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**USES AND GRATIFICATIONS OF INTERNET ACCESS AMONG UNIVERSITY  
STUDENTS: A SURVEY OF THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MASS  
COMMUNICATION, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

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*The growth and development of the internet has open numerous potential for its users. The University of Nairobi has realised and appreciated its immense potential and invested in modern ICT facilities for use by both staff and students. The University has several computers with internet and computer laboratories on all of its campus tahta raetailred to meet the computer needs of its staff and students. An extensive intercampus WAN and Campus Wide backbone network enables the labs to tap to several network based services, including 24x7 Web access, E-mail facilities, file-sharing services, library services among other shared server services. The study sought to determine the accessibility, uses and gratifications of internet among university students in Kenya with special reference to the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Nairobi. The objective of the research is to find out how students access the Internet, what they use the Internet for, how frequently they use the Internet, what Internet services they use most, how satisfied they are with the Internet services provided by the university, and what problems they face during an Internet search. The university students are believed to be heavy users of internet in carrying out research, communication with their friends and as a source of doing their academic assignments. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The findings showed that their attitude towards the Internet was very positive and they used it mainly for study purposes. Results indicated that the most frequently used Internet services were: e-mail, World Wide Web, Instant Messaging and File Transfer Protocol, online databases, dictionaries, encyclopedias and online courses. Google was the most popular search engine for retrieving information on the Internet. However, the use of free database services provided by the University was not satisfactory. The respondents were also dissatisfied with the Internet service provision, slow speed of the Internet connection and inadequate number of computers in computer labs. The researchers recommend that students be trained on how to use the Internet. Technical/ operational measures should be used to control the non-educational use of the Internet resources and services.*

**Keywords:** *internet, internet access, internet uses, internet gratifications*

**Introduction**

The internet is perceived as network of networks that consists of different networks, local to global,

that are linked by a broad array of electronic, wireless and optical networking technologies. Using a standard internet protocol suite (TCP/IP) the computer networks are interconnected globally.

These networks link private, public, academic, business and government network. The Internet carries an extensive range of information resources and services, such as the inter-linked hypertext documents of the World Wide Web (WWW) and the infrastructure to support email which is widely used.

Traditional communication was done through print and electronic media which have been reshaped by the internet. Telephones, music, film, television, newspaper, book and other print publications have adapted new services such as Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP), Internet Protocol Television (IPTV), website technology, blogging and web feeds. The Internet has enabled and accelerated new forms of human interactions through instant messaging, Internet forums, and social networking. Online shopping has boomed both for major retail outlets and small artisans and traders. Business-to-business and financial services on the Internet affect supply chains across entire industries.

The origins of the Internet reach back to research of the 1960s, commissioned by the United States government to build robust, fault-tolerant, and distributed computer networks. The funding of a new U.S. backbone by the National Science Foundation in the 1980s, as well as private funding for other commercial backbones, led to worldwide participation in the development of new networking technologies, and the merger of many networks. The commercialization of what was by the 1990s an international network resulted in its popularization and incorporation into virtually every aspect of modern human life. As of June 2012, more than 2.4 billion people—over a third of the world's human population—have used the services of the Internet, according to the Internet World Stats.

Educational institutions were early adopters of the Internet (Defleur and Dennis, 2002) and as such the Internet was initially used by scientists and university professors. Mutula (2001) contends that the Internet has become the preferred technology to

improve instruction, increase access to information, enhance distance education and raise productivity of students and lecturers in educational institutions. Dawson (2005) adds that the strengths of the Internet for academic work include; currency of online information sources, accessibility to multi-media resources and information not limited by distance or time constraints. With the improved Internet connectivity, educational institutions in the developing countries are now beginning to tap into the many opportunities offered by the modern information societies (International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications, 2003). The increased use of the Internet in academic institutions worldwide has made communication and educational media researchers recognize the significance of understanding how and why students use it. Studies on Internet use among college students are desirable as students are heavy users of the Internet compared to the general population and that the use of the Internet among them is a daily routine (Jones, 2002).

The Internet is an educational tool with numerous potentials. It may be used to replace the traditional classroom lectures or supplement traditional instructional methods. The Internet enables students to communicate with other students abroad and thus share each other's ideas, knowledge, experiences, and cultures. The Internet enhances skills and capabilities of students, which assist them in studies and in professional life. Students use e-journals, e-libraries, e-books, and online databases as academic resources for their related courses (Shahin, Balta & Ercan, 2010).

