

An Assessment of Social Media Usage among TVET Students in Kiambu County, Kenya

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Abstract: his study was carried out to assess the use of social media among the students of TVET institutions in Kiambu County. In the context of today's electronic media, social networking sites have come to mean individuals, using the Internet and web application to communicate in previously impossible ways. This is largely the result of a culture-wide paradigm shift in the uses and possibilities of the internet itself. The objectives of the study were to find out the preferred social networking sites among TVET students, Reasons for utilization, assessing the factors that influence the respondents to visit a social media site or even do repeat visits to the same site and time spent per session on social media. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design which was employed to derive responses from a sample size of 357 from 10 stratified sampled TVET students in Kiambu who were selected through random sampling techniques. Data were collected from this population using questionnaire. The 357 respondents completed and returned the questionnaire correctly representing 100% return rate. The results of the study reveals that 337 (94.3%) TVET students in Kiambu are on social media platform. The study established that Facebook was the most common used social media 33.6 % among the TVET students in Kiambu County, followed by whatsapp 27.2%, twitter at 17.9%, Imo 8.7% and other social media 12.6%. The study established that most of the students 38% were using the social networking sites in sharing knowledge, 34% interaction with friends, 11 % collaboration and 17% for communication purpose. The findings of the study indicated that internet enabled phones are the leading means of internet access among students of TVET Institutions in Kiambu County with 69.5 % of the respondents using phone technologies, followed by the Personal computer 23.4 % and cybercafé with 7.1 %. The current study indicated that the influence of friends as the main reason accounting for 60.8 % of the profiled respondents. The media also was found to be a major influencer in promoting the use of social media accounting for 24.9 %. The study indicated that the influence of parents was 11.3% and relatives accounted for 3% influence.

Keywords: Social media, Social networking sites, social networks, TVET.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has turned out to be an accepted way of communication. Ellison & Boyd (2007) define social networking sites as web-based service that allows users to: create public or semi-public profile in a system, share a connection, view and cross-list their relationship with others in a system. Social media applications are classified according to their functions such as blogs (word press), intranets, podcasts, video sharing (You Tube), photo sharing (Flickr), social network (Facebook, My Space) wikis (Wikipedia), micro blogging (twitter) among others (Hearn *et al.*, 2008). Social networking sites are websites that allow those who have account with them to communicate with a selected group of friends (Awake, 2011). Social networks comprise a representation of each user (often a profile), his or her social links, and a variety of additional services (wikipedia, 2011). Most of the social networks are web-based and provide mean for their users to interact via the Internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging; social networks allow activities, events and interact within their individual networks.

Sudheim (2011) argues that Social Media has recently become an integral part of our everyday lives, but it has been around long before Facebook and Twitter. What has changed is that social media is now widely available whereas it used

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to be limited to those with an in-depth understanding of technology and underground hacker circles. Social networking sites (SNSs) have also attracted increasing scholarly attention as being effective as both means of self-expression and for the management and amelioration of individual and group networks (Barnett, 2011). This is particularly applicable to the younger generation in technologically developed countries. SNSs allow individuals to create online profiles, share personal information, and view information created by others, thereby facilitating the formation of social networks among users (Boyd and Ellison 2007; Donath and Boyd 2004).

Boyd and Ellison(2007) notes that social media provides a great space for individual Internet users not only for the basic data storage needs, but even more importantly for the users' psychological experience requirements, such as to “be found”, “be authorized” and “be admired”. The applications include blogs/micro blogs (e.g. Twitter, Tpeople), wikis/Wikipedia, image sharing (e.g. Flickr), podcasts/video-sharing (e.g. YouTube, Youku), and community forum/social networks (e.g. MySpace, Face book) (Beer, 2008; Wilson, 2008). The major social networking tools like MySpace and Facebook give people an online identity and an online space to call their own (Rethlefsen, 2007).

