# Digital Lifestyle of Connected Nigerians

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1   INTRODUCTION: ICTS IN NIGERIA

The Nigerian ICT space is not homogenous in growth, with a clearly fast-paced telecommunication sector and a growing (albeit underserved) Information Technology sector. The Nigerian telecommunications industry is now over 100 year old, but it was only in 1999 that the National Policy on Telecommunications was launched. A National Policy on Information Technology followed in 2001, along with the establishment of the National Information Technology Development Agency under the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology (Dada and Sesan, 2003). Following initial resistance to the idea of industry harmonization by certain factions divided along the Computing/IT and Telecom/Broadcasting divides, Nigeria – like most other nations – has since come to terms with the reality of harmonization which blurs the lines between traditional computing and telecommunications.

*Figure 1: Ownership and Access to ICTs by Households (2006)*
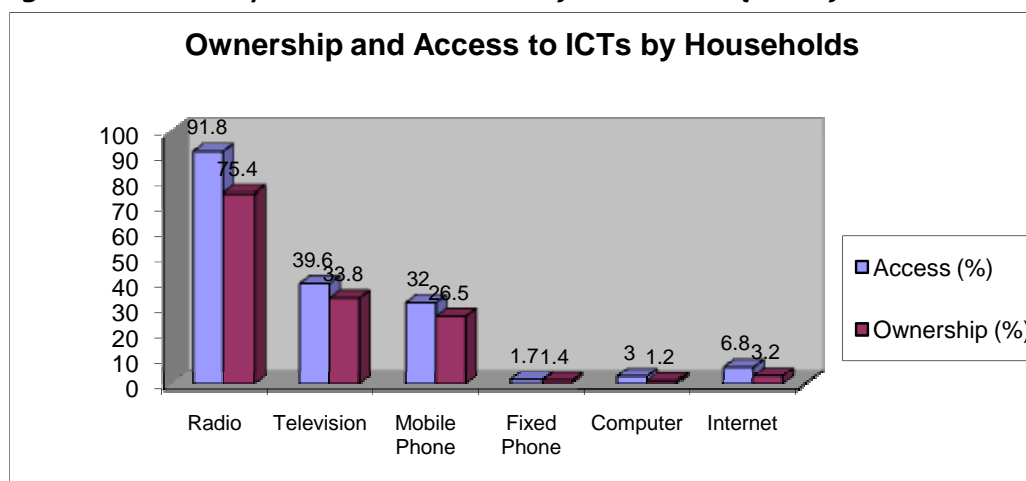
Source: NCC/CBN/NBS Collaborative Survey, March/April 2006

In a bid to establish its seriousness about ICT harmonization, the Federal Government set up a 26-man Presidential Task Force, on the 22nd of August, 2006. The Task Force was saddled with the responsibility of restructuring government institutions and organisations in the telecommunication and Information Technology sector in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the Task Force's recommendations have not been implemented to date. In spite of government reluctance, the industry has forged ahead mostly through the input of private sector participation and enlightened consumer demands. In December 2000, Nigeria had 450,000 connected fixed lines, no connected digital mobile line, 1 national career, 18 operating Internet Service Providers, 9 active licensed fixed-line operators, and 1 licensed mobile line operator (Ndukwe, 2005)[1]. In the same period,

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[1] Ndukwe, E. (2005), "ICT Infrastructure: An Essential Foundation for Implementing the WSIS Process in Nigeria", *eNigeria Annual National Conference*, 28-30 June, Abuja, Nigeria.

Nigeria had 200,000 internet users (Internet World Statistics, 2005)[2], even though many experts disagree with the figures. The reason for the disagreement is that there are always multiple users for public terminals in the popular cybercafés that dot the entire landscape, especially in the major cities across the various regions of the country.