The main purpose of this study is to investigate internet access, use and gratifications of students at the University of Nairobi. One of the theories that has been used to study audience uses of mass media in general and new media in particular is the uses and gratifications theory. Rice and Williams (1995) say that the uses and gratifications model is ideal for the analysis of new media such as the Internet. This explains why the present study will be

conducted based on the uses and gratifications approach.

### **Problem of Research**

The Internet, and more specifically the WWW, is being eagerly adopted by all sectors in Kenya. However, the use of the WWW in the universities marks the first deployment of an educational medium in which the end user can access a virtually unlimited breadth of content. McNealy (1999) wrote, "Right now, putting students in front of Internet terminals is no better than putting them in front of TV sets. It may even be worse" (p. 17A). And while the resource is huge-Lawrence and Giles (1999) estimated 800 million web pages-some have argued that only a fraction of the millions of Web pages hold any educational value for students. This raises some interesting questions regarding the use of the WWW in an educational context. Even students who seek out educational content may be thwarted by the very attributes heralded by WWW proponents, e.g., the WWW's breadth and depth of information.

Research into selective exposure, defined as "behavior that is deliberately performed to attain and sustain perceptual control of particular stimulus events," (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985, p. 2) has raised questions about new media technologies that provide an abundance of choice and place even greater control over consumption in the hands of the consumer. In a nonlinear medium, when educational content is sometimes packaged as "edutainment," what is to prevent students from skipping over the "education?" Preliminary data collected during a pilot study (Ebersole, 1999) indicated that for middle and high school students accessing the WWW from computers in public schools, the most frequently visited sites were those that were also the least educational. And while "research" was the most frequent response to the question "why are you using the WWW at this time?" content analysis of the sites visited suggested that "looking for something interesting" was the more likely explanation for the majority of

sites visited. There have been calls for research to determine the effect of computers with Internet access on student achievement (Ebersole, 1999).

The challenges facing usage by educational institutions are: technical support for hardware and software; teacher training and development; "increasing effective use of the Internet to enhance student learning; and protecting students from inappropriate material on the Internet". Research into the use of the WWW in universities public schools has important implication for local, state, and national policy and funding initiatives. While a study such as the present one is only a small step in the quest to assess the value of this new medium, it is important in that it permits identification of the motivations of individual users. The study can also help to identify crucial points where intervention may be necessary in order to realize the WWW's full potential as an educational resource. Once we understand what motivates students to utilize this medium, we can better design incentives that encourage educational use and discourage use that distracts students from that goal.

### **Research Focus**

Information collected in this study relating to the uses and motives of Internet users can be helpful in building profiles and predicting behaviours. These data is useful in a number of areas including marketing, design, education and psychology. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and website designers would benefit from conceptualizations of and Internet usage motivations identified in this study. After all, much of the ISP management revolves around helping customers get what they want and understanding their expectations in order to meet them. Investors and who would-be-investors involved in the provision of Internet access services and website operators can also benefit from the conceptualization of Internet audience usage motivations identified in this study. Understanding uses and gratifications for students using the Internet guides ISP managers in fine-

tuning their offering to satisfy the needs of the audience.

A research into the use of the Internet among college students such as the present one has important implications for e-education policy makers and funding initiatives. While a study such as the current one is only a small step in the quest to assess the value of the Internet, it is important in that it permits identification of the motivations of individual Internet users. The results of this study are useful to education policy makers and project officers in designing e-learning resources websites. The e-learning resources and website designers can use these research findings to design websites with features or incentives that can motivate students to utilize the Internet more for a wide range of important uses. The results of this research have added to the scarcely available information in Kenya on uses and gratifications of the Internet and this is useful in advancing theoretical development of the uses and gratifications theory. To the communication scholars and researchers, this study forms a foundation for future researchers who would like to pursue a study in the area of uses and gratifications of new media, especially Internet based media

The study will seek to determine the uses and gratifications of internet among university students in Kenya with special reference to the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Nairobi. The objective of the research is to find out the role played by internet and the gratifications accrued from the use of internet among university students. The university students are believed to be heavy users of internet in carrying out research, communication with their friends and as a source of doing their academic assignments. The UON being the largest and oldest university will give an overview that can be easily generalizable.

