

Impact of social media on students with visual impairment a study of south-south region of Nigeria

(scientific paper)

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Abstract: *This study was undertaken to ascertain the role the various media platforms play in the daily social and educational development of students who are blind and visually impaired. The study area was south-south Nigeria, 10 higher institutions was selected across the zone, 25 visually impaired student participated in the study. 5 research questions were generated to aid this study. 15 item questionnaire was the main instrument used to elicit responses, bar chart statistical tool was employed to analyse the data obtain. The result reveals that in hierarchical order of preference email, Facebook and Whatsapp are top most preferable platform used by the visually impaired. The study recommended that students and working class visually impaired should be encouraged to explore the benefit of social media platform to enhance their educational and social interaction using the various devices as may be available to them.*

Keywords: *Impact, Social media, Visual impairment*

1 Introduction

The adverts of information and communication technology have broadened the means of communication and exchange of information in the 21st century. Information can therefore be obtained through different platforms like the internet oriented social media such as Facebook, Whatsapp, twitter, email, YouTube. This new media is actually propelled and driven by the internet, which provides platforms for social interactions between and among users in such a manner that no older platforms/media can boast of. The new media according to Adaja and Ayodele (2013) display such potentials that the only limitation to the dynamism is ignorance or illiteracy in

terms of the inability to use the hardware and/or software for maximum effects in the realm of communication, education, politics, economics, social or technology.

2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to find out which one of the social media platform in any way has impact on the daily development of person with visual impairment in the south-south region of Nigeria.

3 Significant of the study

Significantly, the study stands to benefit stakeholder, including parents of students with visual impairment, the students and the communication provider.

4 Research questions

The following research questions were generated to guide the study, which are

- Which social media is mostly used by the visual impaired?
- Which social media meets the social engagement and interaction needs of the visual impaired?
- Which social media meets the educational purpose of the visual impaired?
- Which social media meets the entertainment needs of the visual impaired?
- Which social media helps the visual impaired to maximise access to the environment.

5 Literature review

This review is focus on the benefit of social media platform.

Social media are media that allow users to meet online via the internet, communicate in social forum, it permit users to generally interact by sharing news, photo or ideas and thoughts or respond to issues and other contents with other people (Buhari, Ahmad & Hadiashara, 2014). Social media is also considered by Bryer & Zaratarro (2011) as technologies that facilitate social interaction, make possible collaboration and enable deliberate by stakeholders across boundaries, time and space. These technologies include: blogs, wikis, media (audio, photo, video, text) sharing tools, networking platform and virtual worlds. The common examples of social media are the popular social networking site like Facebook, Myspace, YouTube, flicker, twitter, 2go etc.

The rise of social media sites as another platform on the internet has gained popularity over the decade. The sites have attracted millions of users worldwide due to this fact many people are changing the outlets where they search for news, information, business and entertainment. These social media sites let those who use them create personal profiles, while connecting with other users of the sites. Users can upload photographs and post what they are doing at any given time (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Pempek, Yemolayeva & Calvert, 2008 in Buhari, Ahmed & Hadi Ashara, 2014). Social media by their nature have the capabilities of educating, informing, entertaining and inflaming the audience. Above all, they possess a contagious and outreaching influence which the conventional media lack. This potential is most likely what Oshahenge (2011) refers to as "unstoppable power of the social media.

Persons with disabilities, particularly those with visual impairment have gained a lot from smartphone technology and mobile devices which can be used to implement assistive software such as audio-based multi-touch interaction techniques that enable blind users to access touch screen applications. However, a study conducted by Qiu, Hu and Rauterberg (2015) shows that an increasing number of persons with blindness and visual impairment are gradually involved in mobile social media along with popularization of mobile devices. Their recent statistics in the Netherlands shows that more than 100,000 blind and visually impaired individuals own an Apple iPhone since the introduction of a screen reader (voiceover) in 2007 still mobile social media continues to pose barriers to people with blindness as they must constantly re-learn how to navigate these systems. Laptop, desktop computers have also received adaptation in keyboards and assistive software like Jaws, Open Book etc. which enable persons with visual impairment to access social media. Abubakar, (2011) posits that social media which include blogs (political blogs), video sharing (YouTube) with large text conversations are laptop or desktop computer based. This is to say interaction in social media is not only done with mobile phones but can also be possible with any type or size of a computer.