Figure 2: Ownership and Access to ICTs by Individuals (2006)
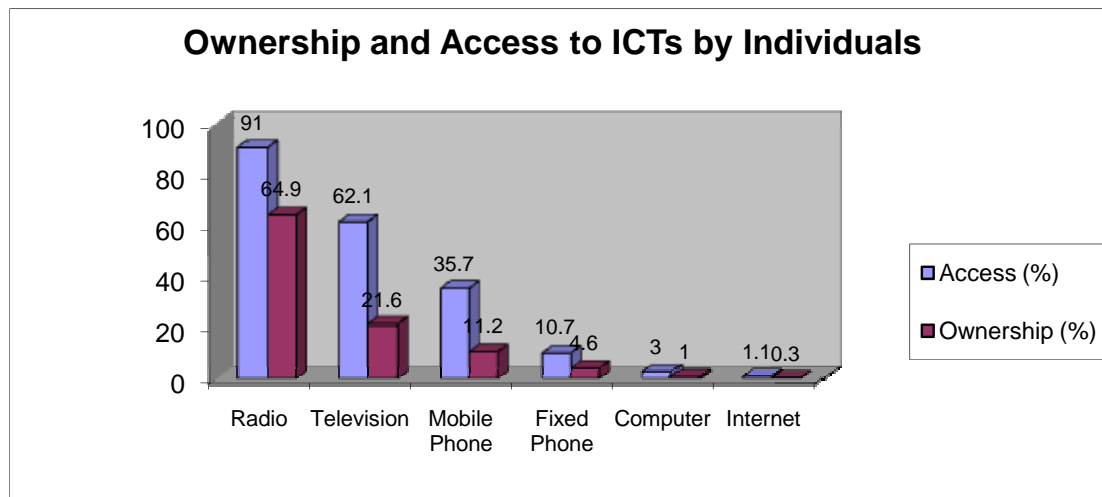
Source: NCC/CBN/NBS Collaborative Survey, March/April 2006

In March 2004, the figures grew to become 888,854 connected fixed lines, 3.8 million connected digital mobile lines, 2 national careers, 35 operating Internet Service Providers, 30 active licensed fixed-line operators, and 4 licensed mobile line operators. In December 2004, Nigeria had 1.5 million internet users, a penetration rate of 1.3% and constituted about 5.6% of the total number of African internet users. Africa itself only boasts of 1.5% of global internet users even though it has 14% of the world's inhabitants. Summarily, Nigeria's ICT space has improved significantly from 400,000 lines in 1996 to over 71.9 million lines in October 2009[3], and 11 million internet users by 2009. This huge number represents a demographic that needs to be studied beyond the usual association of Nigerian internet with cybercrime, hence the study on the *Digital Lifestyle of Connected Nigerians.*

2   THE SURVEY

Apart from the huge growth in the number of internet users, what has captured the attention of this researcher is the fact that many of these users go out of their way to get – or stay – connected. They have had to stay back at work, visit cyber cafes at odd hours, endure *plug-and-pray* services and spend a large part of their monthly income on expensive access. Also, many have found a way around the problem of electrical power instability. The survey is a collaborative effort between the *Centre for Information Technology and Development* and *Paradigm Initiative Nigeria*, and it

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[2] Internet World Statistics (2005), *Internet Usage Statistics for Africa,* Retrieved October 12, 2005, from the World Wide Web: http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm.
[3] Nigerian Communications Commission figures (2010)

focuses on what Nigerians (who are currently resident in Nigeria) are doing to get (and/or stay) online, what internet services they use and other important questions. For example, how many computers does the average *connected Nigerian* have? What internet service provider(s) are they subscribed to? What do they do when power supply is cut off? Where do they consider their primary place of access: home, office or public café?

Figure 3: Mobile Internet (GPRS) Usage Statistics from July 23 – 30, 2006
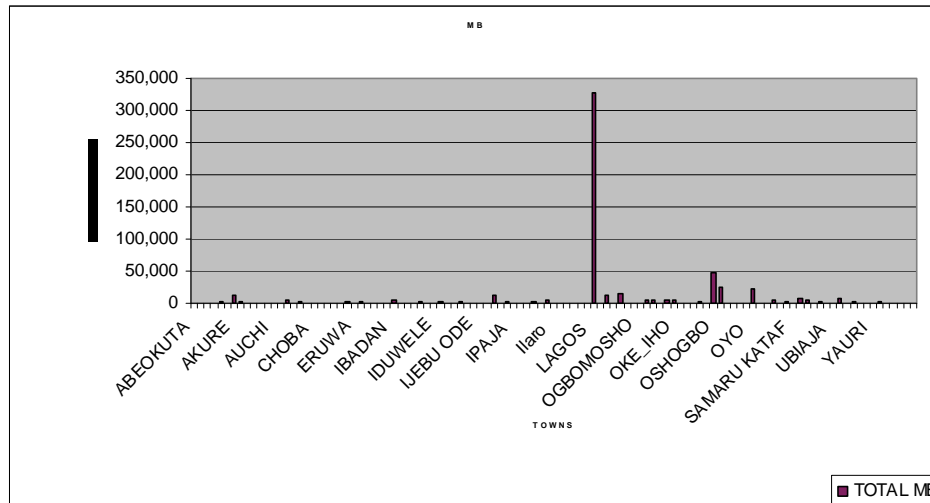