The complete.com website in 2009 ranked Twitter and Facebook as one of the top social media platforms worldwide with most active users being youngsters recording a monthly usage of 180 billion members with a consumption of 180 terabytes worth of data annually. Facebook the most popular social network surpassed the 500 million registered users in 2010 (Crunch base, 2010). The network's popularity with digital natives who grew up with the social media is due in part to the networks ability personalize content with interactivity as users share and discuss contents with friends and family (Yaros, 2009). Locally, according to *www.bakers.com* (2012), there are 1994720 Facebook users in Kenya which makes it number 65 in the ranking of all Facebook statistics by country. Facebook penetration in Kenya is 4.98% compared to the country's population and 19.01% in relation to the number of internet users. Peer influences have been found to be a major driving force towards utility of internet especially among youth of 16 years old to 24 years old age set (Kimani, 2012).

Mobile technologies including laptops, tablets, and smart phones allow us to be constantly connected, which has had a dramatic impact on how we communicate nowadays. These latest communication technologies if enhanced can help enhance communication among people and institutions (Patel, 2010). Bellingham et al. indicate that 51% of internet population is using smart phones; a majority of them has a data subscription as well. Android is market leader in this market followed by apple. Over 98% of web access in Kenya is through mobile phones. Social media has created opportunities for organizations to have interactive conversations with stakeholders (Sweetser, 2010) which also accords as noted by Argenti (2006) the companies means to gauge effectiveness of communication process. In today's world, notes Matthews (2010), the success or failure of any company hinges on the way it communicates to the key stakeholders such as investors, consumers, employees and members of immediate community.

Globally, TVET is increasingly becoming important in times of rapid social and technological change. Workers need more updated skills to participate in the knowledge economy as the competencies they acquire increasingly become quickly outdated (Neal, 2011). Onomo (2012) acknowledged this ability of the media by remarking that social networking sites has become “a widespread tool for communication and exchange of ideas, helping individuals and organizations with just causes to reach a phenomenally vast audience that could hitherto not be reached by traditional media. The key objective of TVET in Kenya is to offer opportunity for students to explore their opportunity for students to explore their practical aptitudes and to develop elementary skills and gain perspective of technology which enables them to become more effective and informed members of society. According to Technical and Vocational Education and Training Bill (2012), institutions offering TVET are organized at five levels namely: Vocational Training Centers (VTCs), Technical Colleges, Technical Teacher Training Colleges, National Polytechnics, and Technical Universities established in accordance with the provisions of the Universities Act (2012).

Problem statement:

Social media have become a mainstream activity and have become a major mode of communication especially for youths who form about 50% of the world population on facebook. Social media have moved from being just interactive to a form of mass media. Social media have been predicted as a strong force in shaping public opinion especially in issue of politics, social causes and sexuality. Social media have also been an expression of the complexities between the media and society (Idakwo, 2011:23). Over the years, social networking sites have metamorphosed from few-user-based sites into

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phenomena that have become niches for billions of users. The growth and popularity of social networking sites have generated concerns among school authorities, communication experts and socio-psychological researchers about the benefit and potential risks facing students, as they engage in online social networking to cater for their social and information needs rather than oral or face-to-face communication.

Matthews (2010) notes that social media has revolutionised corporate communication, rapidly changing its strategies especially on how corporate messages are distributed and measured. Platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Badoo, and Instagram among others had registered increased subscriptions since their invention. Lately, social media have been a preferred electronic mode of communication among the youth with young adults between 18-29 years, 81% being active users (Lerhart *et al.*, 2010). This is reiterated by Gomez & Velez (2011) who pointed out the fact that higher institutions had underutilized their social media platforms. In the present study, the objectives were to find out the preferred social networking sites among TVET institutions students', Reasons for utilization of social media, assessing the factors that influence the respondents to visit a social media site and time spent per day on social media

Theoretical framework:

This study can be explained, using the media systems dependency (MSD) theory. The media systems dependency theory was first proposed by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin Defleur in 1976, and consists of a complex system in which the media, individuals, their personal environment, and the social environment have dependency relationships with each other. Each component depends on the others components in a system by drawing on resource in order to satisfy goals. Particular attention is given to the resources of media systems in modern society and the consideration conditions which will increase or decrease individuals reliance on media system. In another way, media systems dependency theory is a relationship in which the capacity of individuals to attain their goals is contingent upon the information resources of the media systems (wikipedia, 2012).

