delivery causing inability for widespread coverage and poor service delivery. In an effort of providing an uninterrupted service, all the major digital operators have had to depend on diesel generators to power their base stations. The implication of this is additional cost of doing business and reduction in expansion to rural and remote areas. The telecommunications operators are reluctant in investing in unprofitable areas, concentrating on areas where they can easily recoup their investments (USPF, 2009b). These have resulted in making rural and remote areas with little or no telecommunication services.

The riverine dwellers of Burutu local government, area of Delta state are the Ezons, which area is consisting of many creeks which are tributaries of the Forcados River which empties its contents into the Forcados Sea. The dwellers of this region are fisher men and women, Farming, canoe carving, salt making and petty trading. Their lives can be more improved if there is Road, Electricity and Internet connectivity to local Government area.

Methods

This study employed descriptive survey design. The study covered 10 communities in Burutu Local Government Area of Delta State. The communities used for this research are Ogulagha, Odimodi, Burutu, Ayakoromo, Ekiagbodo, Okrika, Egodor, Tuomo, Torugbene and Ozobo. Questionnaire was used for the collection of data, which is made up of three sections. Section A contain items on personal information's about the respondent, section B contain items on the use of internet, while the third section, section C is on general comments on any relevant areas about the topic. Questionnaires were administered and collected from the respondents from the above communities.

Data Analysis, Findings and Discussion

Analysis of data received, findings and discussions are in the tables below.

Table 1: Age of Respondents

Age	*No. of Respondents*	*% of Respondents*
12-18	15	7.5
19-25	70	35
26-32	55	27.5
33-39	25	12.5
40-46	12	6
47-53	18	9
54 and above	5	2.5
Total	200	100

In Table 1 above it reveals that age between19-25 and 26-32 of the respondents. This could be responsible to the

fact that those within these ages are more associated with education and the use of internet relatively high among them.

Table 2: Gender of Respondents

Gender	*No*	*%*
Male	145	72.5
Female	55	27.5
Total	200	100

The table above shows that there are more males than females responding the questionnaires than the females in the riverine areas who are ready to attend the questionnaires.

Table 3: Highest Educational Qualifications of Respondents

Highest Educational Qualifications	*No*	*%*
FSLC	39	19.5
JSC	41	20.5
SSCE	40	20
NCE/ND	54	27
HND/B.SC/BA	20	10
M.SC/MA	5	2.5
PhD	1	0.5
Total	200	100

The Table 3 indicates that 54 (27%), 41 (20.5%), 40 (20%) and 39 (19.5%) of the respondents possess NCE, JSC, SSCE and FSLC respectively. While 20 (10%), 5 (2.5%) and 1 (0.5%) are HND/B.SC/BA, M.SC/MA and PhD Holders respectively.

Table 4: Frequency of Use of the Internet

Frequency	*No*	*%*
Every Day	30	15
Once a day	20	10
Once in a week	43	21.5
2-3 times a week	22	11
Often	25	12.5
When the need arises	60	30
Total	200	100

The Table 4 shows that 60 (30%) use the internet only when the need arises. The table revealed that respondents used the internet; this might be as a result of the mobile telecom operators in Nigeria providing internet services which could be access through the mobile phones and laptops.

Table 5: Search Engines Mostly Used

Search Engine	*No*	*%*
WhatsApp	60	30
Yahoo	50	25
Google	40	20
Alta vista	10	5
Ask Jeaves	25	12.5
Others	15	7.5
Total	200	100

The Table 5 shows that majority of respondents make use of WhatsApp, closing followed by Yahoo, and Google. These results correspond with the study of Adomi, Omodeko and Otolo (2004), and Ejedafiru E. F. (2009). Whose studies on the use of cybercafé at Delta State University and use of internet among riverine dwellers in Warri North L.G.A of Delta State, respectively. Which revealed Yahoo and Google as the search engines used by respondents.

Table 6: Purpose of Using the Internet

Purpose	*No*	*%*
Online Examinations Registration	40	20
Job Searching	70	35
Browsing the web	22	11
E-mail	33	16.5
Answering specific questions	10	5
Searching for information on occupational purposes	25	12.5
Total	200	100

Findings on the purpose reveals that majority of respondents use the internet for Job searching, followed by Online Examination Registration and sending and receiving of e-mails, while searching for information on occupational purposes ranked 4th.

Table 7: Constraint Experienced in the Use of Internet

Constraint Experienced	Number		%		Total
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Difficult using the Net	190	10	95	10	100
Poor internet Infrastructure	199	1	99.5	0.5	100
Absence of internet service providers	187	13	93.5	6.5	100
Lack of awareness of important sites in their subject	196	4	98	2	100
Lack of skills needed to use the net	170	30	85	15	100
Poor and lack of finance	195	5	97.5	2.5	100

The Table 7 implies that all respondents encountered problem of poor internet infrastructure, constraint to lack of awareness of important sites in the subject area and problems of using the internet (difficult using the net, absent of internet services and lack of skills to use the net). Diso (1994) holds the view that rural areas in Nigeria are generally characterized by poor living conditions-absolute poverty and absent of almost all the amenities of life. Nigeria government is yet to come in terms with the fact that provision of ICTs in riverine areas is an eminently sensible development trend. It can be seen that all the constraints are militate against respondents in the communities studied.

Table 8: Methods of Acquiring Internet Skills

Skills Acquisition Methods	No	%
Formal Education	65	32.5
Assistance from colleagues	20	10
Computer training Programme	40	20
Use of hand book and manuals	60	30
Self instruction through trial and error	15	7.5
Total	200	100

Users acquired skill to use the internet through formal Education with 60 (32.5%), followed by use of handbook and Manual 60 (30%), while 40 (20%) undergo through computer training to enable them access the net.

Conclusion

The study revealed that most of the respondents used the internet in various time frequencies. Interaction with friends, Job searching, Online examination Registration and sending and receiving of mails were the major reasons for their use of the internet, most of the respondents acquired their internet skills through formal education, use of hand books and manuals while the search engine used are the WhatsApp, Yahoo and Google respectively.

The respondents encounter all the constraints and problems of internet used in the area. The major problems encounters are: Poor internet infrastructure, Lack of awareness of important sites in their subject area, Poor and lack of finance, Difficulty using the net, etc. However, there will be a gradual improvement, looking at the easy availability of mobile phone services in the riverine area.

Recommendation

In the light of the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- The riverine community dwellers should be encouraged by the Local Government council, state, and Representatives of the area in government to build an ICT centre to enable learn and have the basic knowledge of computer and the use of internet.
- Telecom operators/Internet service providers should improve their infrastructures to enable the residents have hitch free access to the internet.
- Telecom Operators/Internet service providers should extend their mass to the riverine areas to enable them have direct access to the internet.
- Government should provide other social amenities (Electricity, Road, Hospitals, etc.) so as to bridge the gap between urban and rural dwellers.

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