### **Uses and gratifications theory**

According to Rice and Williams (1995) the uses and gratifications theory has been repeatedly used

for the analysis of new media such as the Internet. This theory originally arose in the 1940s and underwent revival in the 1970s and 1980s. According to Severin and Tankard (2001), the uses and gratifications theory involves a shift of focus from purposes of the communicator to the purposes of the receiver to determine what functions mass communication is serving for audience members. Defleur and Ball-Rokeach (1988) further clarify that the rise of the uses and gratifications perspective was a shift from the old view that audience were passive (a dominant concept in the magic-bullet theory) to the realization that mass media users were active in their selection of preferred content and messages from the media. One of the tenets of the uses and gratifications model is that audiences are active and seek to find out mass media that satisfy their gratifications. The Internet has enabled audience to have more options from which they are able to select the websites and Web pages that satisfy their specific needs and have more control. According to Ko (2000) the Internet interactivity of this model is appropriate as it emphasizes audience activity.

On the WWW, a user interacts with the Web browser, Web pages and hyperlinks. Studies on the uses and gratifications of the Internet among students have shown that the students use the Internet for entertainment and diversion, social interaction, passing time, escape, information, to maintain communication, and website preference (Kaye, 1998). Past studies conducted on the use of the Internet by students based on the uses and gratifications perspective show that the Internet is least used for educational purposes. A study by Kwanya (2005) on uses and gratifications of the Web among five secondary schools students in Nairobi concluded that most of the students did not visit websites for academic purposes. Kwanya (2005) also found out that students do not think the Web as an educational tool but rather an information reservoir that for social interactions.

### **Internet in Kenya**

According to Mweu (2003) there was no formal internet in Kenya until 1993. The Centre for International Development and Conflict Management (1998) notes that the African Regional Centre for Computing (ARCC) inaugurated full Internet connectivity in Kenya in October 1995. The first commercial Internet Service Provider (ISP), form net began operating in 1995. Currently, there are over 100 licensed ISPs. Some of the ISPs in operation are; Kenya Web, Swift Global (K) Ltd, UUNET Kenya Ltd, Nairobi Net Ltd, KENET, Today's Online Ltd and Simba NetCom Ltd. By the end of 1995, Nairobi area had 100 Internet users and by 2000, there were about 200,000 Internet users in Kenya. This number has grown very fast and now we have approximately 1.5 million Internet users in Kenya (The 2006 Kenya ICT Strategy). Kenya is targeting to have internet penetration reach 100% in 5 years time. According to the Kenya ICT board, to make the Kenya the continents technology hub, internet access infrastructure must be developed and users access reliable fast internet. The board's chairman Paul Kukubo says all Kenyans should be connected to fast reliable internet to realize this dream.

The set target means that Kenya has just 5 years to increase its Internet penetration from the 28% estimated by Internet statistics website Internetstatistics.com, ranking Kenya fourth in internet usage in Africa. In Apr, 2012 the Communication Commission of Kenya released the 2nd quarter ICT sector statistics for 2011/2012. According to CCK, the number of Internet subscribers in Kenya increased by 13.48 percent from 5.42 million to 6.15 million between September 1 and December 31 2011. During the same period, the estimated number of Internet users rose to 17.38 million up from 14.30 million, representing an increase of 21.55 per cent. According to the CCK 2nd Quarter ICT Sector Statistics for 2011/2012, broadband subscriptions increased to 131,829, posting a 4.14% growth from

the previous period. Of the total Internet subscribers in the country, broadband subscription represented only 2.14 per cent. Kenya has more internet users than South Africa, the latest internet world statistics report shows. Kenya is ranked fourth among Africa's top internet countries as at December 31 2011 figures. Nigeria is ranked the number one country with 45 million users but this is attributed to its huge population of over 155 million people. Kenya which has a paltry 200,000 internet users in the year 2000 but currently enjoys 10.4 million users as at the end of 2011 year. According to the World Internet statistics, Kenya's internet penetration is estimated at 25.5 percent of the population which stands at 41 million people. CCK's figures put the penetration at 36.6 percent. The Kenyans users account for Africa's 7.5 percent people with access to internet. According to CCK, Safaricom mobile data and internet subscriptions stood at 4.6 million users, Yu Mobile followed with 670,000 subscribers, Airtel commanded about 608,000 users while Telkom Kenya had some 110,000 users.