According to Baran and Davies (2009), media systems dependency theory assumes that the more a person depends on having his or her needs met by media use, the more important will be the role that the media play in the person's life, and therefore, the more influence the media will have on the person. People turn to the media to communicate or make sense of what is happening, as the world becomes complex. Little-John (2002) also explained that people will become more dependent on the media that meet a number of their needs than on the media that touch only a few needs. The more an individual relies on the media for the expression of thought and sharing of ideas, the more that individual is influenced by the media. Again, the more we depend on social media, the more our attitudes, cognition, emotional states or behavior will change (wikipedia, 2011). As individuals develop expectations that the media system can provide assistance toward goal attainment, individuals generally develop dependency relations with the media or medium perceived to be the most helpful in the goal pursuit. Media systems dependency theory also rests on the fact that industrialization have decreased the influence of inter personal communication and, therefore, increased the role of media system (wikipedia, 2011).

Significance of the study:

This study is very important since it would go a long way in helping TVET institutions to fully utilize social media and incorporate them in their already existing channels of communication.

It is expected that the output of this research will benefit students and the administration of TVET institutions as it will show the level of the students' use of social networking sites. This shall help them to understand how best to sustain the students attention on using social networking sites. Also this work will be of immense benefit to the field of Library and information sciences as it will be an addition to the existing literature.

2. METHODS**2.1 Research design**

The research design used in this study was descriptive survey research design. Mugenda and Mugenda (2012), states that the descriptive study is a method, which enables the researcher to summarize and organize data in an effective and meaningful way. According to Cooper and Schindler (2003), a descriptive survey research is concerned with finding out the what, where and how of a phenomenon.

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2.2 Settings

This study was conducted in Kenya, Kiambu County targeting 11 stratified sampled TVET institutions. The county is 40% rural and 60% urban owing to Nairobi's consistent growth northwards.

2.3 Study populations

Students were drawn from the 11 stratified sampled technical intuitions. 357 Students were recruited using simple random sampling because it is regarded by many researchers and statisticians as being the most practical method of sampling that is free fabulous. (Keslinger, 1976) also observes that "A sample drawn at random is unbiased in the sense that no member of the population has any more chance of being selected than any other member"

The sample size for the study was estimated by relying on works by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) and Sekaran (2003). Krejcie and Morgan (1970) recommended that for social research, a confidence level of 95 per cent and margin of error of ± 5 per cent would be acceptable. Gang (1999) used Krejcie and Morgan's work to come up with a sample size table that correctly gives the optimal sample size of a population of 82,100 with 95 per cent confidence level and 5.00 margin of error as 384 individuals. Sekaran, (2003) also has the derivative of the table as depicted by Gang (1999) and gives the same figure as best suited for the study sample size.

2.4 Inclusion criteria

TVET institutions students' who agree to participate in the study.

2.5 Data collection instruments

Data was collected through a structured questionnaire made of closed ended questions to facilitate standardisation of the answers given and ease of analysis. The questionnaire was structured into two parts: part one consisting of contingency questions touching on the general information of the respondent and the second section with questions on their interactions on social media platforms

2.6 Pilot Study

To check for the reliability of instrument a pretest was done through a pilot study which was carried out on Subjects drawn from neighboring private technical training institutions. Pretesting the instrument was a critical component of minimizing measurement errors in assuming research (Best, 1977). This process helped to determine internal consistency as well as to get feedback or issues such as representativeness of items for particular constructs, clarity of questions, questions format, clarity of instruction, and specificity of items.