However, a study conducted in 2013 to find out students' use of social media in Nigeria revealed that students view social media for the purpose of leisure as entertainment, watching films, to expose themselves to pornography, discuss serious issues like politics, economy and religious matters (Ezeah, Euphemia, Asogwa & Obiorah, 2013). Today in Nigeria there are over 1000 social media networking sites, which include social, educational, entertainment and gossip. The mass appeal of social media on the internet could be a cause for concern, particularly, undergraduates in Nigeria spend more time on Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites through smartphones that are now in abundance among them and most of them cannot go for two-three hours without checking and updating their profiles on these social networks even at the detriment of other activities such as education and career pursuit (Idankwo, 2011) this is not different to student and the working class

individual with visual impairment. In fact, in a study to ascertain the usefulness of deploying assistive technology devices for teaching and learning in Nigeria higher education for the benefit of students who are blind or severely visual impaired, a and iolayim2009 noted that there is a overwhelming support by visually impaired student to the deployment of assistive technology devices and the utilisation of social media platform for teaching and learning, information dissemination, socialisation, political awareness, economic enhancement, leisure and recreation as well as entertainment. Of its importance and advantages, numerous problems of social media usage have recently been the major focus of attention worldwide. Issues of fraud, identity thefts, pornography and countless other negative influences associated with social networking in general have been a cause for concern for scholars and authorities worldwide. There are increasing concerns over the use of social media for internet crimes ranging from hacking to recruitment for terrorism.

1) Methodology

The study was a survey design and cover 10 higher institutions within the south-south institutions of Nigeria. Participants were all visually impaired students. The sample population was purposive and included the all visually impaired student in the 10 higher institution selected for the study, in all 25 visually impaired students were involved. The instrument for this study was a 15 item questionnaire well validated by two experts in research and statistics who as well ensure the reliability of the instrument. The study was conducted by face-to-face administration of the instrument on respondent by two members of the research group and all completed questionnaire were retrieved. A bar chart statistical analysis tool was used to interpret the information obtain.

2) Data analysis and result

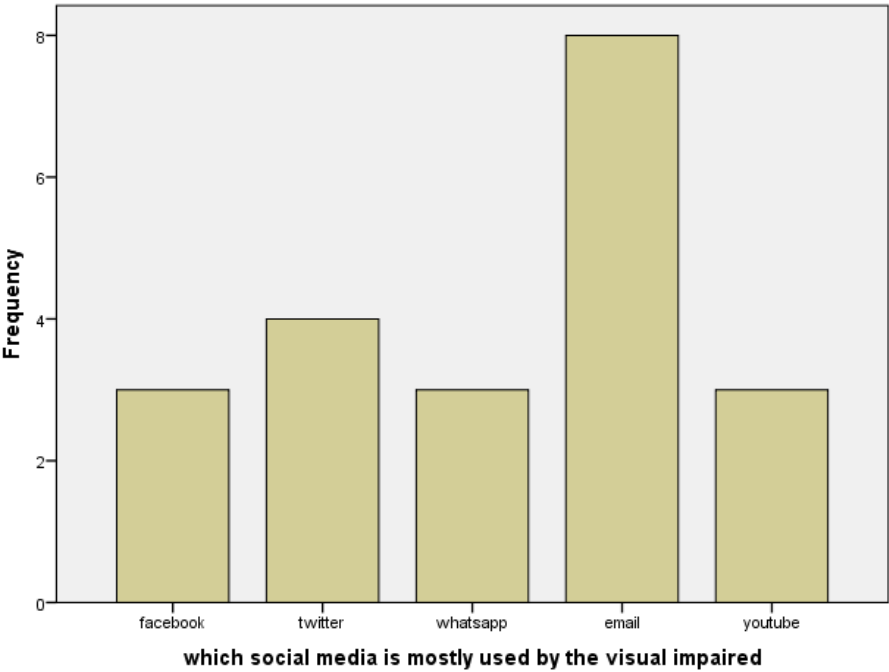
Presentation of result

Research question one

Which social media is mostly used by the visual impaired? To answer this question, frequencies and bar graph was used. The result showed that the most social media used by visual impaired students is email represented 38% followed by twitter 19% and then Facebook, Whatsapp and then YouTube respectively. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequencies of the most used social media among the visual impaired

which social media is mostly used by the visual impaired				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Facebook	3	14.3	14.3	14.3
Twitter	4	19.0	19.0	33.3
Whatsapp	3	14.3	14.3	
Email	8	38.1	38.1	85.7
YouTube	3	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	21	100.0	100.0	

