

# **MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION REVIEW**

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# **MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION REVIEW**

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# Patterns of Media Usage among Students in Privately-owned Universities in South-West, Nigeria

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Idowu Sobowale, PhD  
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## Abstract

Communication sustains the modern society. Mass media are public carriers of messages to heterogeneous audiences, including university students and they allow students to express themselves as well as acquire knowledge. This paper examines the contemporary patterns of media use among students in five private universities in Nigeria. Media use indicates the various ways students employ the media to meet their different needs for information, entertainment and education. The survey research design was adopted with the questionnaire as the major instrument administered among respondents drawn from privately-owned universities in South-West Nigeria. It was found that students are media literate with the skills to navigate through different media platforms. However, most of the respondents preferred new media to the traditional media of newspapers, magazines, radio, television and films. Respondents access the Internet mostly through their mobile phones, and mainly for entertainment purpose. It is therefore suggested that more creators of media messages targeting this group should put them online, especially on the social media.

## Introduction

The media environment today includes both the main stream traditional and new media. The traditional media of communication include radio,

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television, magazines, newspapers, films and videos, books and now, Internet. Students' media use patterns reflect the different interests and purposes students employ the media to meet their various needs for information, entertainment and education about the world outside their immediate circles of families, friends and faculty.

New media technologies offer students innovative, convenient and accessible data to enhance their studies at the click of the mouse. Search engines give them access to databases, e-journals and other free online resources which were unavailable to scholars several years ago. Mass media and communication technologies influence people's attitudes, behaviours and values. Information from the mass media can enhance the knowledge of students as well as help them to improve on their personal, socio-cultural and moral values.

To be full participants in our contemporary societies, university students must not just consume media messages, but also create and share contents that are relevant to their existence. Mass media provide the students platforms to access information, entertainment contents and to acquire new knowledge and skills. Credible and reliable information help them make wise and responsible decisions on their personal, professional and social lives as well as take advantages of opportunities that life throws at them. Therefore, making wise choices of the media they use can be immensely beneficial in self-expression and in communicating with other people who share similar interests, concerns and care. This paper the media uses of university students, in an environment that both the old and new media co-exist.

### **Statement of the Problem**

University students need the media to get information, entertainment and education. Some use their laptops to download music and other forms of entertainment content from the Internet. Others watch football matches and get regular sports updates, especially concerning their favorite teams or clubs. Apparently, it is easier for students to use the media today than probably their parents did; digitalization and new communication technologies have made it so. Television has combined pictures and sound to tell its audience what is happening both near and far from them. Radio gives instant voice reports and has wide access. Newspapers and magazines are printed texts that give some depth in their interpretation of events. Films show motion pictures. Books are treasured for their staid



seriousness. The Internet combines all these to provide text, sound, pictures and data. Some students even download films from some websites, access online radio and television broadcast programmes as well as get information for their school work. Others pay regular visits to social network sites to make and keep friends. Literarily, Internet communication provides unlimited human interactivity.

What media do university students use to gratify their needs while undergoing tuition? What are the factors that cause them to choose one type of medium over another? Finding out the media usage of university students will help to determine the best means for delivering specific messages targeted at them. These are some of the problems this study was set to solve.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives for this study are to:

Ascertain the most readily available medium to the university undergraduates

Pin point the medium these undergraduates use most

Find out their reasons for using this pin pointed medium

Identify the instruments or devices that they use to access daily media messages

Assess the amount of time students spend every day on their media of choice

### **Review of Previous Studies**

Media play different roles in the lives of students. Arnett (1995, p. 519-533) points out that the media's unique socializing role is based largely on the fact that the adolescents themselves exercise control over the socialization process through their media choices. These choices are mostly isolated from authority figures and peers. In this age of information overload, people chose to allocate their attention to messages that are relevant to their lives.

The Roper Starch study (1999) examined the use of the Internet by young people between age 9 and 17. Sobowale, Amodu, Aririguzoh and Ekanem (2015) equally studied Internet use to find that some people deploy it to educational purposes. The San Jose Mercury News and the Kaiser Family Foundation (2003) jointly used a telephone survey to assess the attitude of and uses of the Internet of Silicon Valley youths between the ages of 10 and

17. Buttry (2010) asked University of Iowa students about their media use over a 24 hour period. He found that most of them connect with others through their computers and mobile devices rather than listening to the broadcast and print media. Bernt, Bernt and Turner (2003) studied the gender patterns of media usage among middle school students. They report that girls are more print media dependent, preferred stories on people and relationships while the boys read more about sports and hobbies. The results of the study by Richard and Michael (1997) show that students' media use correspondingly increase as they advance through college. They use television for entertainment; and the print media for events knowledge. Aririguzoh (2012, p.90) discover that the Internet is the most preferred medium of communication among Nigerian undergraduates. Arulchelvan and Viswanathan (2006) studied the patterns of usage of the various electronic media by higher education students in the urban and rural areas of Tamilnadu in India. They found that the students used the Internet more than they used the other media. Radio and television were less frequently used because the students were ignorant about the contents and timings of their programs and dismiss these programmes as being non interactive. Some did not even have the appropriate sets to receive their signals.

