

## AVAILABILITY AND USE OF INTERNET SERVICES IN UMUAHIA NORTH LGA, ABIA, STATE.

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### ABSTRACT

*The study examines the availability and use of the Internet Services in Umuahia Metropolis, Abia State. Survey research design was adopted for the study. Structured questionnaire was used to obtain relevant data. Five hundred valid copies of questionnaires were administered to users of Internet services in Umuahia Metropolis. Out of this number, four hundred and thirteen valid copies of the questionnaires were returned. The data collected were analysed using simple percentages and hypotheses tested using Chi Square. The study found out that internet services were available in the study area. The findings also show that internet availability and use is low in Umuahia Metropolis Abia State. The findings show that most of the users were undergraduates. Web browsing, E-mail and chatting dominated the services sought by the users of internet facilities. The findings also revealed that the respondents used internet services for the provision of educational, research, news, business, communication, job search, movies and internet crimes. The problems inhibiting availability and effective use of internet services in Umuahia metropolis were identified. They include amongst others irregular power supply, inadequate internet centres, poor maintenance of internet facilities, lack of search skill, cost of use of internet and dearth of telecommunication infrastructure. The study recommends that there should be improvement in irregular power supply, inadequate internet centres, poor maintenance of internet facilities, lack of search skill, cost of use of internet and dearth of telecommunication infrastructure. The study recommends that internet services centre owners should have generating sets since there is epileptic power supply in Nigeria. There should also be adequate training in the use of internet services. Internet training should be part of the school curriculum, and workshop organized for training civil servants in the use of Internet services.*

**Keywords:** Availability, Accessibility, Internet, Use/Utilization.

### INTRODUCTION

Information access is crucial in the survival of every operation of modern man and organization or nations. Accesses to vital information for operation, planning and decision making has a direct bearing on success power, and competitive edge over others. The availability of good information is very essential in decision making. Information assists in reducing the degree of uncertainty. For about two decades now, information and communication technologies, have come to play such a dominant role in information provision, processing and handling. Prominent among these information technologies is the computer aided internet. The process of storage and dissemination of information has been revolutionized as a result of information and communication technology. The most popular form of information and communication technology is the internet which is often referred to as electronic super highway, which has reduced the world into a "global village." (Odunewu, 2004).

The internet has become an important and reliable tool for information provision and delivery. It is a worldwide collection of computer networks, made up of networks linked together by the international

telephone system. Corporations, governments and academic institutions run these networks. This high level connectivity fosters an unparalleled degree of communication collaboration, resources sharing and information access. (Oketunji, 2000).

The internet is global and it connects all kinds of networks worldwide. This has made it possible for people all over the world to effectively and inexpensively communicate with one another. With the introduction of V-sat, access to the internet in Nigeria has become cheaper (Agboola, 2003).

The internet has a variety of services used to create, browse, access, search, view and communicate information on a diverse set of topics ranging from results of scientific experiments, to discussions of recreational activities. Corroborating this assertion, Agboola (2003) wrote that there are so much to choose from in terms of the information available on the internet on any desired subject matter. The internet ensures that sources of knowledge are easily identified, located and accessed through global electronic networks (Adeogun, 2003).

The availability and access to internet services have broadened the impact of information on people. It has also placed vast information resources at

people's doorsteps. The services have been integrated and cross-referenced, thereby allowing a user to move seamlessly from the information on computer and from one access service to another (Corner, 2000).

It is generally expected that availability and access to the internet services will enhance use and increase in the productivity of users. This claim has been supported by the results of various studies carried out by various researchers (Ikem and Ajala, 2000; Mosuro, 2000, Nwalo, 2001, and Milne, 2002).

People from all walks of life and from all locations can use the internet. The availability and use of internet are not limited to places and users. According to Knight (2005) as at September, 2005, about 957 million people approximately, actively use and have access to the internet and world wide web respectively and this figure increase daily at exponential rate

For internet to be used, it must be available. Hence, Hornby (2006) defines availability as being accessed easily; not being scarce or out of stock; thing you can get, buy or find.