In order to minimize instrument error occurring from ambiguity in research instrument, the researcher sought expert advice in the evaluation of the instrument. The feedback from the experts assisted in the development of a valid research instrument through expert judgement. Cronbach Apha was uses to provide reliability estimates for the instruments and for likert paint items. The items were then considered reliable if they yield a reliability coefficients of at least 0.70. Which is the value desirable (Best, 1977). The study established a reliability coefficient of 0.85 which prompted the researcher to proceed with the data collection.

2.7 Procedure of data collection

Written approval was obtained from the heads of TVET institutions on a formal request to conduct the research study and seeking permission to do so. Prospective participants met with the researcher and made it very clear to participant that their participation was voluntary and they were free to withdraw at any time. A structured questionnaire made of closed ended questions was employed and questionnaire collection was done at the point leading to 100% return rate

2.8 Data management

Data were collected by questionnaire from the students, by researcher. Manual coding was used to check any error in coding. The coding manual and dummy tables were developed before entering the data. Double entry of data from researcher was done to prevent potential data entry error. The data were checked and cleaned by performing preliminary frequency distribution to enhance accuracy and reliability.

2.9 Data analysis

Descriptive statistical techniques were employed to show the frequency distribution of classification variables. These include gender, Age, social media platform, social media utility and internet access. For visual display, charts, histograms and pie charts were used.

2.10 Ethical considerations

Caution was taken to ensure that all research data generated from the study was strictly used for academic purposes and would not be shared/ employed outside of the confines of the present academic study. All information received was kept confidential. In the questionnaires to be used, the respondents were not required to indicate their identities in any way so as to guarantee protection of their private details. Therefore, no personal information was solicited. The principle of voluntary consent was strictly upheld by disclosing the purpose of the study to the respondents and guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality in the questionnaires. No respondent was forced to respond to the questionnaire by coercion or otherwise. Participation was strictly voluntary.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Questionnaire return rate

A total of 357 students completed the questionnaire translating to 100% return rate.

3.2 Demographic information

The demographic information sought to establish background information of students who were the main respondents of the study. Their demographic background was based on gender and age. The findings about gender distribution of respondents indicate that there is no significant difference between males (51.6 percent) and females who accounted for 48.4 percent of the respondents. The main age band of the respondents was 18 to 29 years old indicative of the youth being majority of Facebook, whatsapp and Twitter users. From the findings it can be deduced that a bigger portion of the respondents 47.2% had their age mentioned to be between 21-23 years, followed by those between whose indicated their age was 18 to 20 years old accounting for 33.2 % ,24 to 26 were 13.4 % and age 27 to 29 accounted for 6.2 % respondents

3.3 Social Media usage

The current study establish that 337 (94.3%) TVET students in Kiambu are on social media platform as shown by table 1.

Table 1. Social Media usage

Social media	Frequency	percentage
On social media	337	94.3
Not on social media	20	5.7
Total	357	100

3.4 Common social media usage in TVET institution by students

The study established that Facebook was the most common used social media 33.6 % among the TVET students in Kiambu County, followed by whatsapp 27.2%, twitter at 17.9%, Imo 8.7% and other social media 12.6% as shown by figure 1. The findings agree with other studies that suggested Twitter and Facebook platforms as being the most popular social media platforms with social media online users. (Rabazinski, 2012; Kimani, 2012).