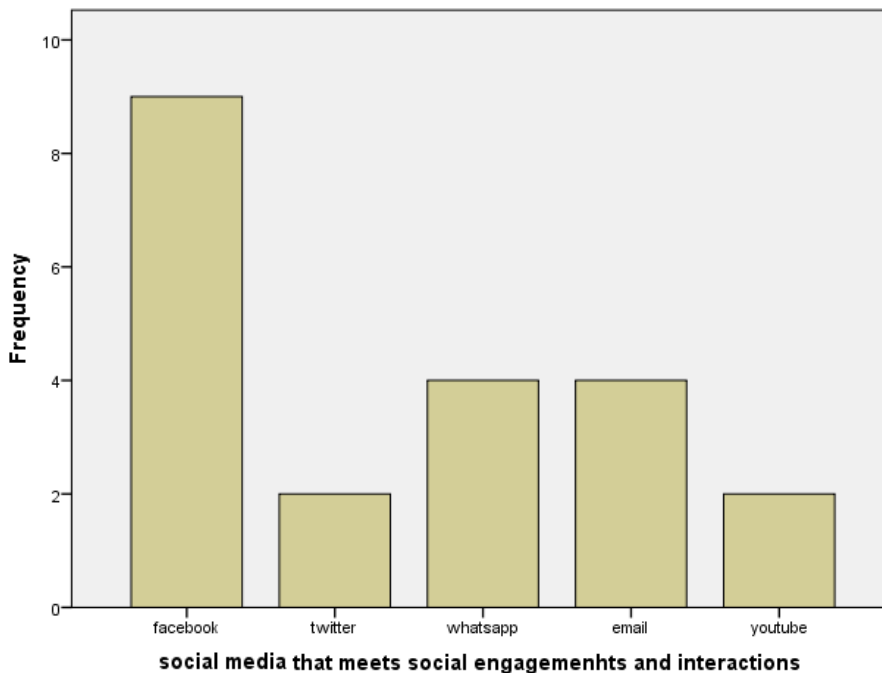


Research question two

Which social media meets the social engagement and interaction needs of the visual impaired? To answer this research question, frequencies and bar graph was used. The result showed that the most social media that meets the interaction needs of the visually impaired is Facebook represented with 42.9%, followed by Whatsapp and Email tool with 19.0%, and then YouTube and twitter. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Frequencies of social media that meets the social engagements and interaction needs of the visually impaired

social media that meets social engagements and interactions				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Facebook	9	42.9	42.9	42.9
Twitter	2	9.5	9.5	52.4
Whatsapp	4	19.0	19.0	71.4
Email	4	19.0	19.0	90.5
YouTube	2	9.5	9.5	100.0
Total	21	100.0	100.0	