Availability means accessibility of a system resource in a timely manner. It connotes being present and ready to be used. It also means the ability of a component or service to perform its required function at a stated instance or over a stated period of time.

No matter how available and accessible the internet is, without being used by people, its relevance will not have the expected effect. Webster's New World Dictionary of American Language, College edition (1993) defines use as to put or bring into action or service; employ for or apply to a given purpose. Use as it relates to the computer, has to do with obtaining the use of the computer gadget through which the internet operate. Internet use simply means to instruct, communication with, store data in, retrieve data from, cause output from or otherwise make use of any resources of the internet.

Internet facilities are most common in urban areas than in rural areas. One of the urban areas where Internet facilities can be found is Umuahia Metropolis. Now that the people in Umuahia are gaining access to the internet, it is expected that they will be encouraged to exploit maximally the capabilities of the internet. It is in the light of this background that this study seeks to investigate the availability and use of internet services in Umuahia North LGA of Abia State.

## Background Information on Umuahia North LGA

Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State was created in August, 1991 by the then government of General Ibrahim Babangida. This local government is made up of two major clans namely: Ibeku and Ohuhu clan. Its headquarters is the Umuahia Metropolis (city). It has an area of 245km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 220,660 as at the 2006 National Census. There are nine autonomous communities in Umuahia North Local Government Area, namely;

AffarataIbeku, Afaraukwulbeku, EmedeOssah, IbekuEgwuassah, Isingwu, Okaiuga, Ndume, Amaoforo and Nkwoegwu.

Umuahia North Local Government Area is an urban local government. It is a railway town and one of the oldest towns in Abia State. It is located at the centre of Abia State and bounded in the Northern axis by Isiukwuato Local Government Area, on the East by Bende, on the west by IhitteUboma and Obowo Local Government Areas of Imo State and on the southern axis by Umuahia South Local government area. The local government is of historical and economic importance, having the advantage of being the state capital with a fair share of social amenities, educational institutions, banks and industries and a network of street roads and major roads linking it with other parts of the state. The National War Museum and the famous Ojukwu Bunker form part of the tourist attractions that the local government can boast of.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out using survey method. The instrument for data collection adopted for the study was questionnaire. The instrument was structured to access relevant information from the cybercafes in Umuahia metropolis. It was validated using expert opinion. The reliability of the instrument was tested, using test-retest method.

Five (500) copies of structured questionnaires were administered to the internet users in popular cybercafés in Umuahia Metropolis. The distribution of respondents cuts across civil servants, university staff and students. out of five hundred copies of questionnaires administered, four hundred and twenty-three copies were returned (423). From this number, ten(10) copies were invalid, leaving the valid copies at four hundred and thirteen (413) copies representing 82.6% response rate see the table below:

**TABLE 1: Percentage of distribution of the questionnaires**

Respondent	No of male	No of female	Total
Civil servant	81 (19.6%)	50 (12.1%)	131(31.7%)
University Staff	54(13.1%)	28(6.8%)	82(19.9%)
Students	103(24.9%)	97(23.5%)	
Total	238(54.6%)	175(42.4%)	413(100)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

In the table below 146(35.4%) of the respondents are between 16-25 years of age 104(25.2%) of the

respondents are in the age bracket of 26-35 years of age 98(23.7%) between 36-45, 38(9.2%) of the respondents are between 46-55, while 27(6.5%) of the respondents are between 56-65. The result shows that majority of the users of internet in Umuahia

metropolis fall between the age brackets of (16-45). This is so because many of the undergraduate who are in the majority of the users of internet in the metropolis fall within this range of age.

**TABLE 2: Age distribution of the respondents**

Age range	No of respondents frequency	% of respondents frequency
16-25	146	35.4%
26-35	104	25.2%
36-45	98	23.2%
46-55	38	9.2%
56-65	27	6.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Total 3 below shows the academic qualification of the respondents. Majority of the users of internet 200(48.4%) are undergraduates (WASC/GCE/NECO), 91(22.0%) hold OND/NCE, 76(18.4%) have HND/B.Sc degree, 23(5.6%) have Master's degree, 7(1.7%) possess PhD, 14(3.4%) did

not declare their qualifications while 2(0.5%) of the respondent holds first school leaving certificate (FSLC). This result corroborates the findings of the study by Poulshter, J. Bell, J., Qates, R. (2015) that the internet utilization is most prevalent among younger educated individual.

