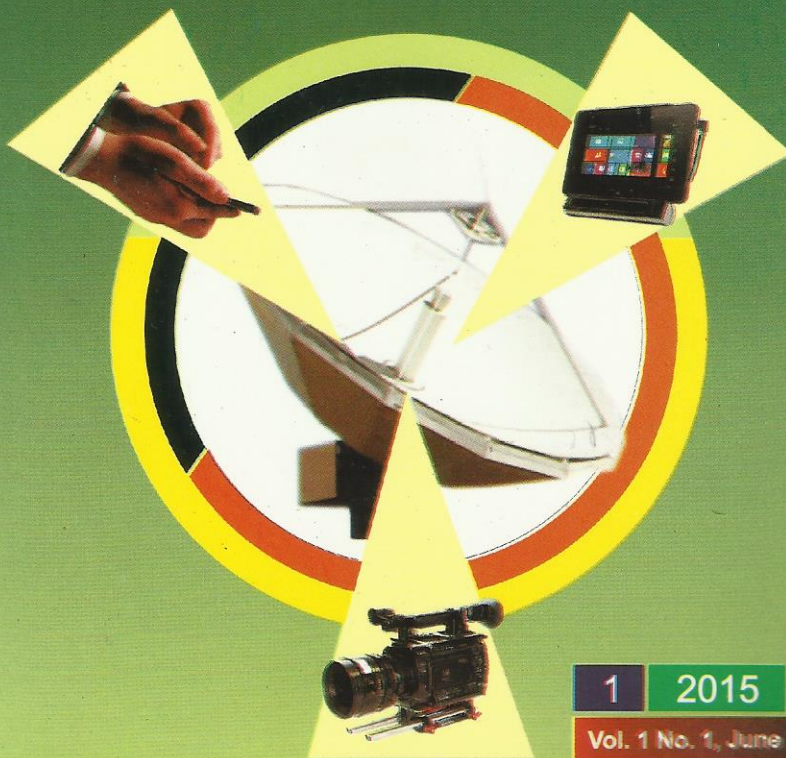




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Development and Maintenance of Interpersonal Relationships through Social Networking Sites among Nigerian Youths

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&

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Abstract

The study focuses on the ubiquitous nature of internet, which offers unfettered opportunity for the youths in particular to interact. Thus, it aims at determining the extent to which social networking sites impact on interpersonal relationship among youths. To achieve this objective, a combination of survey and interview was carried out at three higher institutions in Ilorin, Nigeria, namely University of Ilorin, Al-Hikmah University and Kwara State University. Six Hundred (600) respondents were randomly selected for the survey, 200 from each institution on whom a standard questionnaire was administered. Another forty-five respondents were purposively selected for the interview. Findings revealed generally that social networking sites influence the kind of interpersonal relationships youths create among themselves. Also, it is established that youths spend considerable time on social media for the purpose of establishing and maintaining old friends, and also for making new ones. It concludes that the main purpose Nigerian youths use social network is for socializing. The study recommends that youths should maximize the potentials of social networking sites by exploring available sites for educational purposes.

Key words: Social Networking Sites, Internet, Relationship, Interaction Technologies, Youths.

Introduction

Over the decades, the Internet and the Web have undergone a remarkable expansion, permeating all aspects of people's lives and resulting in an unprecedented growth of social interaction technologies. Social Interaction Technologies (SIT) are Internet-based tools and techniques

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that help initiate, share, and maintain interactive and collaborative activities online (Dumova and Fiordo, 2010). New SIT-based or social media have notably changed people's information gathering and communication habits by adding a strong interactive and collaborative aspect to the milieu.

According to Carey (1998), the internet, which emerged in the twentieth century, is the first global communication system that is displacing the old national system of communications. The old system of communication, no doubt, means the traditional mass media comprising radio, television, cinema, newspaper and magazine. The internet, as Einav (2004) puts it, is growing by at least 85 million users per year, and it, in many ways, represents a potentially better form of media because it can engage an increasingly alienated audience. Meanwhile, Facebook alone, according to Grimmelmann (2010:3), has over four hundred million users and is still growing. Despite the benefits it offers, it presents many threats to the most cherished values and standards of society.