The Communication Commission of Kenya (CCK) sector statistics report quarter one 2012/2013 indicates that the data/internet market continued to record an upward trend with majority of subscriptions contributed by the mobile data/internet segment. The ease of subscription coupled by the ease of accessing the service through the mobile phone has enhanced growth in this market segment. During the quarter under review, the population that had internet access was recorded at 34.2 percent up from 30.9 percent recorded in the previous quarter. Even though there were increased internet/ data subscriptions during the period, bandwidth utilization increased marginally by 0.3 percent. The total bandwidth usage, however, increased to 48.3 percent during the period. Moreover, there is still unexploited capacity and potential in this market segment. Consideration for projects geared towards optimal utilization of this capacity could be valuable as this will ultimately stimulate further growth in this market segment.

Academic institutions in Kenya adopted have the Internet. Schools, colleges and universities have websites through which course and other information is disseminated to the students and the rest of the public. Many libraries in colleges and universities in Kenya have embraced the e-resources concept. This is widely done through Programme for Enhancement of Research Information (PERI). Many academic institutions have invested a lot in Information and Communications Technology (ICT). One of these investments is in the provision of computers and free Internet services to students and staff. Jones (2002) points out that the Internet has opened new academic opportunities for students. First, through the Internet, online study groups thrive. These study groups allow students who do not live in the same vicinity to meet and discuss class work. Second, e-mail allows students to turn in assignments, communicate with lecturers, peers and parents at any time, and also maintain contact easily with their friends. Thirdly, the Internet allows social connections already developed to continue to be cultivated in addition to allowing new ones to be formed. The Internet is considered important to students in many ways. Academic institutions have also invested in e-resources. Libraries in colleges and universities subscribe to e-resources as additional sources of information to their print resources. However, while previous studies show that students heavily use the Internet, it is not used to further their academic or educational goals. For example, a study by Wambilyangah (2006) revealed that the youth in Nairobi did not consider the Internet as an academic hub. Kwanya (2005) and Jones (2002) also confirmed that students dominantly used the Internet for e-mail, instant messaging and Web surfing.

According to Luambano and Nawe (2004) students fail to use the Internet effectively due to lack of skills, insufficient awareness of Internet resources that could enhance learning and lack of motivation from lecturers who emphasis on printed resources. Mutula (2001) points out that in East Africa, users

are not provided with the necessary skills required for effective Internet utilization. Jones (2002) further observes that although academic resources are offered online, it may be that students have not yet been taught or have not figured out how to locate these resources. The extensive use of the Internet since the 1990s has made the study of the Internet become a focal point for many communication researchers. In view of this, it is necessary that user needs and expectations towards the Internet should be examined to better understand its uses and gratifications. Therefore, this study aims at investigating university students' uses and motives of the Internet with special focus on the University of Nairobi.

### **The University of Nairobi**

The first Kenyan higher-education institution was the Royal Technical College of East Africa, established in Nairobi in 1956 to provide instruction in courses leading to the higher national certificate offered in Britain and to prepare matriculated students through full-time study for university degrees in engineering and commercial courses not offered by Makerere University. In 1961, it was renamed the Royal College of Nairobi and turned into a university college, offering Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees in engineering of the University of London. In 1963, when Kenya attained its independence, Royal College became the University College of Nairobi and joined Makerere and Dar es Salaam Colleges to form the Federal University of East Africa. Due to nationalist pressure mainly from Kenya and Tanzania, the University of East Africa was dissolved in 1970, with each of the three countries (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania) establishing their own national universities under their respective Acts of Parliament. The University College of Nairobi was therefore renamed the University of Nairobi. The University of Nairobi was established through an Act of Parliament Cap 210 of the laws of Kenya. Since then, the government has established fourteen other public universities.

The University has grown tremendously over the years from a faculty based university serving a student population of 2,768 to a college based university of over 45,000 students in the 2012/2013 academic year. The University of Nairobi has responded to the national, regional and Africa's high level manpower training needs by developing and evolving strong, diversified academic programmes and specializations in basic sciences, applied sciences, technology, humanities, social sciences and the arts. The University has seven campuses hosting six colleges. The Colleges include: College of Agriculture & Veterinary Sciences situated at Upper Kabete Campus, College of Architecture & Engineering situated at the Main Campus, College of Biological & Physical Sciences situated at Chiromo Campus, College of Education & External Studies situated at Kikuyu Campus, College of Health Sciences situated at the Kenyatta National Hospital and College of Humanities and Social sciences situated at the Main Campus - Faculty of Arts ; Parklands-School of Law; Lower Kabete Campus -School of Business. The University became ISO 9001:2008 certified institution of higher learning in August 2008 which puts the university in the path of continual improvement.