**TABLE 3: Educational qualification of the respondents**

Qualification	No of respondent	% of respondent
FSLC	2	0.50%
WAEC/GCE/NECO	200	48%
OND/NCE	91	22.0%
HND/BSC DEGREE	76	18.4%
MASTER DEGREE	23	5.6%
PhD	7	1.7%
OTHERS	14	3.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Table 4 below shows that the entire respondent 413(100%) were in agreement that internet services are available in Umuahia metropolis.

**Hypothesis 1:** there is no availability of Internet Services. From the Chi square analysis, it can be observed that the computed value of  $X^2$  of 413.00 was

greater than the critical value of  $X^2$  of 26.30 at 0.05 level of probability at 16 degree of freedom. In view of this result, the null hypothesis which claimed that there is noavailability of Internet Services was rejected. This means that there is no availability of Internet Servicesin Umuahia.

**TABLE 4: Availability of Internet Services**

Responses	No of respondent	% of respondent
Yes	413	100.0%
No	Nil	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Table 5 below shows the rate accessibility of information on the internet to the users in Umuahia metropolis. Majority of the respondents 230(55.69%) indicated they obtain information they need from internet while 100(24.21%) stated that they do not obtain the information they need from the internet 73(17.68%) do not obtain information regularly while 19(2.42%) of the respondents did not make any response. The result confirms that most of the respondents, satisfy their information need from the internet.

**Hypothesis 2:** there is no accessibility of information on the internet. From the Chi square analysis, it can be observed that the computed value of  $X^2$  of 248.78 was greater than the critical value of  $X^2$  of 26.30 at 0.05 level of probability at 16 degree of freedom. In view of this result, the null hypothesis which claimed that there is noaccessibility of information on the internetin Umuahia was rejected. This means that there is accessibility of information on the internetin Umuahia.

**Table 5: Accessibility of information on the internet**

Responses	No of respondent	% of respondent
Yes	230	55.69%
No	100	24.21%
Not regularly	73	17.68%
No responses	10	2.42%
<b>Total</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

In the table 6 below, majority of the respondents 200(48.43) indicate they use the internet when the need arises; 85(28.58%) of the respondent returned that they use the internet once a week 55(13.32%) use the internet twice a week, 50(12.11%) indicated that they use the internet on a daily basis 15(3.63%) use the internet monthly while 8(1.94%) of the respondents use the internet service twice in a month. The result show that majority of the respondents use the internet when the need arises, to do class assignments, prepare lecture notes, send reports, obtain business information and so on.

**Hypothesis 3:** there is no Frequent of use of internet by respondents. From the Chi square analysis, it can be observed that the computed value of  $X^2$  of 357.56 was greater than the critical value of  $X^2$  of 26.30 at 0.05 level of probability at 16 degree of freedom. In view of this result, the null hypothesis which claimed that there is no Frequent of use of internet by respondents in Umuahia was rejected. This means that there is Frequent of use of internet by respondents in Umuahia.

**Table 6: Frequency of use of internet by respondents**

Responses	No of respondent	% of respondent
Daily	50	12.11%
Once a week	85	28.58%
Twice a week	55	13.32%
Monthly	15	3.63%
Twice a month	8	1.94%
When the need arises	200	48.43%
Irregular Internal	<b>413</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

In table 7 below majority of the respondents indicated that they use internet for educational and research information 300(72.64%) the result also shows that 200(48.43%) use the internet for news /sport news, 100(24.21%) use internet services for communication, information, 70(16.95%) use it for job search, 52(12.59%) use it to look for friends,

30(7.26%) use the services for trade and commerce, 20(4.84%) use it for health information while 10(2.42%) use internet services to watch films. The result above, therefore show that people use the internet mainly for educational/research information and news/sports news.