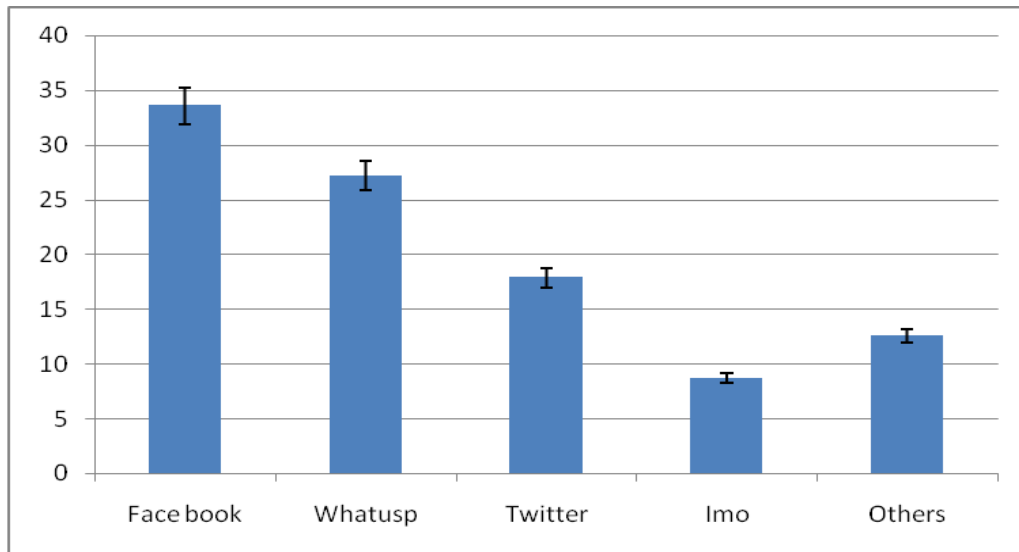


Figure 1. Social media platform preferred/most commonly used by the respondents as per the study

3.5 Means of accessing the internet

On means of accessing the internet, the findings indicated that internet enabled phones are the leading means of internet access. Among students of TVET in Kiambu County 69.5 percent of the respondents, followed by the Personal computer 23.4 percent and cybercafé with 7.1 percent as shown figure 2. The use of internet and mobile phones has witnessed a rapid increase in internet penetration rates among populations. This is mostly attributed to reduced costs associated with internet access. (Communications Commission of Kenya, 2013).