### **The School of Journalism and Mass Communication**

The history of professional training for journalists in East Africa dates back to the early 1960's. The intention then was to Africanise the mass media. Between 1963 and 1968, the International Press Institute ran a series of six-month training programmes in Nairobi for journalists from English-speaking African countries. To continue of these programmes the Ministry of Education approached UNESCO in 1968 to assist in setting up a more intensive training programme integrated into the University of Nairobi. Thus, the School was opened in the University as a UNESCO regional project financed largely by funds from

Denmark, Norway, and Austria to cater for students from Eastern and Central Africa.

Until 1979, the School offered a two-year undergraduate programme leading to a Diploma in Journalism. This earlier effort was mostly aimed at advanced-level secondary school leavers and journalists with little or no prior professional training. The courses gave practical training as well as relevant theoretical background in subjects such as mass communication, international studies, economics and government. The School offers the following programmes, PhD in Communication and information studies, a Masters Degree in Communication Studies, a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Media Studies and a Bachelor of Arts in Broadcast production program.

The vision for the School is to be a School of distinction in communication training, research and consultancy services while the mission is to promote excellence in advancement of communication disciplines, professions, and services through innovative and efficient resource mobilization and management.

The School has two (2) computer laboratories and just like all the students of the University of Nairobi its students have access to all computing and internet Service available in the University.

### **Computing and Internet Service**

ICT technologies are instruments of change world over. The ability of these technologies to inject efficiencies not experienced before, and to open new frontiers laden with incredible opportunities, particularly to a teaching and research environment such as one found at the University of Nairobi, cannot be overemphasized. The University appreciates this immense potential and, hence, has been very keen in facilitating deployment of relevant ICT facilities to both her staff and huge student community.

The University has several well-stocked computer labs established on all campuses, which are specifically tailored to address computing needs for

students. An extensive intercampus WAN and Campus Wide backbone network enables the labs to tap to several network based services, including 24x7 Web access, E-mail facilities, file-sharing services, library services among other shared server services. Plans are underway to have the students' halls of residence connected to the University network to allow students enjoy the ICT facilities at their leisure.

The University of Nairobi Communication and Network Services include Wireless Network (WiFi) named ChemiChemi and Chemiweb, Email, and other network services for both staff and students. There are ICT Support Offices in each Campus. To improve the learning experiences, the University has been adopting innovative ways that befit a modern university in a digital revolution. Top among these include the gradual shift from the traditional paper photocopies and dictation as methods of disseminating knowledge, to modern lecture room experience where power-point and multimedia presentations, backed with high resolution digital projection equipment is a norm. E-learning concept is also finding root in the University as a systems that allows students to follow courses online, outside the conventional lecture theatre. The University of Nairobi subscribes to electronic resources that include electronic books and journals, online journals and a digital Repository that collects, preserves, and distributes scholarly outputs of the University of Nairobi.

**Sample of Research**

The target population comprised of all students of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Nairobi. The students are the respondents. The sample was randomly sampled. Sampling involves selecting individual units from a larger population.

The sample size for this study was obtained through the formula suggested by various scholars such as Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2003); Cooper and

Emory (1995) and Sekaran (1992), which is as follows:

$$n = \frac{z^2 \times pq}{d^2}$$

Where n = the desired sample size (if the target population is greater than 10,000)

z = the degree of confidence which in this case is 95% confidence interval

p=stands for the population having the characteristic to be measured (there being no reasonable estimate of p, 50% or p = 0.5 is adopted to maximize the expected variance and ensure that the sample is large enough)

q = 1-p (this stands for the population not having the characteristic which in this case is 0.5)

d= stands for the degree of accuracy required (in this case it is set at 5%)

Since the target population for this study is less than 10,000. Then a smaller sample size can be used without affecting the accuracy and this requires that an adjusted minimum sample size be calculated as follows:

$$n' = \frac{n}{1 + [n/N]}$$

Where n' = the adjusted minimum sample size

n = is the minimum sample size already calculated above

N = is the total population

**Table 1: Sampling size**

	Course	Target Population	Sample size
1	BA(Journalism)	1116	48
2	BA (Broadcast)	120	26
3	Masters	263	29
4	PhD	19	2
	<b>Total</b>		105



The sample comprised of 105 randomly selected students of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Nairobi. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used for the selection of respondents for the study. This method is considered appropriate because it provided information on all the categories of students within the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Nairobi.