**Table 7: Reasons for use of internet services**

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Education/research information	300	72.64%
Word news/ sport news	200	48.43%
Class assignment	254	61.50%
Food security/ agro information	88	21.31%
Communication/ chatting	100	24.21%
Health information	20	4.84%
Job search	70	16.95%
To watch films	10	2.42%
Trade and commerce	30	7.26%
To look for friends	52	12.59%

Table 8 below show the type of internet services sought by users of internet in Umuahia metropolis. Majority of the respondents 394(95.4%) indicated that they use the internet facilities for web browsing, 261(63.2%) replied that they use internet facilities

for electronic mail (e-mail), 222(53.8%) indicated that they use the facilities for chatting, 82(19.9%) go for mail list, 36(8.7%) make use of net use-net while 23(5.6%) use the internet services for file transfer.

**Table 8: Type of internet services sought by the internet users in Umuahia metropolis.**

Option	Frequency	% of respondent
Web browsing	394	95.4%
e-mail	261	63.2%
mail list	82	19.9%
use net	36	8.7%
chatting	222	53.8% Or 53.8%
file transfer	23	5.6%

In Table 9 below majority of the respondents 300(72.64%) were of the opinion that poor power supply or irregular power supply constitutes a major problem confronting the use of internet services in Umuahia Metropolis as the cost of running and maintenance of electricity generating sets is on the high side. Power supply from the National grid from Enugu Electricity Distribution Company is not reliable and not regular too. 200(48.4%) of the respondents complained of the enormous fees charged by the cyber cafe operators. 180(43.58%) of the respondents said that accommodation in the internet centre/ cyber cafe is inadequate, they also complained of poor quality service by Internet service providers' (ISP) to cyber cafe operators 100(24.21%) of the respondents returned that the issue of manpower /skill is another – big conversion that militates effective internet services to users in Umuahia Metropolis. 100(24.21%) of the

respondents stated that the information from the internet do not suit local needs. 70(16.95%) of the respondents complained of environmental pollution by radio-active emission from computers, 80(19.37%) reported of the poor maintenance culture among the cyber cafe operators, 50(12.11%) opined that there is the problem of locating website/network problems, while 30(7.26%) of the respondents complained of poor quality service provided by the operators and inadequate infrastructural facilities respectively. These findings are in agreement with that of Ndanwa, Angela and Anachobi, E.S. (2014) on their study of Assessing students' use of internet services in private secondary school. Libraries in Nigeria who submitted that manpower problem, irregular power supply, high cost of computer/ internet access, inadequate facilities etc militates against internet services.

**Table 9: Factors that militate against the use internet facilities in Umuahia metropolis.**

Option	Frequency	% of respondent
Electricity (power supply)	300	72.94%
High charges	200	48.4%
Manpower problem/skill	100	24.1%
Poor quality services by ISP/cyber cafes	180	43.58%
Information does not suit local needs	100	24.21%
Accommodation	180	43.58%
Problems of locating website /network	50	12.11%
Poor maintenance of the computer	80	19.37%
Radio-active emission on	70	16.95%
The environment by the computers	70	16.95%
For infrastructural facilities	30	7.26%

Table 10 below show suggestions solution to the problems associated with the use of internet in Umuahia Metropolis in Abia State. Analysis of data show that 413(100.00%) of the respondents favoured improved power supply; 400(98.85%) opted for reduction of price by cyber cafe operators; 350(84.75%) were in favour of teaching and promoting use of internet by government and private institutions and providing good infrastructural facilities 300(72.64%) of the respondents were of the

opinion that information from the internet should be adapted to suite the local needs and requested for more internet centres, 250(60.53%) requested for generation of indigenous research in Agriculture, health and other areas, 150(36.32%) submitted that internet service provides should provide effective service, 100(24.21%) want the cyber cafe staff to be effective, while 200(48.43%) requested for good accommodation for user.