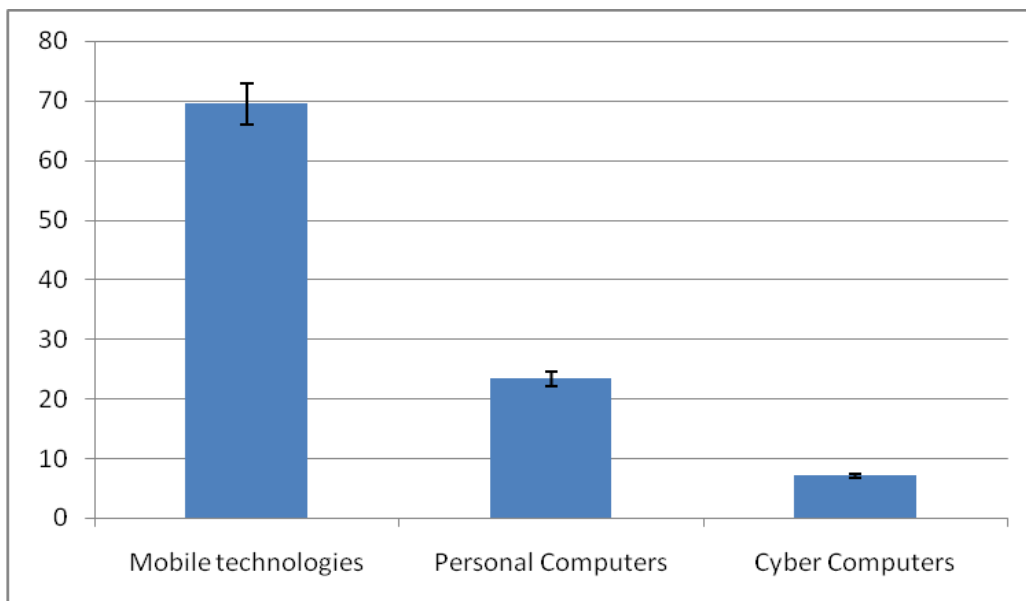


Figure 2. Means of accessing the internet

3.6 Reasons for utilization/usage

According to the study findings of the study, 38 % of respondent utilize social media to share knowledge, 34% for social interaction, 17 % for communication and 11 % for communication purpose as shown by figure 3. According to research done by Kist (2008) that shows that, approximately half of all teens who have Internet access are also members of social networking sites, and use the Internet to make plans and socialize with friends (Kist, 2008). As one researcher stated, “Teens use the social media as an extension of their personality, to show their friends – and the world – who they are, what they care about, and to build connections with other like-minded people” (Goodman, 2007, 84). The findings of this

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study totally agrees with Johnson and Johnson (1996) as quoted by Aghaee (2010) who postulates that there are many advantages of using social media in collaborative learning; assisting each other when needed; exchanging resources and documents; classifying complex knowledge, sharing existing knowledge with others as well as giving and receiving reflections and feedback from others.

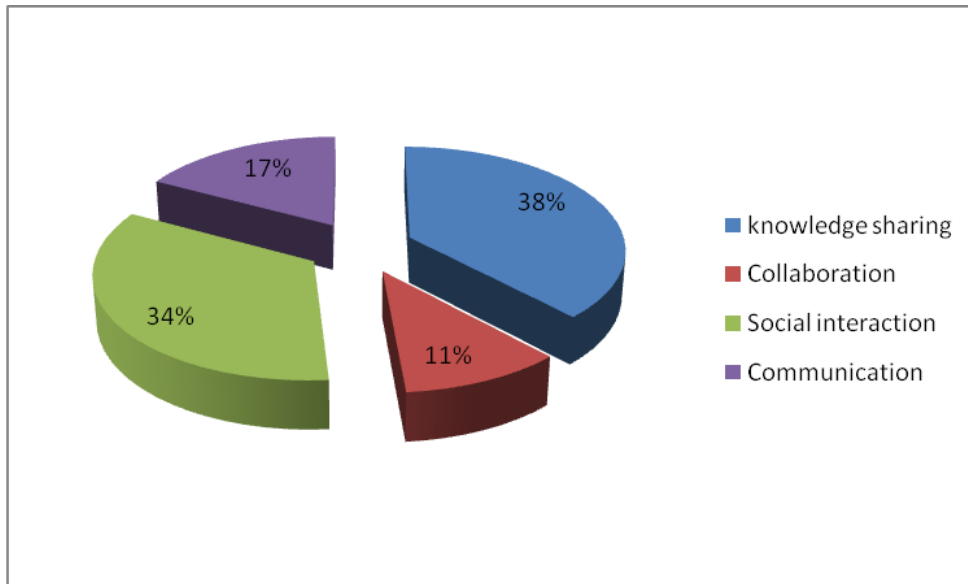


Figure 3: Reason for social media usage

3.7 Time spent on Social Media per day

The findings have established that social media has become very popular with most of respondents 51.9 % indicating they spend 3 to 4 hours, 39.2 % spend 1 to 2 hours, 8.3 % spend 5 to 6 hours and 0.6 % spend over 6hrs per day accessing the internet on social media alone. This accounted for more than 90 percent of the respondents spending more than one hour per day on social media as shown by figure 4. This fact is significant as it is an indication of a dedicated mass of the population that interacts on social media platforms in TVET institution. According to Peter & Valkenburg (2009) it is estimated that the vast majority of teenagers in Nigeria visit at least one social networking site approximately twenty times each day