**Instrument and Procedures**

Data was collected using secondary and primary sources. Secondary data was collected through the internet, e-sources which include e-book, journals and blogs. Primary data was collected using a self-report questionnaire with both structured and unstructured questions that were hand delivered. Part I asks questions on bio-data. Parts II deals with internet use, Part III on problems facing students in using the internet.

**Data Analysis**

This was a descriptive survey. The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative techniques to analyze data collected. That is, data was analyzed through descriptive statistics, such as, measures of central tendencies and dispersion. To establish the nature and magnitude of the relationships between the variables and test the hypothesized relationships the researcher used inferential statistics (correlation and regression analysis). SSPS software was used for further analysis

**Results of Research**

Out of the 105 respondents targeted for the study, 96 (91%) responded.

Table 1: Respondents by Course

**Area of study**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
PhD	2	2.1	2.1
Masters	21	21.9	24.0
BA Journalism	46	47.9	71.9
BA Broadcast	27	28.1	100.0
Total	96	100.0	

Source: Research Data, 2013

From Table 1 above , it can be seen that 2 (2 .1 %) respondents were from PhD programme, 21 (21.9%) respondents were from the Masters programme 46 (47.9 %) respondents were drawn from the Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Media Studies and 27 (28.1%) from the Bachelor of Arts in Broadcast Production. This distribution of respondents across the four programmes offered by the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Nairobi was due to the proportionate sampling technique adopted for selecting the sample population.

**Training in the use of computers and internet**

The researcher established that 92 (95.8%) of the respondents have had training in the use of the computer and internet while 4 (4.2%) have not been trained. Table 2 shows the number of SOJMC students trained on use of computers and internet:

**Table 2: Training in the use of computers and internet**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	92	95.8	95.8
No	4	4.2	100.0
Total	96	100.0	

Source: Research Data, 2013

**Access to the internet**

The researcher established that respondents prefer to have access to the internet at home or using their mobile phones than at the cyber café or at a university computer laboratory. Table 3 shows the preference levels:

**Table 3: Preferred area of access to the internet**

	University Computer Laboratory		Home		Mobile Phone		Cyber Cafe	
Most preferred	34	35.4	45	46.9	39	40.6	32	33.3
preferred	44	45.8	26	27.1	16	16.7	37	38.5
Least preferred	18	18.8	25	26.0	41	42.7	27	28.1

*Source: Research Data, 2013*

The relatively high time spent by respondents in using the Internet could be attributed to the reason that most of the students at SOJMC rely on accessing Internet services and resources at the university and mobile telephony services. Internet access at the university for the students is free, hence their preference for Internet use at the university. This finding implies that the reported uses and gratifications of Internet among SOJMC students were greatly based on their access and access time of the Internet at the university.

**Frequency of use of a computer/laptop for studies**

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they use a computer/laptop to support their studies at the university table 6 presents responses to this question:

**Table 4: Frequency of use of a computer/laptop for studies**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Daily	43	44.8	44.8
Weekly	31	32.3	77.1
Monthly	19	19.8	96.9
Occasionally	3	3.1	100.0
Total	96	100.0	

*Source: Research Data*

The above findings demonstrate that majority of the respondents (N= 43, 44.8 %) used the Internet for support of their studies on daily basis, 31 (32.3%) on weekly basis, 19 (19.8%) and 3 (3.1%) on occasional basis.

**Table 5: Frequency of use of a computer/laptop for studies per hour**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
0-5 hrs a week	29	30.2	30.2
5-10 hrs a week	41	42.7	72.9
11-15 hrs a week	13	13.5	86.5
16- 20 hrs a week	6	6.3	92.7
More than 20 hrs a week	7	7.3	100.0
Total	96	100.0	

*Source: Research Data*

Majority 70 (72.9%) are spending less ten hours on the internet compared to 26 (27.1%) spending over ten hours as shown on table 5 above.