Source: Vee Networks Technology Group

The survey, launched in May 2009, and was planned to be conducted entirely online since the target demographic would be people who have some form of access. However, a little over 240 respondents had completed the survey after five months. This informed the need to make copies of the questionnaire available offline for the same purpose of receiving responses on the question of the digital lifestyle of connected Nigerians. After 2 months, the total number of online and offline respondents increased to 1,142. While additional surveys are being expected as at the time of writing this paper, the response of a size that exceeds our initial target of about 1,000 respondents provides an interesting perspective on what connected Nigerians do online, what they do to get (and stay) online, and what effects these have on their lifestyle.

3   RESEARCH FINDINGS

The survey revealed that internet usage is most popular among young people aged 20 to 24. There is a 2:1 ratio when you compare the number of men and women online, and 6:1 when the comparison is between single and married people (divorced, widowed and others make up only 1%). Majority of respondents (41%) have completed either secondary school (equivalent of high school) education or a bachelors program (32%) while 36% quoted an income range of less than one million naira (about $6,600) per annum. Only 1 of every 5 responded to say that they do not own computers while 35% claim to have only one computer and 36% have one laptop

computer alongside their desktop computer. More people seem to gain access from cybercafés and their workplace (55% combined) while only 17% have access at home.

Age:
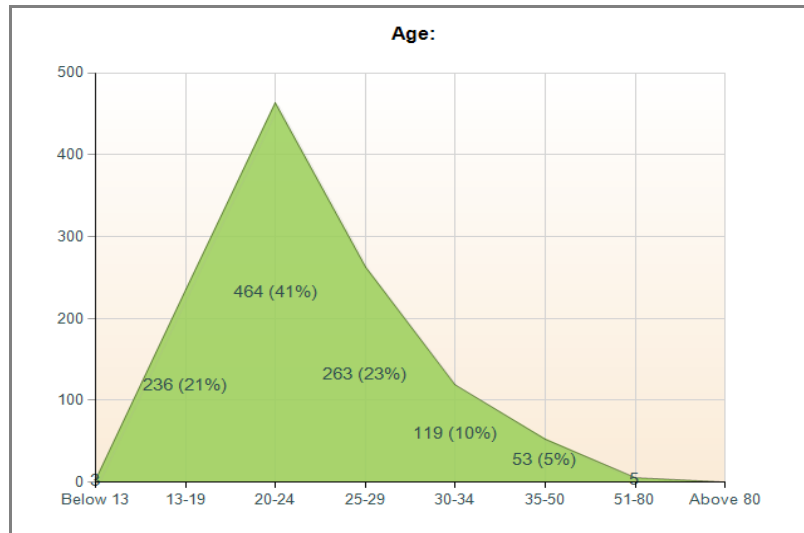
More than half of the respondents spend between 1 and 5 hours online, only 2 in every 100 claim not to have any functional eMail address and Yahoo! is by far (80% to Gmail's 36%) the most popular web-based eMail service. Yahoo! Messenger further demonstrates the brand's popularity in Nigeria with its 83% compared with Skype chat's 25% and Google Talk's 21%. About half of those surveyed claim to receive less than 50 eMails per day, FaceBook is by far the most popular social network (89% compared to runner up Hi5's 33%) and only 17% update their status messages on FaceBook or microblogging platforms many times a day, or always. While the competition in terms of internet service providers is quite stiff, Globacom (22%), MTN (21%) and Starcomms (22%) are the preferred providers.