Pavlik (2001:15) emphasizes on the ubiquity of the internet when he posits that stories told online (including via television linked to the Internet or other network-based digital technology) can make connections much more easily than in any other medium. Businesses and other social interactions are easily carried out with the facility. As perhaps the best-known example of social media globally, social networking has experienced outstanding growth. It shares similarity with blogs aggressively in use. According to a comprehensive social media survey, the global social networks like blogosphere rivals any mass media in terms of reach, time spent, and wider cultural, social, and political impact (Wave 3 Social Media Tracker, 2008). The current number of blogs in the world amounts to 168 million (BlogPulse, 2011) with some popular blogs having hundreds of thousands of subscribers.

Contrary to what was obtained in the past, the existence of social sites in this digital milieu, made possible by internet has, thus, provided almost an unfettered opportunity for people to interact globally. Interestingly, Lewis (2010), Okorie and Tunji (2011) recognise the unique

opportunities offered by the internet, when they note that the emergence of social networking sites have significantly altered today's media landscape and presents individuals with new opportunities to meet different people from different backgrounds across the globe. This is done primarily through the use of hyperlinks, or clickable pointers to other online content. Other tools for making such links or associations are still emerging. Carey (2004:189) corroborates that, recently, some personal computers have provided DVD drives that can play movies and high-end personal computer (PC) games have included some video. Furthermore, there is much more use of communication devices like the modem, ipod, adroid, ipad, and iphone for entertainment and making relationship. If we consider the power of the ever-expanding social networking sites on the Internet like Facebook, Friendster and MySpace, among others, it becomes clearer that the new media is one of the greatest agents that redefine the relationship that exists among people in the 21st Century.

Understandably Roberts and Foehr (2005) rightly observe that in a little over 50 years, we have moved from a media environment dominated by local newspapers and radio stations to one characterized by an almost continual diet of highly vivid, on-demand, audiovisual images, many with interactive capabilities. Of profound interest is the fact that unlike adults, youths are often among the early adopters and obvious sustained users of these new technologies. On account of this, Magid and Collier (2007:1&2) posit that "although many of us adults may not be aware of all the web's capabilities these days, rest assured that our teens are". They establish that "as we adults struggle to find the language that describes this phenomenon, teens are speeding ahead, making it up as they go, including the language and the tools and their uses. To them, these sites are just another tool for socialising". Through social networking sites, therefore, there exists a kind of social relationship that goes with it. This inclined Okorie and Tunji (2011: 114) to affirm that "with social networking, it becomes apparent that some interpersonal relationships have experienced a transformation". What is uncertain, however, revolves around one of the fundamental questions

which is: In this modern media environment, what motive underlies Nigerian youths in developing interpersonal relationship through the social networking sites?

Statement of the Problem

Sprawling the social media landscape are Facebook, Twitter, Okut and MySpace, among others, which have universal appeal. Despite the fact that Nigerians generally use social media, there is no doubt that a large number of youths have more access to the internet and have as well signed up to social networking sites. Significant about the use of these social networking sites is the manner and purposes to which they put it. And one of the purposes is to interact with friends, family members and other loved ones. It is on the basis of this that the researchers seek to establish the most popular networking sites which youths sign up to as well as the type of interpersonal relationship youths develop and maintain through the various social networkingsites.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives are to:

- i. Determine the most popular social networking sites Nigerian youths sign up to
- ii. Examine the purpose for which youths mostly use social media
- iii. Establish whether or not Nigerian youths develop and maintain relationship through social networking sites
- iv. Determine the activity youths engage in to nurture interpersonal relationships on social networking sites
- v. Determine the extent to which social networking sites impact on interpersonal relationship among youths

Research Questions

- i. What are the most popular social networking sites Nigerian youths sign up to?
- ii. For what purpose do youths mostly use social media?
- iii. Do Nigerian youths develop and maintain relationship through social networking sites?

- iv. What activity do youths engage in to nurture interpersonal relationships on social networking sites?
- v. To what extent do social networking sites impact on interpersonal relationship among youths?

