

Abstract:

This study set out to investigate the uses and gratifications of mobile Internet (M-net) among the youth in Kenya. In particular it sought to identify the M-net services and resources available, determine their frequency of use and assess the motives/gratifications sought by college students using M-net services and resources in public middle-level colleges in Nairobi. It also identified and examined the challenges faced by students when using M-net. The uses and gratifications theory was found suitable in this study because of its ability to look at what people do with media and why. The notion of an active audience is a central tenet of the uses and -gratifications and is applicable to new media particularly the M-net which is interactive. In selecting the sample population, various sampling techniques were used. Purposive sampling was used to select Nairobi as the study site. Simple random sampling was used to select four out of the 21 public middle level colleges that are found in Nairobi. Proportionate stratified sampling was adopted in getting the number of respondents from each college. Some 510 self-administered questionnaires were sent out and 450 were returned constituting a return rate of 88.2%. However, data analysis was done on only 400 questionnaires whose respondents duly completed, the rest were spoiled. The study findings showed that the most frequently used M-net services and resources are Online Social Networks and E-mail while Online Chat Room, Listservs and Wikis are the least frequently used among students in public middle-level colleges. It established that most college students used M-net mainly to develop and maintain online social interactions, and to communicate but rarely for academic purposes. Process gratifications including ease of use, convenience, privacy, parental contact, speed, time management, fashion, mobility, immediacy, availability of 24-hour communication and availability of wide range of information, and social gratifications including friendship, interaction and peer pressure were found to be the main gratifications sought by student when using M-net. The main challenges facing students when using M-net are difficulty in using small keypad and finding relevant information.