**Information source**

Respondents were asked to indicate which information source they used to support their work at the university (research, study, assignment etc). Table 6 presents responses to this question:

**Table 6: Information source**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Search Engines (Google, Yahoo)	32	33.3	33.3
Search web pages (Homepages)	45	46.9	80.2
Subject Directories (Proquest)	3	3.1	83.3
University E-Learning Resources	9	9.4	92.7
University Web Resources (Library)	3	3.1	95.8
University Library Publications	4	4.2	100.0
Total	96	100.0	

Source: Research Data

**Internet services and resources**

The Internet provides several online services and resources. Some of the commonly provided Internet services include; Electronic mail (E-mail), World Wide Web (WWW), Instant Messaging (IM), Mailing lists, File Transfer Protocol (FTP), and Newsgroups. Through the Internet, a wide range of e-resources are provided which can support the educational needs of students. This wide range of Internet services and resources are provided to the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Nairobi students.

From the responses it is evident that e-mail, WWW, IM and FTP are the most highly used Internet services. This finding is in line with previous researches by Kumar and Kaur (2005), The PEW Internet & American Life Project reported by Jones (2002), Chou (2001), Kaur (2000), Kooganurmah and Jange (1999). These studies found out that the most commonly used Internet services among others were; e-mail, WWW, IM, and FTP. These results are further in conformity of previous studies and remarks by Flanagan (2005), Severin and Tankard (2001) and Jones (2002). The students’ use of e-mail, WWW and IM points out to the uses and

gratifications theory concept that the audience is conceived active. This is because the Internet services require audiences to be active and in control of their Internet use (Severin and Tankard, 2001).

The use of various Internet services by respondents could be attributed to the variety of needs of students. Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch (1974) note that each individual has several needs, hence audiences have created a wide range of choices that will meet these needs. Chou (2001) concurs with this and notes that according to the uses and gratifications theory and the play theory of mass communication, students have a variety of needs (social, academic, personal, etc)to use the Internet. Hence this leads to different degrees of exposure to various Internet services (e-mail, WWW, etc.) which result into varying degrees of gratifications and pleasure experiences.

**Use of internet**

A number of statements were presented to the respondents on the use of the internet. The results showed that students used the internet as follows:

**Table 7: Purpose for use the internet**

STATEMENTS	Percentage of respondents
Communicate with friends, classmates and parents/relatives, lecturers	86%
Exchange computer files	73%
Receive and turn in assignments to lecturers	65%
Gather academic/educational materials for the course I am currently pursuing	83%
Find employment listings that fit me	80%
Listen to and download audio music and movie video	71%
Look for information about TV series, actors or favourite singers, sport, football, Formula 1, diet/nutrition, food supplements, beauty, fashion	73%

Source: Research Data

From Table 7 most students used for communication, internet, information gathering and for entertainment.

### **The motivation for use the internet.**

Motives or motivations refer to the gratifications that the audiences seek from a particular mass medium. Below are the motivations for which respondents use the internet:

1. It is an interactive medium that provides instant feedback
2. It is a medium that increases my access to information from different locations around the globe.
3. It saves money when accessing information because it is freely available.
4. It contains a lot of information on a wide range of issues or topics.
5. It is enjoyable and exciting.
6. It is used by peers, family and friends

### **Problems facing students in using the internet**

The last objective of this study was to identify the challenges/problems students faced when using the Internet. Majority of these problems match those found in previous studies by Kumar and Kaur (2005) and Luambano and Nawe (2004). The challenges/problems when using the internet at SOJMC, UON include the following:

1. Slow internet connection
2. insufficient a awareness on the electronic education resources available at UON
3. Lack of internet user skill
4. Lack of adequate time to use the computers
5. Difficulties in finding relevant information from the internet
6. Inadequate computers with internet access
7. Lack of motivation from some lecturers who don't encourage students to use internet resource references

The university provides a wide range of Internet services and resources which are used by students

in different ways. The results of this study show that the most highly used Internet services were e-mail, WWW, IM and FTP. A clear pattern of frequency of use of various Internet services was noted from findings. Those Internet services/resources which were identified as significantly used had a high frequency of use. A very small number of respondents indicated using the library e-resources, and even those using them showed low frequency of use of these resources. This supports the notion that most students do not use the Internet for educational purposes.