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the diffusion of innovation theory. Diffusion of innovation theory, according to Manoncourt (2004) cited in Imoh (2007:37) "...explains the collective human behavior and responsiveness of members of a community, over time, when new technologies, attitudes, behaviours, policies, programmes, etc are introduced." Developed in 1962 by Everett Rogers, the theory emphasizes that mass media provide information and awareness after which they establish personal contacts. In the same manner, they organize expertise and advice after which actual experience take over in the adoption process.

The core assumption of the diffusion of innovation theory is located on the reason new ideas and technologies spread through different cultures with close reference to social media and at what rate. Rogers (2003) posits that the adoption of new innovation starts with enthusiastic innovators and early adopters and then moves to use by early and late-majority when the technology becomes more reliable.

Diffusion of innovation, according to Baskerville and Pries-Heje (2001) and Fichman (2001), occurs through five steps. The five stages, according to these authors, are knowledge/awareness, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation.

Knowledge signals the stage an individual is first exposed to an innovation. At this stage, he lacks clear cut information about the innovation, and is, therefore, not inspired to find more information about the innovation.

Persuasion: At this stage, an individual gets interested in the innovation because he forms a favourable attitude to it. He, therefore, actively seeks detail information about the innovation.

Development
Among

Decision
of the
innovation
whether

Implementation
innovation
of the
information

Confirmation
up his
reinforcement

The application
not for
implication
Nigeria
making

Concept
The term
while a
under the
Program
On its part
of social

Social media
that also
information
can the
information
Boyd and
connect
interaction

Decision: This is where an individual shows commitment to the adoption of the innovation. It is here that an individual takes the concept of the innovation and weighs its merits and demerits with a view of deciding whether to adopt it or not.

Implementation: This is the stage where an individual adopts the innovation. At this stage he does not simply determine the usefulness of the innovation, but goes an extra mile to probe for additional information about the innovation.

Confirmation: This is the final stage when an individual finally makes up his mind to continue using the innovation maximally. His decision is reinforced by positive outcomes from it.

The appropriateness of diffusion of innovation theory to this work is not farfetched. The advent of social networking sites which by implication involves a new technology makes human interaction possible. Nigerian youths, who are early and aggressive users, find it worthy in making and maintaining relationships among other purposes.

Conceptual Framework

The term 'youths', is often defined by varying age range. For example, while Audelo (2008), and the World Bank (2012) consider them to be under the age bracket of 15 and 24 years, the Commonwealth Youth Programme (2010) places them between the age of 15 and 29 years. On its part, the World Health Organisation (2011) has it that any member of society between the ages of 25 and 34 can be regarded as youth.

Social networking sites, according to Boyd and Ellison (2007), are tools that allow users to create a personal profile of themselves containing information such as age, location and interests. These personal profiles can then be connected with family, friends and colleagues, where information can be shared among one another. These connections, as Boyd and Ellison (2007) put it, create a network of users where anyone connected to the network can view everyone else's profile and, therefore, interact with them.

Review of Related Literature

A reflection at previous research on social networking sites and online relationships reveal what direction research needs to go to find valid conclusions on the interplay of real life and social networking sites in the developmental relationships. Various empirical studies conducted over the years leave little doubt that, given exposure, media content can and does influence youths' level of socialisation, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. In a study meant to examine Facebook in particular in facilitating online dating and computer-mediated relationship among young people, Okorie and Oyedepo (2011) found that the internet has been a major driver in facilitating social relations among people across the globe and the emergence of social networking sites like Facebook has opened new vistas in promoting social interaction and online dating among young people all over the world.

While writing on the impact of the media in people's everyday life, Lewis (2010) rightly observes that users of social media are no longer passive consumers. They could be creators or producers of information. Internet tools such as blogs, YouTube, Flickr, MySpace and Facebook allow the average person to create content that can be shared with a worldwide audience.

On his part, Vitak (2008) advances several reasons people use social networking sites. One of the reasons is for them to meet strangers and become friends with them. This type of relationship, according to Vitak (2008), is a weak interpersonal relationship. She further stresses that majority (57%) of respondents said they were initially introduced to those "friends" through mutual friends, which increases the likelihood of such relationships developing into strong ties. Corroborating Vitak's (2008) findings, Dwyer (2006) cited in Lewis (2010) posits, based on his findings, that youths use social networking to help them maintain relationships with friends. Maintenance of already established virtual community through Facebook and MySpace in particular has also been acknowledged by Boyd and Ellison (2007). According to them, even bloggers, who choose to be anonymous to the broader public, are part

of an identifiable circle of bloggers, who respond to each other and also meet in real life.