Marital Status:

977 (85%) Single
159 (14%) Married
4 Divorced
Widowed
3 Other
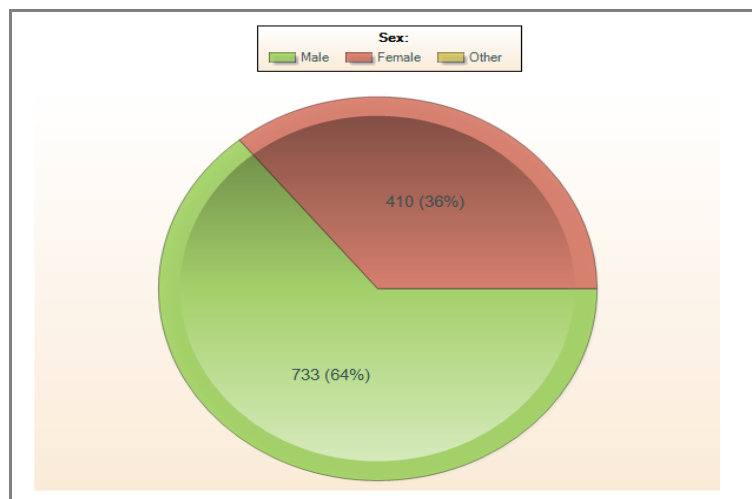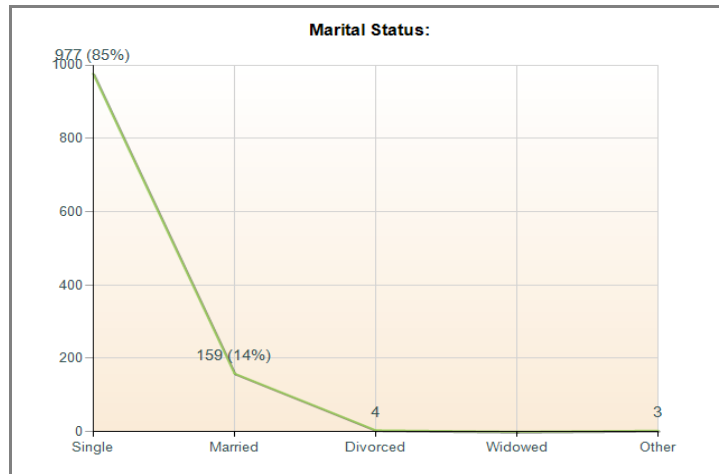
Almost half of the respondents subscribe to an access plan that allows them to stay online all day long while daytime access (9am to 5pm) comes a distant runner up at 11% (even though 39% use other plans that are not listed in the survey). 1 in every 2 internet users own generators that allow them to stay online while 15% only work when there is power supply. Considering the frequency of power cuts, those 15% must be losing a lot of man-hours. While about a quarter of respondents are currently unemployed, 1 in every 4 stay back at work in order to get access and about half do not. 1 in every 4 (often or always) adjust their sleep hours in order to align with the access plan they subscribe to. This is not surprising, considering how much traffic telecom companies record for their "free" midnight calls (usually from midnight until just after 4am).

Highest Qualification Obtained:

8 (1%) Primary School Leaving Certificate
469 (41%) Secondary School Leaving Certificate (or...
105 (9%) OND
119 (10%) HND
364 (32%) BSc (or any other Bachelors degree equivalent)
74 (6%) MSc (or any other Masters degree equival...
4 PhD
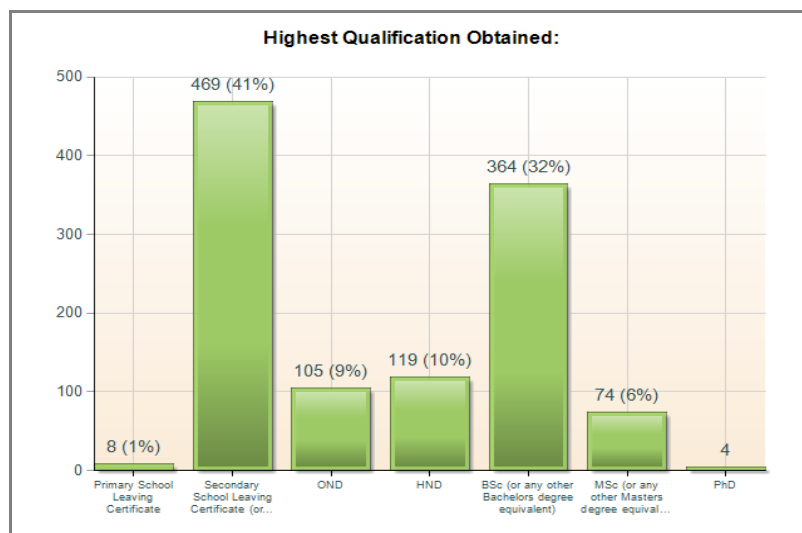
A worrying 42% claim to have suffered bodily harm due to the length of time spent online at one time, with various symptoms such as back ache, wrist pain, etc. While 28% say that their family members have complained about how much time they spend online, only 5% have had their employers complain about their browsing habit. Considering how much information channels are open for any willing individual during work hours, it will not be surprising to note that majority of organizations lose much of their daily manpower to clicks that take their staff from one page to another – and the