**Table 10: Solution to the identified problems associated within the internet**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Adapting internet to suit the needs of user	300	72.64%
Generating indigenous research in agriculture, health & other areas		
Regular power supply	250	60.53%
Staff should be effective	413	100.00%
Providing good accommodation to users	100	24.21%
Teaching and promoting use of internet in both government and private institute	350	84.75%
Price reduction by cyber cafe operation	200	48.43%
Internet service providers should provide effective service	400	98.85%
Providing good infrastructural facilities	150	36.32%
Provision for more internet centres	350	84.75%
	300	72.64%

However, the research findings show that internet services are available in Umuahia Metropolis. This is confirmed in Table 4 where all the respondents, 413(100%) responded in affirmative that internet services are available in Umuahia Metropolis. In this age of technology, Umuahia, a capital city with its literate inhabitants, should have internet services centres to cater for the information needs of the people.

The findings also show that users between 16-35 years of age form majority of the users of internet services in Umuahia Metropolis. This is confirmed in table 2 where this age bracket constitutes more than 60% of the respondents. The study also revealed that majority of this age bracket are undergraduates, suffice to say that the undergraduates use internet services extensively.

The study also sought to ascertain the accessibility to the available internet services by users. The findings show that majority of the respondents have access to the available internet services. This means that accessibility is dependent on availability you do not have access to what is not available. The study also sought to find how regular they respondents use the internet services. The findings show that majority of the respondents have access to the available internet services in Umuahia Metropolis.

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The study also sought to find how regular they respondents use the internet services. The findings show that majority of the respondents use the internet when the need arises and not on daily bases. See table 6.

On the kinds of internet services sought by the users, the findings show that the kinds of internet services the users seek include web browsing which had the highest response rate of 394(95.4%). Other kinds of internet services sought by the users are e-mail, chatting and mail list, user net and file transfer. This corroborates the studies by Odunwu, (2004), and Madu and Adeniran (2005) which listed web browsing, usenet, mail list, e-mail as kinds of internet services sought by the users. See table 8.

In a follow up objective, to find out the purposes for the use of the internet services, the study found that there were varying reasons for the use of the internet. They include education, news, browsing, business, communication, research job search, watching film and internet crime. However, education/research information, class assignments and world news/sports news had high responses rates as shown in Table 7. This is in conformity with the work of Amaeshi, Anyanwu and Oparaku (2006) that listed education, communication, research, watching films, job vacancies news etc as reasons for the use of internet services.

The study further revealed that information content of the internet on developed countries is more than those on Nigeria as a developing country. This is in consonance with Adeogun, (2003) who reported that developed countries enjoy monopoly of information content in the internet.

The research findings identified problems militating against internet services availability and utilization in UmuahiaMetropolis to include irregular power supply cost of maintenance and use, manpower problem, poor quality services by ISP/cyber cafes. Inadequate accommodation facilities, search skill. This corroborates the work of Unagha (2004) and Amaeshi, Anyanwu and Oparaku (2006) which identified lack of search skill, dearth of telecommunication infrastructure, high cost of maintenance and use, irregular power supply as hindrances to effective internet services provision in Nigeria.

The findings of the study also revealed suggestions by the users for solving the identified problems as regular power supply, Adequate training on the use of internet affordable cost of use of internet, provision of good infrastructural facilities, and provision of more internet centres in Umuahia Metropolis.

## CONCLUSION

The result of the study showed that internet services are available in Umuahia Metropolis and that the internet services are readily available in commercial centres than in homes and offices. The study equally

revealed that the available internet services are accessible to the users and the kind of internet services sought by the users include web browsing, e-mail, mail-list, usenet, chatting and file transfer. Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it was recommended that there should be regular power supply so that the available internet services shall be maximally utilized.

Furthermore, there is need for adequate training in use of internet services by both government and private in situations. The introduction of the use of computer in our primary and secondary schools is a welcome development conferences, seminars and workshop on the effective use of internet services for civil servants is also highly recommended.

Finally, it was also recommended that local information required by users should be placed in website. Africa and indeed Nigeria should increase their websites on the internet to cater for the needed local information needs of the citizenry.

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