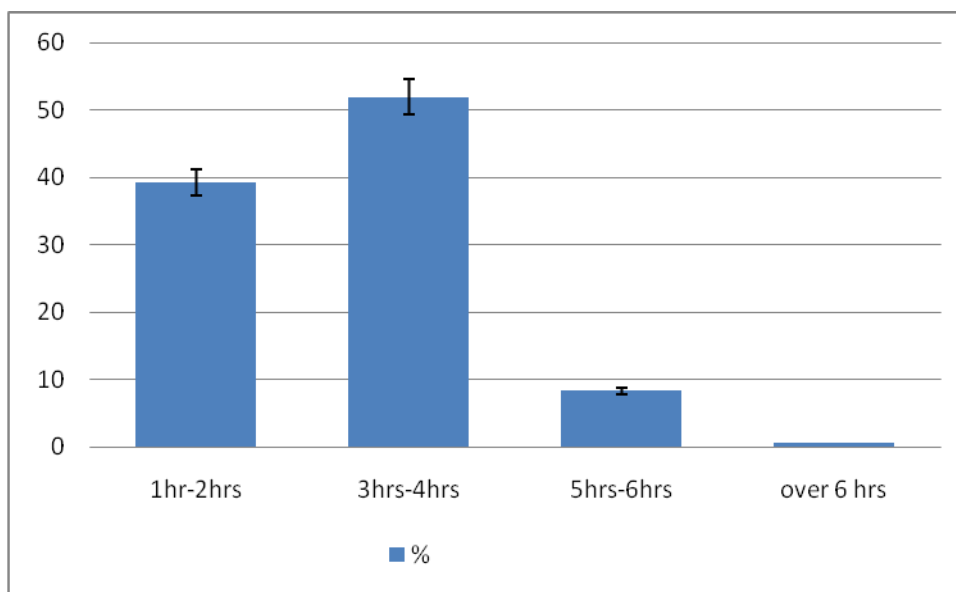


Figure 4: Time spent on Social Media per day

3.8 Reasons for initial use of social media

From the findings on what initially prompted of social media users to interact on its social media platforms, the study indicated that the influence of friends as the main reason accounting for 60.8 % of the profiled respondents. The media also was found to be a major influencer in promoting the use of social media accounting for 24.9 percent. The study indicated that the influence of parents was 11.3% and relatives accounted for 3% influence as shown by table 2. This elucidates the power of social relationships and peer influences in influencing buyer behavior especially among social media users. According to recent research about social media networks and Internet usage, social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace have become so popular that many university and college students will get an account even if they do not want to (Peter, Schouten, & Valkenburg, 2006). This shows that joining a SNS signifies more than just going on a website; it is way of “fitting in” with peers, just like many other types of groups in high school (Peter, Schouten, & Valkenburg, 2006). Peer influences have been found to be a major driving force towards utility of internet especially among youth (Kimani, 2012).

Table 2: Reasons for initial use of social media

what initially prompted of social media	Frequency	%
Friends	205	60.8
Media	84	24.9
Parents	38	11.3
Relatives	10	3.0
Total	337	100

4. CONCLUSION

Gender of the users and age as factors do not have statistically significant influences usage of social media among TVET student in Kiambu. Most respondents utilize Facebook, whatsapp, Twitter platforms, IMO and others. A majority of the Facebook, whatsapp Twitter, IMO and other users are in the 18 to 27 years old age set. Of these, 80 per cent access social media platforms with the aim of socializing with their online friends and/or source for information. Access to internet among the respondents is usually through the use of internet enabled phones (over 65 per cent) and cyber cafes. Friends/peers and the media are the biggest influences that prompted a majority of the respondents to initially interact in social media platforms. To enhance traffic to its Facebook and Twitter sites, the TVET institution should find a way to take advantage of peer group influences as the study has established it as a powerful way of influencing new social media users to visit its platforms. From the research finding, the social Networking sites have been seen as a source of direct response to the need to offering adequate information, Communication, disseminate, discussing and mobilizing vast quality of information hence TVET institutions should utilize this platform in marketing their courses.

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