responses to posted pictures, comments, news, tweets or status messages. Two in every three respondents stated that internet access has had an impact on their career/job while 1 in every 3 agree that their tendency to stay online has made them replace social contacts with online communication. Half of the respondents have completed online transactions but only 4% have fallen victims of any form of cybercrime.

Income Range:
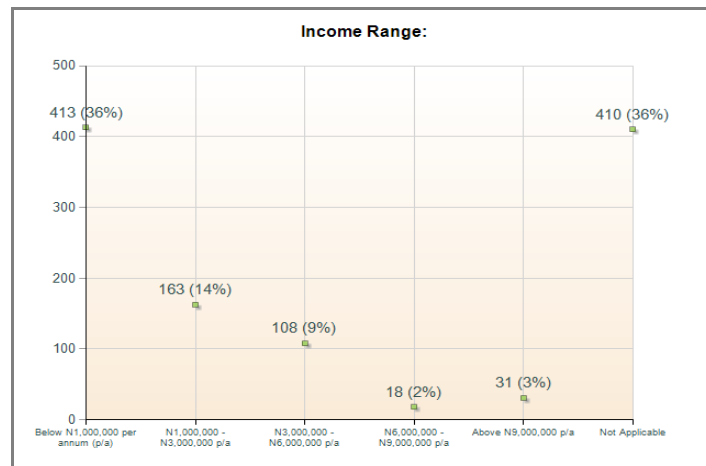
4   CONCLUSION

Evidently, technology adoption is a major factor in the increased number of internet users in Nigeria. Most workplaces have since been transformed from a place where files are moved around to one where files are organized on hard drives. Even for those who are not in the workplace, examination bodies are increasingly adopting the use of online registration and testing – which further promotes the digital culture. Employment is mostly driven by digital tools – ranging from sending resumes to uploading resumes and actually searching for jobs online. At home, the number of computers have not only increased, but the use we put them to are also – from watching movies to listening to music, and even creating both.

Do you own a computer? Which of the following describes you best?

Where do you primarily gain access to the internet?
- Public/cyber cafe
- On my mobile phone
- At work
- At home
- Other
- Private library