The respondents used the Internet for communication, information seeking, developing and maintaining online and social interactions, entertainment, coping with peer pressure, escape from problems and improving personal status. From these use dimensions, it was found out that communication, information seeking, developing and maintaining online and social interactions, and entertainment accounted for the greater use of the Internet by the respondents. These findings were closely related to the motivations for using the Internet. The researcher found out that respondents strongly agreed with motive dimensions of information seeking, communication, entertainment and habit, and interactive control. It was also noted that Internet uses and motivations for using the Internet were influenced by time spent online per week. The significant differences noted in respect to these demographics could be attributed to the variety of social, academic and personal needs/interests for each category of respondents.

Many challenges faced the respondents in using the Internet. The major challenges noted were; insufficient awareness on the educational e-resources available to university library users, lack of motivation from some lecturers who don't encourage students using references of Internet resources, and slow Internet connection. Other problems cited by the respondents included difficulties in finding relevant information from the Internet and lack of adequate Internet use skills.

However, the educational use of the Internet as expected in a university was low due to a myriad of problems.

From a uses and gratifications perspective, it can be generally acknowledged that the Internet is used more by audiences when the existing motives to use it leads to more satisfaction. The two hypotheses tested in this study were supported by the findings. Therefore, it can be said that there is a positive relationship between exposure to Internet services/resources and gratifications sought by SOJMC students. It can also be concluded that there is a positive relationship between exposure to Internet services/resources and gratifications sought by SOJMC students.

### **Discussion**

The first objective of the study was to examine the main e-services and resources provided in the institution and determine their frequency of use among students. The results of this study revealed that the university provides the most commonly used Internet services. It also has a wide range of e-resources. From the results, it was established that the most commonly used Internet services were; email, WWW,IM and FTP. The least used Internet services were; mailing lists and newsgroups. Very few respondents reported using the university library e-resources. The findings revealed that those Internet services/resources which were identified as significantly used had a high frequency of use. This is a clear indicator that the highly used Internet service/resource gratify the users more, hence the students frequent rate of their utilization. The use of various Internet services and resources by students could be attributed to the wide range of social, academic and personal needs of the students. With this variety of needs, Internet users are compelled to use different services and resources to meet these different needs.

The second objective of this study was to identify the uses of the Internet among university students. In general, it was noted that the respondents used

the Internet more for communication, information seeking, and developing and maintaining online and social interactions than for entertainment, coping with peer pressure, escape from problems, improving personal status and aesthetic experiences.

The third objective of the study was to determine the motives/gratifications sought by students using Internet resources and services. It was established that students are motivated by different reasons to use the Internet. The key motivating dimensions for Internet user were related to information seeking, communication, entertainment and habit, and interactive control. From the study findings, it can be concluded that the respondents agreed to the motive dimensions driving them to use the Internet.

The fourth objective of this research was to identify the challenges faced by students when using the Internet. The major challenges noted were; insufficient awareness on the educational e-resources available to university library users and lack of motivation from some lecturers who don't encourage students using references of Internet resources consulted. Other problems stated by the respondents were; lack of adequate Internet use skills, difficulties in finding relevant information from the Internet, slow Internet connection and the problem of taking too long to view/download Web pages.

### **Conclusions**

University students utilize the Internet for many different uses. They are also motivated to use the Internet for different reasons. The main uses and motivations driving the students to use the Internet were; communication, information seeking, and developing and maintaining online and social interactions than for entertainment, interactive control, coping with peer pressure, escape from problems, improving personal status and aesthetic experiences. It is important to note that the findings of this study support those of previous studies which concluded that students use the Internet for

many purposes, least of which is educational use. Time spent online was used to measure the exposure of students to the Internet services/resources. The results of the study supported these two hypotheses. Therefore, it can be concluded that: (1) There is a positive relationship between exposure to Internet services/resources and uses among SOJMC students, and (2) There is a positive relationship between exposure to Internet services/resources and gratifications sought by SOJMC students.

The Internet has become a very powerful mass media, more especially among the university students population. Many academic institutions continue to provide free Internet services to their students. Equally, many commercial and non-commercial website designers are involved in the design of e-learning resources. Several findings in this study have implications for academic institutions and website designers. This is because while students use the Internet, their use of the Internet suggests other motivations besides educational use which should be pronounced in the academic institutions. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that students be given limitless internet access, educational e-resources be aggressively marketed and lecturers to make full use of the internet as an alternative avenue for teaching in order to improve the use of the Internet among the university students. In general, all strategies should be taken to educate the academic staff on the educational resources/services available. This is critical, because staff have a lot of influence on the students and hence they can encourage students to use the Internet.

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