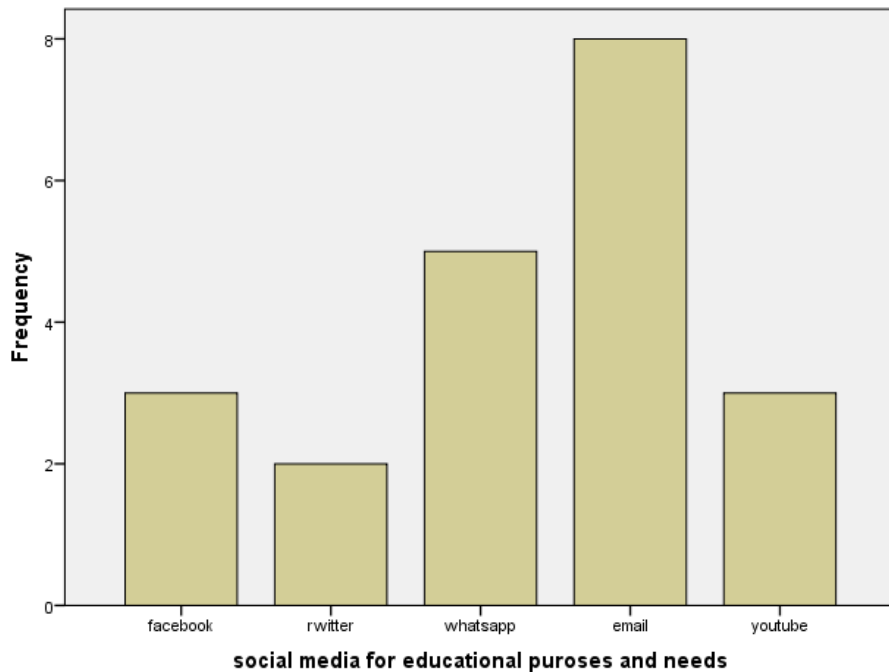


Research question three

Which social media meets the educational purposes of the visual impaired? To answer this research question, frequencies and bar graph was used. The result showed that the most social media that meets the educational purposes of the visually impaired is mostly emails represented with 38.1%, followed by Whatsapp with 23.8%, and then YouTube with 14.3% and Facebook with 14.3%. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Frequencies of social media that meets the educational purposes of the visually impaired

social media for educational purposes and needs				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Facebook	3	14.3	14.3	14.3
Twitter	2	9.5	9.5	23.8
Whatsapp	5	23.8	23.8	47.6
Email	8	38.1	38.1	85.7
YouTube	3	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	21	100.0	100.0	

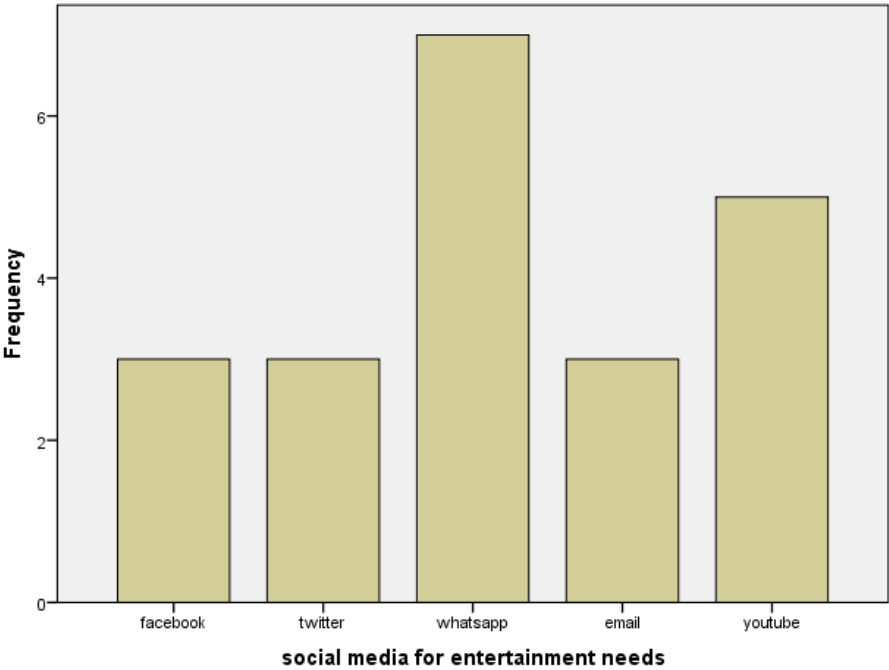


Research question four

Which social media meets the entertainment needs of the visual impaired? To answer this research question, frequencies and bar graph was used. The result showed that the most social media that meets the entertainment needs of the visually impaired is Whatsapp represented with 33.3%, followed by YouTube with 23.8%, and then emails and Facebook with 14.3%. The result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Frequencies of social media that meets the entertainment needs of the visually impaired

social media for entertainment needs				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Facebook	3	14.3	14.3	14.3
Twitter	3	14.3	14.3	28.6
Whatsapp	7	33.3	33.3	61.9
Email	3	14.3	14.3	76.2
YouTube	5	23.8	23.8	100.0
Total	21	100.0	100.0	