275 (27%)
175 (17%)
33 (3%)
136 (13%)
123 (12%)
288 (28%)
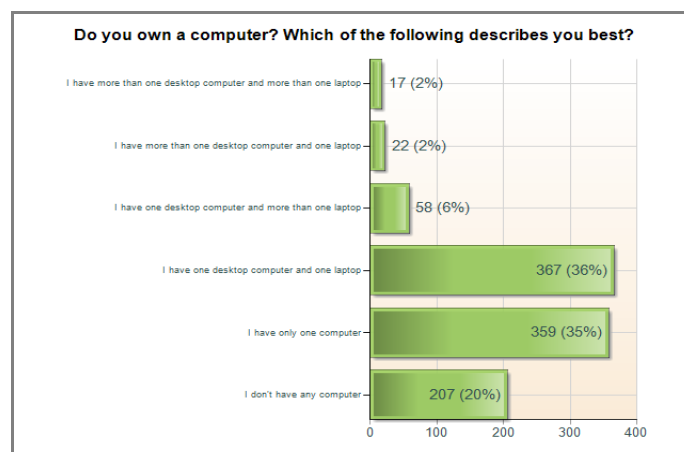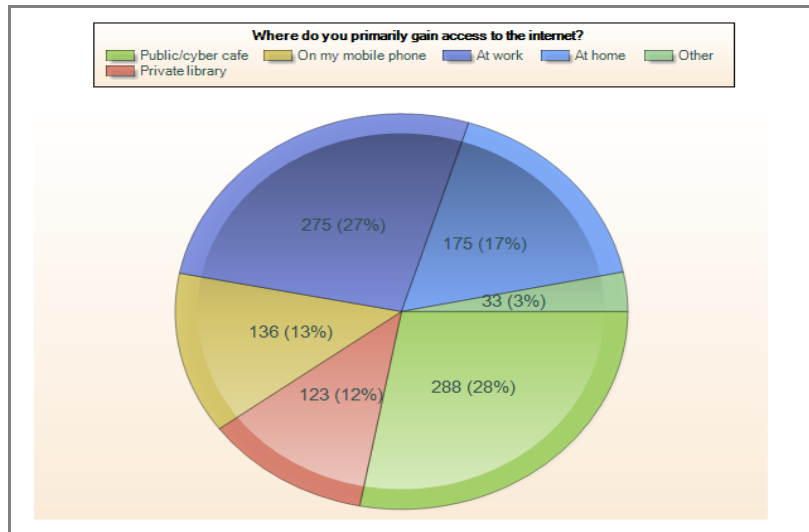
While the survey reveals that issues such as health hazards and reduced efficiency may be areas that should catch the attention of individuals and corporations that have no policy in relation to internet usage, the opportunities are obvious. With an increasing population of internet users who have endured unpleasant conditions such as unfriendly customer service, power outage and *plug-and-pray* speeds, better access will improve user satisfaction and add value to the ICT space. Nigeria offers a huge market size for online products and the possible level of productivity that improved access brings may have Nigeria one day compete for outsourcing dollars with today's leading hubs.

How many hours do you spend online, daily?

589 (57%)
194 (19%)
176 (17%)
46 (4%)
25 (2%)

Less than 1 hour | Between 1 and 5 hours | Between 5 and 10 hours | Between 10 and 15 hours | More than 15 hours
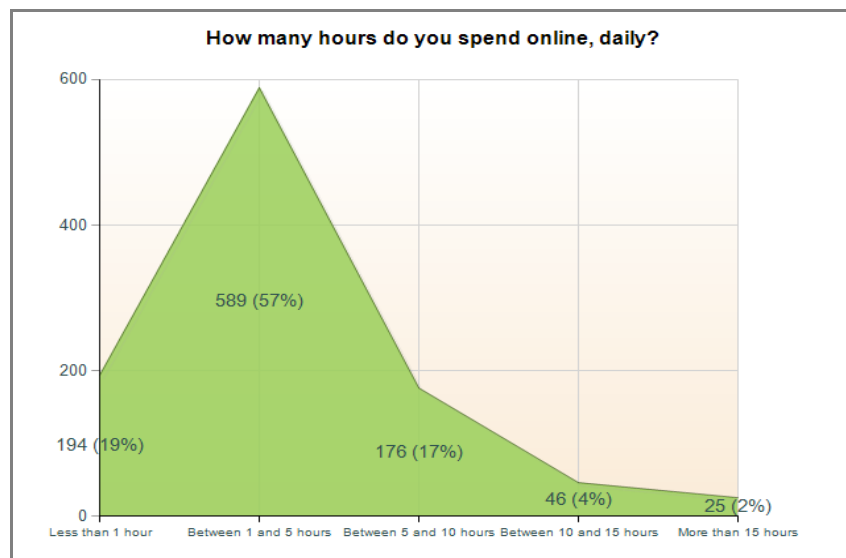
Unfortunately, cybercrime is a clog in the wheel of technology in Nigeria. Not only is the nation seen as a location of interest in relation to cybercrime, the lack of jobs and an unconcerned government have added to the problems of online crime among young people. While there is no single legislation that addresses the issue, numerous incidents and reports have forced government to often talk about the need to stem the

tide. With the approach of agencies such as the Economics and Financial Crimes Commission focused on arrests, the problem continues to linger while the pressure to embrace cybercrime may remain on the increase. Efforts such as the Microsoft Internet Safety, Security and Privacy Initiative for Nigeria (MISSPIN)[4] campaign which has taken a social preventive approach to combat cybercrime may be necessary to make corrective approaches work better. The campaign recorded a milestone in February 2010 when a song and musical video were launched – with a message that speaks directly to young people.