Many countries have employed the mass media in various literacy programmes. According to Arulchelvan and Viswanathan (2006, p.100 - 118) they are used to "reach, teach and enrich". Scholars have drawn our attention to the different uses many nations have put radio to. Galda (1984, p. 40- 42) tells us that in Thailand, radio is used to teach school children mathematics. Ginsburg and Arias-Goding (1984) add that it is used in Mexico for literacy training and other programs. Shears (1984) reports that in Nigeria, radio is used to teach agricultural management courses, while in the Philippines, it is used to educate the listeners on nutrition (Cooke & Romweder, 1977). In the Dominican Republic, media support the primary education programme (White, 1976) and in Paraguay, radio has been deployed to offer primary school instructions (Academy for Educational Development, 1979).

Television too is used in education. Chu and Schramm (1967) claim that tests show that students did far better when they watched lessons containing visual reinforcement. Garland and Loranger (1996) noted that interactive television technology allows students to have unlimited access to course materials. Watching television is popular among students



because it entertains and gives them useful information that enhances their education. Saiprasad (2001) identifies the types of information that students seek as those on education, career guidance and advancement. According to him, they access these through the internet.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Uses and Gratification theory explains why and how individuals use the media to meet needs. Blumler and Katz (1974, p.13-16) suggest that media users deliberately choose and use media from the available alternatives that best meet their needs. This theory helps us to understand media use among students in Nigerian universities and why they use particular media. Luo (2002) says that this theory is rooted in the functionalist approach to understanding mass media communication. The basic assumption of this theory is that people actively use and interact with the mass media to build profile groupings of related uses and theoretically associated gratifications (Karimi, Khodabandelou, Ehsani & Ahmad, 2014). McQuail (2010, p. 423) explains that media use largely depend on perceived satisfactions, needs, wishes or motives of the prospective audience. He also notes that media habits are based on similarities of individual needs, interests and taste. People often use media contents for information, relaxation, companionship, diversion or 'escape'. Folarin (2005, p. 91) says that this theory assumes that recipients actively influence the effect that the messages will have on them by selectively choosing, attending, perceiving and retaining media messages on the basis of their own needs. Therefore, this theory shifts attention from media production and transmission to media consumption purposes. Folarin (2005, p. 91) summarizes the theory to explain who uses what specific media contents for what purposes and under what conditions.

Kink and Hess (2008) say that scholars have attempted to enhance an understanding of the theory by drawing the line between gratifications obtained and gratifications sought. Karimi et al (2014, p. 55) define gratifications obtained as referring "to those gratifications that audience members actually experience through the use of a particular medium" while gratifications sought refer to those gratifications that the audience expect to obtain from a medium before they actually come into contact with it." These are the motives that propel a user to need the media.

### **Methodology**

The survey method was used for this study. This study design allows a

large population of interest to a researcher to be studied by picking a representative sample from it. The sampled elements are more closely examined in order to make inferences about the whole population. The population for this study are the university undergraduates in the nation's 152 universities. However, emphasis is on South Western Nigeria because it houses the largest number of universities, including private universities in Nigeria. In this geo-political zone (South-West) there are nine (9) federal universities; 12 state-owned Universities and 35 others that are privately owned. Five private universities were selected. They are: Covenant University, Bells University of Technology, Crawford University, Babcock University and Redeemer's University. To get a proportionate sample, .05% of the undergraduate students were sampled from each of the universities. The students are aged between 15-27 years, with 89.7% of them in the age bracket of 15-21. This study involved 419 males and 589 females in different levels of study. There were 306 respondents from Covenant University; 107 from the Bells University of Technology; 377 from Babcock; 59 from Crawford University and 159 from Redeemer's University.

Students are predominantly Nigerians, but there are generous sprinklings of foreigners from countries like Benin Republic, Ghana, Cameroun, Sierra Leone, Kenya, and a few non-African students. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to students in these five institutions. The questionnaire addressed issues of media type usage; most commonly available media; most frequently used media and specific reasons for media usage. Other questions addressed the devices through which respondents' access preferred media and average time spent with the media on a daily basis.