Despite the fact that social sites like LinkedIn, MySpace, Twitter and Facebook are considered as favoured avenues for forming relationships, Clark (2008) looks at them differently. Citing Clark, Dominick (2011: 447) illustrates his ambivalence based on the outcome of a survey conducted in 2007 when he asserts that:

In the first place, many profiles were simply abandoned. About 20 per cent were no longer active when the analysis took place. Another 5 per cent were profiles of entertainers, politicians, or other celebrities where building relationships was secondary to their commercial purpose. Of the remaining profiles, most were seldom used. About 50 per cent of the owners had not logged in within the previous two and a half months, and 20 percent hadn't logged in for more than a year.

If the above position is accepted, it means that people generally do not utilise the social media as intensive as one would believe. Their media use is limited by what Albury (2003:108) postulates as everyday circumstances of time, budget and other personal pressures.

A fundamental fact we cannot rule out, however, is that like the handset, where people have internet services, regularly for social networking, is always connected. In most of the households Bouvard and Kurtzman (2000:1) studied, the computer was on and connected to the web whenever anyone was in the house. Accordingly, there were also many new ways that people are using the web and many changes from earlier patterns of web use. Broadly speaking, people still want information, entertainment, and communications with others through the new media. The ways in which these appetites are satisfied have changed and other behaviours have emerged based on the characteristics of broadband web access. For instance, Carey (2004:196) found that:

When people get e-mail throughout the day, it starts to take on some of the functionality of a telephone. First, in order to know that new e-mail was coming in, many households set a tone to ring or an artificial voice to speak whenever the e-mail arrived. In this way, they could hear the tone or voice even if they were in another part of the house, much like a telephone ringing. Second, the constant availability of e-mail encouraged some to develop a relationship with others that relied on near real-time communication. That is, others learned over time that these people in broadband households would get messages almost instantly and could reply very quickly.

Because teens and young adults are among the first to adopt and utilize these easily accessible tools, it is assumed that they are also among the most knowledgeable about how to employ those tools (Loretto, 2009). Most of the young people who log on these sites, Walter (2006) remarks, do so for fun, to organize parties and to find dates. This is not too different from Bickham's (2004) finding, considering the social context of media use that youths spent a higher percentage of their media use time with their friends.

Strikingly too, for some young people, particularly those who are marginalized or otherwise socially isolated, online relationships provide a significant, and sometimes the only opportunity for such socialization. This ability to connect others with shared values, views, needs or experiences, can assist young people experiencing marginalization to identify potential supportive connections in their local community (Munt, et al. 2002:135). As a study of social networking sites for young people who suffer chronic illness or disability demonstrates establishes, not only does it provides the opportunity to develop such friendships but participants described these friendship as "true friends" that were amongst their most dependable and enduring (Third and Richardson, 2010:32).

Method

The research was conducted through a series of semi-structured interviews. The interview schedule was designed to explore the experiences of the participants in using social networking sites. The interviews were conducted in a private setting, and lasted for approximately 45 minutes. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

Out of the total sample, 40% of the participants were female and 60% were male. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying themes or patterns in the data.

Table 1: Response to the statement "Social networking sites are a waste of time."

Response
Strongly agree
Agree
Undecided
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Total

Method

The researchers employed two methods for the study, using survey and interview methods. Population of the study comprised all students of the three universities in Ilorin, Kwara State -Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, University of Ilorin, Ilorin and Kwara State University, Malete. From these institutions, a sample of 600 respondents, 200 from each of the universities, was drawn randomly. A standard questionnaire was directly administered on the 600 selected respondents. The survey method was considered relevant to this study because of its ability to relate to respondents' psychological disposition such as opinions, values, and beliefs regarding the use of social networking sites. On the other hand, forty five students were purposively selected for the interview part of the study to collect richer and deeper responses on the problem of the study.