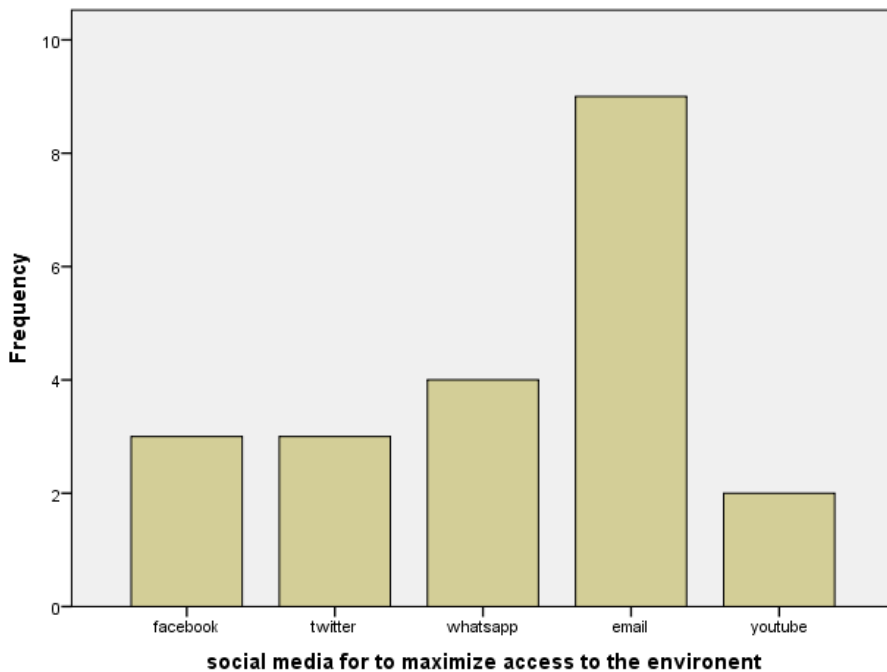


Research question five

Which social media helps the visually impaired to maximize access to the environment? To answer this research question, frequencies and bar graph was used. The result showed that the most social media that visually impaired to maximize access to the environment is email represented with 42.9%, followed by Whatsapp with 19.0%, and then twitter and Facebook with 14.3. The result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Frequencies of social media that helps the visually impaired to maximize access to the environment

social media to maximize access to the environment				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Facebook	3	14.3	14.3	14.3
Twitter	3	14.3	14.3	28.6
Whatsapp	4	19.0	19.0	47.6
Email	9	42.9	42.9	90.5
YouTube	2	9.5	9.5	100.0
Total	21	100.0	100.0	



3) Discussion

Generally, the study presented a clear picture of the importance of the internet including associated social media platform to communication and information dissemination to all especially to person with visual impairment in areas of education, social life, interaction, economic enhancement and political awareness. This is in agreement with Agba and Olayi (2009) and Adaja and Ayodele (2013). On which social media platform is most preferable and used, the study revealed that email top the chart affirming the claims by Agba and Olayi 2009 that email is most used by visually impaired to access information and communication. similarly, Facebook and Whatsapp are confirmed to be mostly the platform of socialisation and entertainment by the visually impaired just as their sighted counterpart is view is upheld by Ezeah, Euphemia, Asogwa & Obiorah (2013).

4) Conclusion

From the outcome of this study, it can be concluded that the visually impaired just as their sighted counterpart in the zone understudy derived pleasure and great attachment to the use of the internet and the social media platform daily to enhance social interaction, sending and receiving information, economic enhancement, political update, entertainment and overall educational attainment. Thus, these platforms can be interesting means for contact and studying as well as favouring both inclusion and personal growth.

5) Recommendation

The study recommend that in view of the fact that the internet service and the social media platform have offer immeasurable opportunities for student who are visually impaired to cope with life long struggle s in socialisation process stakeholders in the communication industry especially in the area of information and communication technology [ICT] should do more to improve network services to users including students with visually impairment.

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