How many eMail accounts do you have?

Category	Value
More than 5	38 (4%)
5	32 (3%)
4	70 (7%)
3	203 (20%)
2	391 (38%)
1	272 (26%)
None	24 (2%)

Which instant messaging channel(s) do you use?

Yahoo! Messenger — MSN — Google Talk — Skype Chat — Meebo — Other

- Yahoo! Messenger: 858 (83%)
- MSN: 170 (17%)
- Google Talk: 216 (21%)
- Skype Chat: 254 (25%)
- Meebo: 92 (9%)
- Other: 117 (11%)

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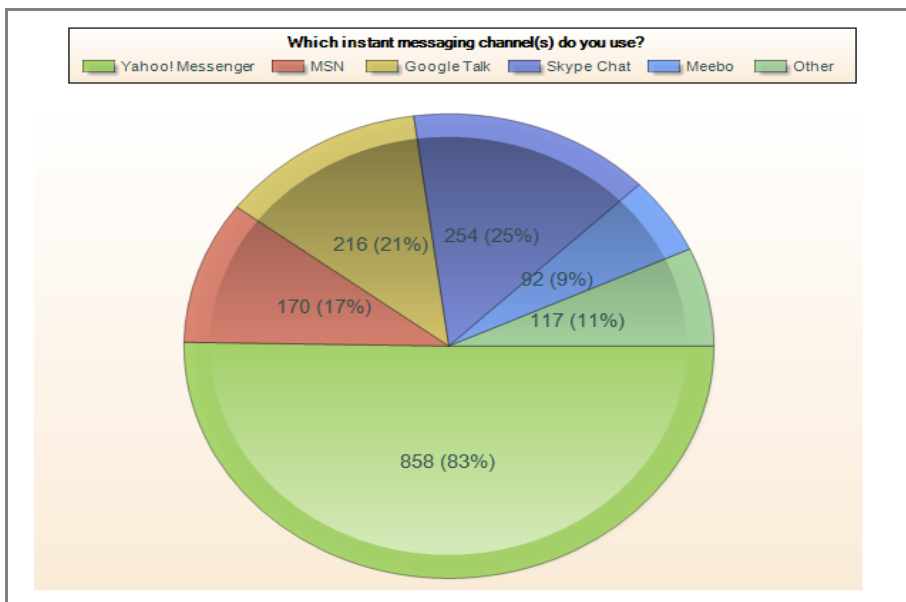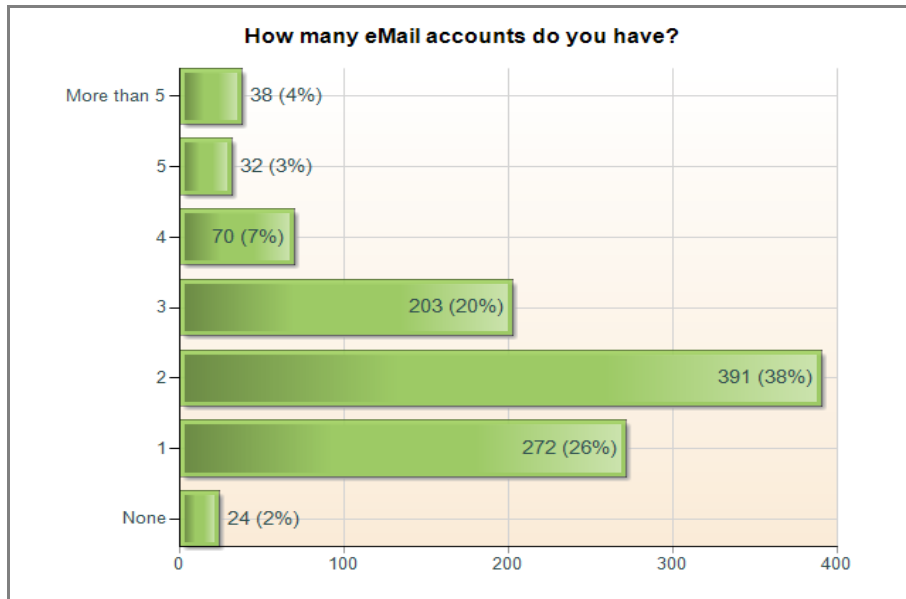
[4] MISSPIN is a collaborative project between Microsoft, Paradigm Initiative Nigeria and other partners. The project website is http://www.pinigeria.org/isspin

What web-based eMail service(s) do you use?