Data Analysis

Out of the 600 copies of the questionnaire administered, only 577, representing 96 per cent response rate, were computed and analyzed, using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, and expressed in simple percentage. Meanwhile, the quantitative analysis was supported and enhanced by relevant richer responses collected through the interview. The analysis is presented as follow.

Table 1: Respondents' Opinion on Whether or not they Established Serious Relationship through Social Media.

Respondent's preference	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	108	19
Agree	201	35
Undecided	67	12
Strongly disagree	106	18
Disagree	95	16
Total	577	100%

Table 1 shows that 19% and 35% respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that they have established serious relationship through social networking sites, while 12% of the total respondents were neutral. On the other hand, 18% of them strongly disagreed having serious relationship just as 16% also disagreed.

Supporting this statistics, many of the interviewees in this study maintained that they have obtained, created and sustained serious relationships through social media. To most respondents, therefore, social networking sites are veritable avenues for seeking, obtaining and sustaining relationships. As one of them put it:

Social networking is a blessing to us youths of today. Gone were the days when you need to go to parties or social gatherings before you develop relationships. You can be in the comfort of your home or room and bargain relationship with anybody anywhere. More importantly, the need for face to face interaction has been graciously removed, which brings another great advantage to individuals that are shy. The old dictum of 'face to face is better than hundred letters' is no more valid, and this makes having relationship of any kind- platonic, amorous or serious- simpler. I have not less than sixty boy and girl friends that we interact with one another regularly. Among these friends, there a few of them that I have serious relationship with, there are some I have platonic relationship with. Life cannot be better.

Table 2: Duration of Relationship Established Through Social Networking Sites

Duration
Less than 5 years
5 years and above
Total

Table 2 shows that 70% of the respondents established relationships through social networking sites. Duration of relationship was 5 years and above while 30% were less than 5 years. Those who established relationships through social networking sites were 70%.

Nevertheless, 30% of the respondents did not establish relationships through social networking sites.

0%
40%
20%
10%
50%
100%

The last sentence of the text is one of the most common network. Even though the adoption of social networking sites confirm the trend among a large number of youths, the adoption of social networking sites is still in its infancy.

Table 2: Period for which Respondents have been Using Social Networking Site.

Duration	Frequency	Percent
Less than one year	67	1.6
– 5 years	172	29.8
More than 5 years	338	8.5
Total	577	100%

Table 2 seeks to find out how long respondents have been using social sites. Data reveal that 12% had been using it for less than one year while 30% had been using it for a period of between one and five years. Those who had been using it for more than five years were 59%.

Nevertheless, a respondent provided a better insight into the duration of time that the selected youths have been using social networks.

Of course, social networks became popular in Nigeria not long ago. The popularity of the use of social media came actually with the general adoption and use of Blackberry phone. Nevertheless, a majority of youths I know had used and had become addicts to social media for not less than two years. Everybody wants to belong fast.

The last sentence of the respondent above was revealing. It pointed to one of the reasons youths in Nigeria, in particular, use social media or network. Everybody, according to the respondent, wants to belong fast. As adoption of innovation theory Rogers (1962) asserts, when people confirm the usefulness of an innovation, it becomes a general acceptance among a large group of people.

Table 3: Activities Youths Engage in to Nurture Interpersonal Relationships on Social Networking Sites.

Activity	Frequency	Percentage
E-mail/Messenger	92	16.5
Chatting	328	56.8
Video Call	73	12.6
Voice Call	84	14.5
Total	577	100%

Data in Table 3 shows that 17% of the respondents engaged people they interact with through e-mail/messenger. While 59% initiated or maintained interpersonal relationship through chatting, 13% and 15 % engaged those they interact with through Video call and Voice call respectively.

As established by the data in the Table, a majority of youths maintained relationships through chatting. This was also supported by a majority of responses from the interviewees in this study. As was encapsulated by one of the respondents:

To me, what we youths engaged in while using social networking for creating and maintain relationships is chatting or what some of us called 'pinging'. I can tell you that virtually all the youths that are on any social network use it for chatting with friends. Even when we upload our photos and share pictures, chatting or pinging is the main coordinating strategy of communication in social networking. That is why you will see many youths always 'pinging' their phones. Even when they are in toilets, they play with the keys of their phones to chat with friends. This is so common among us, the girls.