## Results

Table 1: Proportionate number of students sampled

School	Males %	Females %	Total %
Babcock	13	24	37
Covenant	14	16	30
Redeemer's	4	12	16
Bells	8	3	11
Crawford	2	4	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100</b>



There were more female respondents than males, which represents the growing trend within the Nigerian tertiary educational system in recent times. The largest number of male respondents came from Covenant University. They were closely followed by the respondents from Babcock University.

Table 2: Media most readily available to University students

School	Internet%	Films %	Television n%	Newspapers %	Radio %	Magazine %	Total %
Babcock	21	7	4	3	2	1	38
Covenant	18	6	4	1	1	0	30
Redeemers	11	2	1	1	1	0	16
Bells	7	3	0	0	0	1	11
Crawford	4	1	0	0	0	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100</b>

N = 1008

Most of the respondents -irrespective of the school- see the Internet as the most readily available medium of communication. In fact, three-fifths of these respondents agree that the Internet is the most effortlessly obtainable medium of communication available to them. This may not be surprising as these universities' management provide easily accessible hotspots for their students to access the Internet. In Covenant University, every student is credited with 10 gigabytes of data every month. The Internet is very distantly followed by films and television. Students can share, buy hard copies of films or even download some from the Internet. Television comes up as the third most easily available medium. Students are not allowed to bring television sets from their homes. Some of the schools provided single television sets in the students' halls of residences. However, some were not working. In the halls where they work, many students crowd around them. Occasionally, there are quarrels, especially, when a student wants to change channels or watch another programme. The least available media are the radio, newspapers and magazines possibly because the students do not want to spend their stipends in buying them.

Table 3: Media most frequently utilized by university students

School	Internet %	Films %	Television %	Radio %	News-Papers %	Magazines %	Total %
Babcock	24	5	4	2	1	1	37
Covenant	21	3	4	1	1	0	30
Redeemers	12	1	1	1	1	0	16
Bells	9	1	0	0	0	0	10
Crawford	4	1	1	1	0	0	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>

N = 1008

Across the five universities, the medium most used by the respondents is the Internet. As already discovered in Table 2, this medium is the most easily available. It is also the most used. The millennial students may have found the Internet most fascinating because it combines the functionalities of all the older media: chat, text, voice and pictures. They can also create and distribute contents on line. Some maintain on line profiles with their social media accounts and through these have made new or re-connected with old friends on line. As students, they can download software applications, access information for their academic work, submit or upload their assignments from anywhere and at any time. Films and television are audiovisuals messages that may hold the interest of the students by their story lines, suspense and actors' ingenuity. Moving pictures on the silver screen captivate, but then their alluring power appears incapacitated to the gripping hold of the Internet among the respondents.

The radio, magazines and the newspapers fared even worse. Possibly, the inconvenience of stepping to the newsstands and cost of purchasing copies of printed media hinder their ready availability and consequent use. However, it must be pointed out that a general trend among these millennial students is a decline in reading culture. This confirms the observation of Aririguzoh (2013, p.120) that "communication methods shape human existence. Changes in communication technology inevitably create changes in both culture and the social order."

Table 4: Motivations for Media use among university students

School	Entertainment %	Information Gathering %	School Work %	Personal Communication %	Business Communication %	Total %
Babcock	14	6	9	4	4	37
Covenant	10	6	4	7	4	31
Redeemers	6	4	2	1	2	15
Bells	2	4	2	2	1	11
Crawford	2	2	1	0	1	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100</b>

N = 1008

From Table 4, it can be seen that the single largest number of respondents (34%) use the media mostly for entertainment purposes or to get some amusement. Some media contents are built to capture the interests of their consumers. Possibly, these students find them relaxing after strenuous academic exercises and daily boredom. Many media entertainment contents are anchored around games, music, dance, sports, shows, movies and pieces of gossip about popular entertainment personalities. Amusement diverts attention their attention from the hard rigour of academics and class boredom. Some respondents find school life uninteresting, especially if they were forced by their parents to enrol in these particular schools where they feel their freedoms are restricted.

While some other respondents are motivated to use the media to gather information (22%) on issues of interests to them. Some other ones deploy the media to help them in their school work (18%), which may be disturbing to some educators and parents. Respondents from Babcock University particularly use the media for their school work. Some of their lecturers post their lecture notes and assignments on line and the students are expected to download them.

The different media channels also provided platforms for the respondents to maintain their personal and business relationships by offering them different avenues to keep in touch with their families, friends and professional colleagues. Importantly, more respondents from Covenant University use the media for personal communication more than students from the other schools. Some of them connect with their family and friends



through the Internet. The management of this school does not allow students to bring telephones to school or have any SIM enabled device. They feel telephone calls would distract students from their academic pursuits. Any student caught with a telephone in his possession is severely sanctioned. The other schools permit their undergraduates to own and even use their personal phones while in school. However, they are not allowed to use their telephone calls to disrupt classes. Student entrepreneurs use the media to keep their old businesses in the minds of their publics as well as source for new businesses. In Covenant University, two final year students were interviewed. One retails food through online placement of orders. The other arranges for taxi cabs to convey other students to different destinations.