- Corporate domain: 262 (25%)
- GMail/GoogleMail: 371 (36%)
- MSN/Hotmail: 199 (19%)
- Personal domain: 96 (9%)
- Yahoo!: 820 (80%)
- Other: 64 (6%)

Which of the following best describes your daily eMail traffic?

- I receive less than 50 eMails, with very little spam: 570 (55%)
- I receive less than 50 eMails, with lots of spam: 297 (29%)
- I receive between 50 and 200 eMails, with very little spam: 87 (8%)
- I receive between 50 and 200 eMails, with lots of spam: 47 (5%)
- I receive over 200 eMails, with very little spam: 13 (1%)
- I receive over 200 eMails, with lots of spam: 15 (1%)

Which social networking website(s) are you signed up to?

Legend: Bebo, FaceBook, Hi5, LinkedIn, MySpace, Ning, TakingITGlobal, Xing, Other

- 212 (21%)
- 94 (9%)
- 137 (13%)
- 45 (4%)
- 129 (13%)
- 77 (7%)
- 915 (89%)
- 344 (33%)
- 211 (20%)

How often do you update your micro-blogging platform (e.g. Twitter, FaceBook status, NaijaPulse, etc)?

427 (41%)

193 (19%)

136 (13%)

117 (11%)

69 (7%)

27 (3%)

61 (6%)

I am not subscribed to any | Never | Once in a while | Once in a day | Few times in a day | Many times a day | Always

Which internet service provider(s) are you subscribed to at home?

224 (22%)

221 (21%)

229 (22%)

261 (25%)

157 (15%)

150 (15%)

178 (17%)

46 (4%)

62 (6%)

51 (5%)

95 (9%)

70 (7%)

None | IPNX | Multilinks | Skannet | Visaphone | Zoom Mobile

What type of home access plan(s) are you subscribed to?

508 (49%)

403 (39%)

113 (11%)

48 (5%)

96 (9%)

24/7 (Always on) | Daytime access (e.g. 9am - 5pm) | Mid-day access (e.g. 3pm - 9pm) | Night access (e.g. 9pm - 5am) | Other

How does power supply affect your internet access?

Category	Value
I only work when PHCN supplies power	149 (15%)
I have a generator to provide backup	451 (47%)
I use (an) inverter(s) to provide backup	77 (8%)
I have multiple backup plans	130 (13%)
I relocate to a location with power supply	55 (6%)
Other	104 (11%)

Do you often stay back (or arrive early) at work because of internet access?

Legend: Yes | No | I am presently unemployed

- 265 (27%)
- 447 (46%)
- 254 (26%)

Have you ever had to adjust your sleep pattern due to your chosen access plan and/or power supply (for access)?

	Value
Never	279 (28%)
Rarely	462 (48%)
Often	182 (19%)
Always	47 (5%)

Have you ever suffered any bodily harm due to the length of time you spent online at one time (e.g. back ache, wrist pain, etc)?

Yes No

557 (58%)

409 (42%)

Has any member of your family ever complained about the amount of time you are spending online?

Yes No

697 (72%)

269 (28%)

Does your employer complain about your browsing habit?

Yes No

916 (95%)

50 (5%)

How does your internet access impact on your career/job?

636 (66%)

174 (18%)

156 (16%)

a requirement to keep my job   It is necessary for me to move up the career...   It has no impact on my work

How has internet access changed your social life?

It has no impact on my social life — 121 (13%)

I combine both online and offline networking — 543 (56%)

Online social networking has taken the place of face-to-face — 302 (31%)

0   200   400   600

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Have you ever completed an online financial transaction?

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No

504 (52%)

462 (48%)

Have you ever been a victim of cybercrime?

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No ■ Please provide details...

932 (96%)

34 (4%)