Table 4: Time Spent on Social Networking Sites

Time Spent
Less than 1 hour
1 – 2 hours
2 – 3 hours
More than 3 hours
Total

As shown in Table 4, more than three quarters of the respondents spent between one to two hours on social networking sites.

The interviewees also revealed that social networking sites have become a part of their daily lives. They wake up in the morning and use it to communicate with their friends.

I think social networking sites have become a part of our lives. We wake up in the morning and use it to communicate with our friends. We use it to share pictures and videos with our friends. We use it to chat with our friends. We use it to play games with our friends. We use it to watch videos with our friends. We use it to listen to music with our friends. We use it to do everything with our friends.

The dangers of social networking sites have been identified by many researchers. They include cyberbullying, identity theft, and sexual harassment.

Table 4: Time Respondents Spent on Social Media

Time Spent	Frequency	Percent
Less than one hour	47	8
1 – 2 hours	112	19
2 – 3 hours	172	30
More than 3 hours	246	43
Total	577	100

As shown in Table 4, a majority of the respondents (43%) spent more than three hours on social networking sites. Thirty of them, however, spent between two and three hours on the sites while 19% spent duration of one to two hours. Those who spent less than one hour were 8%.

The interview with selected individuals confirmed this and, at the same time, signposted a dangerous trend that social networking had brought to the lives of the youths. One of the interviewees noted that youths today wake up and sleep with their blackberries, and therefore, practically use it to connect every minute. According to him:

I think the number of hours youths today spend on social networking is dangerously enormous. If youths are using the same number of hours they use with their blackberries on their education, we will not be talking about high rate of failure at all levels of our education. Many of them sleep and wake up with their blackberries, use many hours in toilet not easing themselves, but pinging, browsing and connecting. Many of them have vigils doing nothing but communicating and connecting through their social media. It is becoming crazy!

The dangerous trend that social networking is establishing, as was identified by another respondent, is crazy addiction that is degenerating moral and cultural values of our society.

Table 5: Benefits of Using Social Networking Sites.

Advantages	Frequency	Percentage
A great way for leisure	96	17
Connect freely with existing friends	114	20
I have more friends	82	14.2
Enhances my business activities	49	8.4
I express myself better	34	5.8
I have found a heartthrob	98	17
More interactive and cheaper	81	14
Others	23	4
Total	577	100%

Table 5 shows benefits respondent derive from use of social networking sites. While 17% indicated that their use of social networking sites is a great way for leisure, 20% indicated free connection with friends. Also, 14% said through social networking sites, they were able to have more friends. In the same vein, 8% said the facility enhanced their business activities just as 6% said it enables them express themselves better. While 17% settled for the fact that social networking sites offer them opportunity to have a heartthrob, 14% and 4% said the sites make interpersonal relationship more interactive and for other related reasons respectively.

The interview with selected youths shed a clearer light on this finding. One of the interviewees disclosed and lamented thus:

The above earlier interview confirms the audience has mentioned reasons youth Table 6 are, the positive development technologies development.

Table 6: Negative Aspects of Social Networking Sites.

Disadvantages
Emotional distress
Waste of time
Loss of privacy
Absence of physical contact
Others
Total

As shown in Table 6, the negative aspects of social networking sites are:

What we do on social sites and why we wake up and sleep on social sites could be very frivolous. It is all about companionship. We want to connect with people and we want to make friends, even with people we don't know. We chat on the social media. We date and keep relationship with people we never met. The needs we gratify through the social media are mainly that of companionship. Nevertheless, I wish we could use the social media more to share ideas and educational materials that could improve our knowledge and educational status.

The above response shed more light on the dangerous trend, which earlier interviewees established social networking is portending. It indeed confirms McQuail's (2005) proposition on the major needs media audience look out for in the media they use and attend to. McQuail mentioned companionship, which the respondents noted to be the major reasons youths today use social media. The response and the finding in Table 6 are, however, damning and confirm the fear people have about the positive roles of the new technologies on social and political development. People, as confirmed in the above response, use new technologies more for frivolities - chatting, dating- and less for individual development.