Table 5: Devices/channels used to get daily media messages

School	Mobile phones %	Internet %	Laptops %	Radio %	Television %	News-Papers %	Magazines %	Total %
Babcock	19	10	3	2	2	.1	0	37
Covenant	5	11	12	1	1	1	1	32
Redeemer's	7	6	1	0	0	.0	1	15
Bells	5	3	1	0	0	1	0	10
Crawford	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100</b>

N = 1008

From Table 5, it can be established that only few of the respondents get their daily media messages from the radio, television and magazines. May be they do not find these channels fashionable or they are not easily available in their schools. Respondents from schools where students are permitted to own phones get most of their messages on their mobile phones. Some telecommunication operators offer their subscribers opportunities to subscribe to some daily newspapers and news agencies at very affordable prices. Mobile Telephone Nigeria (MTN) subscribers can even access its mobile television services. In Nigeria, DSTV Mobile television is available on Glo, MTN, Etisalat, and Airtel networks. It appears that these respondents have taken full advantages of these services to get their daily media messages while on the go or moving in between classes. The portability and affordability of some mobile phones has created another platform for media interaction where users chat, browse and exchange messages. Some of the mobile phones have pre-installed games and many



more can be downloaded from Google Play Store or the Appstore. Respondents also go on line to source for media messages with their laptops. They can also watch, upload, download and transfer different files including music, pictures, audio and video files. The popular YouTube and numerous other video sites readily offer free contents to users. Other Internet sites parade games, jokes and pieces of information that range from the mundane to the esoteric. Conventional newspaper and magazine houses have their on-line versions. Today, there are also on-line radio stations.

Respondents from schools where possession of telephones are prohibited use the Internet to get messages on their laptops. Because Covenant University management forbids her students from owning mobile phones while in school, it can be seen that most respondents from this institution do not get their messages through telephone devices. Rather, they see the Internet as their most preferred channel. They can access this medium on their laptops.

Table 6: Time spent daily with preferred media

School	Less than 1 hour %	1-2 Hours %	3-4 Hours %	5-6 Hours %	More than 6 hours %	Total %
Babcock	3	13	11	4	6	37
Covenant	3	11	11	3	3	31
Redeemer's	1	5	5	3	2	16
Bells	0	3	4	1	2	10
Crawford	0	1	2	1	2	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

The value people place on things may be equated to the time that they invest in such things. From Table 6, it can be seen that media addicts spent more than six hours daily with the media across the five universities. The heaviest addicts are from Babcock, Covenant and Redeemer's universities. However, most of the respondents spend at least 3-4 hours every day using their preferred media. These were closely followed by the respondents who spend an hour or two with the media. Probably the respondents who spent less than an hour daily on the media may find media contents distasteful or shy away from wasting their time with the media, probably to engage themselves in their academic pursuits or whatever they think are more relevant to their existence. Particularly, students from Crawford and Bells

Universities spent less time using their preferred media than the respondents from the other schools.

### **Major Findings**

The major findings of this study are:

Students in privately owned universities in south western Nigeria are both media conscious and literate. They possess the ability to navigate the various media platforms.

The Internet is the most easily available and accessible medium to a majority of the students. It is also their most preferred choice and the most used medium. Most of them access the Internet with their mobile phones and laptops.

Traditional channels of communication like the newspapers, radio and television appear not to hold much interest or fascination for these students.

These students use the Internet mostly for entertainment and as a source for information for their school work.

### **Recommendations**

Private universities management in South Western Nigeria should adopt the edutainment learning approach. This method would combine education and entertainment as part of their curricula. This style would make classes more interesting.

University managements should regulate access to Internet services to specific periods. This will force some students not to lose focus on why they are in school. When a student spends more than six hours every day browsing for entertainment, he or she is already an Internet addict.

The Internet (social media) should be a preferred channel of communication for school administrators who want to pass across different pieces of information to their students.

People crafting messages targeting undergraduates in South Western Nigeria should put them online, especially through the different social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

## Conclusion

Students' media use show their present media preferences and tell where they would ordinarily prefer to get their information, education and entertainment. It appears that millennial undergraduates in private universities in South Western Nigeria are not keen on getting their media messages from newspapers, radio or television like their parents did. Instead of sitting down to read a newspaper, listen to the radio or watch television to keep up to date, they prefer to browse the Internet on their mobile phones, tablets or their laptops for media content.

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