Table 6: Negative Effects of Using Social Networking Sites.

Disadvantages	Frequency	Percentage
Emotional disturbance	93	16.1
Waste of time	125	21.6
Loss of privacy	257	44.5
Absence of physical contact	46	7.9
Others	56	9.7
Total	577	100%

As shown in Table 6, 16% of the total respondents noted that social networking sites result to emotional distress. Twenty two of them said

use of the sites amount to waste of productive time and 45% other settled for loss of privacy. Similarly, while 8% regrets that social networking sites do not offer opportunity for physical contact, the remaining 10% attributed the negative effects of social networking sites use to other factors.

Table 7: Most Frequently used Social Site by Respondents.

Most Frequently Used	Frequency	Percent
2go	76	13.1
Hi-five	33	5.7
LinkedIn	48	8.3
Facebook	185	32
MySpace	58	10
Twitter	121	20.9
Others	56	9.7
Total	577	100%

Table 7 shows that the most frequently used sites is Facebook with 32% followed by Twitter (21%), 2go (13%), MySpace and Other sites (10%) each, LinkedIn (8%) and lastly, Hi-five (6%).

An interviewee shed more light to the finding in Table 7. She established that Facebook is more popular among the youths because it is the most used social media in the world. According to her, "When we talk of social media, it is definitely Facebook. When youths talk of social media, they actually mean Facebook. So it is the most used in the world, and for that, most youths prefer using it to any other social media or network"

Discussion of Findings

The study shows that most of the youths develop and maintain interpersonal relationship through social networking sites. Accordingly

50% of the persons who those, who Although purposes, the or maintain

In the case e-mailing (promising On the impact the greatest where 20% sites provided has (17%) navigate to find

On the negative social network Additionally, be invested in one's social the respondent

Another revealed popular social most of the is evident from the site. This is thirds (65%) of Facebook account stay in touch with 2go and MySpace

Conclusion

The emergence social interaction

On the negative side of it, as many as 45% indicates that indulging in social networking site makes one vulnerable to loss of privacy. Additionally, it leads to waste of one's valuable time (21%) that could be invested in other productive ventures. Besides, inability to satisfy one's social a expectation could result to emotional stress as 16% of the respondents attest to.

Another revealing data, though intuitively expected, is about the most popular social networking sites youths sign up to. Based on findings, most of the respondents use Facebook as their favourite platform. This is evident from data depicted on table 8 where 32% are subscribers of the site. This is consistent with Vitak's (2008) finding that nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents said the majority of their friends have a Facebook account, which suggests that many students use the site to stay in touch with offline friends.. Next is Twitter(21%) followed by 2go and MySpace with a distant (13%) and 10% respectively.

The emergence of the internet has provided yet another platform for social interaction. Through social networking sites adults and more

importantly the youths devote considerable attention to their computer and Smartphone screens to engage in social networking. As it is, they are looking to social media among their top sources for news, information, and above all, entertainment and social interaction. As a matter of fact, nowadays the ways people consume media differ remarkably from the way media were used in the past. With the social media, people are no longer passive consumers but active ones. Through sites like Youtube, Hi-five, Facebook, there are rooms for cross-fertilisation of ideas. New relationships are also made while old ones are maintained. It is on the basis of this Okorie and Tunji (2011:112) allude that the emergence of social networking sites has presented individuals with new opportunities to meet different people from different backgrounds across the globe for different purposes.

Recommendations

Against the backdrop that social networking could waste one's productive time, lead to loss of personal privacy and emotional distress, Nigerian youths should use limited time social networking for fun, chatting or entertainment. Such interaction should be invested in exchange of ideas to enhance academic and business endeavours.

Users who are loyal to some particular sites should explore other social networking sites and maximize their full potentials. In the digital age where different social media appear every in numbers, exploring alternate sites serves as good opportunity for them to promote their talents, interests and causes since they are available at little or no cost.

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On the part of social networking sites owners, they should see these sites as a service and not just a business. By so doing, they would ensure they bring value to all their users. Another tool could be developed to

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prevent invasion of privacy to minimize rampant cases of harassment on the social networking sites.

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