

COMMUNICATING IN THE ABSENCE OF MOBILE TELEPHONE NETWORK DURING THE STATE OF EMERGENCY IN BORNO STATE, NIGERIA

КОММУНИКАЦИЯ В ПЕРИОД ОТСУТСТВИЯ ТЕЛЕФОННОЙ СВЯЗИ В ПЕРИОД ЧРЕЗВЫЧАЙНОГО ПОЛОЖЕНИЯ В ШТАТЕ БОРНО, НИГЕРИЯ

Joseph Wilson,
*Department of Mass Communication,
University of Maiduguri,
Maiduguri, Nigeria
wilson@unimaid.edu.ng*

Джозеф Вилсон,
*Департамент массовой коммуникации,
Университет Майдугури,
Майдугури, Нигерия
wilson@unimaid.edu.ng*

Nuhu Gapsiso,
*Department of Mass Communication,
University of Maiduguri,
Maiduguri, Nigeria
ndgapsiso@yahoo.com*

Нуху Гансисо,
*Департамент массовой коммуникации,
Университет Майдугури,
Майдугури, Нигерия
ndgapsiso@yahoo.com*

*The role of mobile telephony in Nigeria can never be
overemphasised. Little wonder, the astronomical growth in*

mobile subscribers/users in Nigeria ranks among the top ten mobile phone subscribers/users nations in the world. The growing reliance on mobile telephony by Nigerians for various purposes makes it seemingly an indispensable tool for the smooth running of daily endeavours. The technology has overwhelmed other conventional means of communication that existed and supported communication among Nigerians for ages. For example, the introduction of Global Service for Mobile Networks at the dawn of the new millennium in Nigeria relegated and almost pushed to extinction the likes of Telegram, surface mail or letter writing, land line telephony, radio message, walkie talkie etc. Unfortunately, in 2013, the mobile telephone network was shut down in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states as a counter insurgency measure, when the then government of President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in the three States. The use of Thuraya services at a point was also banned by the military in the affected states. While the mobile network was restored in Adamawa and Yobe in July, 2013, Borno state was without mobile telephone network for over 6 months (17th May, 2013 to 3rd December, 2013). What was the nature of daily communication endeavours without the usual mobile telephony among the residence of the affected states? This study examines how residence of Maiduguri were communicating during the period.

Key words: state of emergency, mobile phone network, Borno State, counter insurgency, communicating.

Невозможно переоценить роль мобильной телефонии для общества Нигерии: об этом свидетельствует астрономический рост числа пользователей мобильных телефонов, выводящий Нигерию в топ-10 стран по данному показателю. По целому ряду причин мобильные телефоны становят-

ся незаменимым инструментом для повседневной коммуникации. Технологии подорвали традиционные средства связи, существовавшие в Нигерии на протяжении веков. Введение в Нигерии GSM в начале XXI века привело к практически полному исчезновению таких средств коммуникации, как телеграмм, почта, наземная телефония, радио, рации и т.д. К сожалению, в 2013 г. по указу правительства президента Гудлака мобильная сеть была отключена в штатах Борно, Йобе и Адамава, чтобы обеспечить меры контрпартизанской борьбы во время чрезвычайного положения. Использование услуг компании Thiraya также блокировалось военными. Мобильная коммуникация была восстановлена в штатах Адамава и Йобе в июле 2013 г., однако в Борно ситуация сохранялась на протяжении 6 месяцев (с 17 мая 2013 г. по 3 декабря 2013 г.). Какова была природа ежедневного общения без привычной мобильной связи? В настоящем исследовании приводится анализ того, как осуществлялась коммуникация жителей Майдугури в указанный период.

Ключевые слова: чрезвычайное положение, мобильная сеть, штат Борно, контрпартизанская борьба, коммуникация.

Introduction

Communication is an integral part of human existence. Society thrives on communication to facilitate the actualization of its developmental goals. The inevitability of communication has resulted in a series of communication-related inventions (printing press, telegraph, telephone, satellite, internet, etc), spanning centuries to facilitate and ensure that communication is effective and efficient.

The mobile phone is an invention that has been used and adopted globally. The last two decades have witnessed unprecedented penetration of this popular handheld device. Current Statics (2016) show that the total number of mobile phone users worldwide is 4,66 billion. It is estimated that by 2019 mobile phone users will rise to 5,07 billion (Statista, 2016). According to Bauer (Bauer, 2016) all regions of the world are gaining access to mobile phones, which contributes to the enormous gain in ownership. More than 60% of sub-Saharan Africans have access to mobile phones and over 80% of the population in developing countries have mobile phones. The Ericsson Mobility Report (2015) indicates that Nigeria is one of the nations that, it is predicted, will reach 100% mobile phone penetration. Mobile phone active subscribers in Nigeria stood at 148,74 million at the end of the first quarter of 2016 (NCC, 2016), indicating enormous growth.

Bauer, further noted, that convergence around the mobile phone has elevated the technology above other preceding communication methods as the technology of choice for people who seek greater interconnectedness and a technology that incorporates (rather than replaces) other media in content provision. This astronomical growth in mobile phone penetration is often attributed to affordability of the device, ease of use, capability of providing diversity of interactive activities (text messaging, voice calls, internet browsing), do not require much literate numeracy for basic use, they can be shared, prepaid, billed in price per seconds, depending on the need or the needs and abilities of the user (Bauer, 2016) .

Mobile phones are becoming essential to the management of people's private and emotional lives. People see their phone as a reflection themselves and their status, they use it to communicate how they are feeling and to enhance their everyday experiences. The

attachment has grown, too, as individuals use the mobile phone to deepen relationship and manage friendship and maintain their own mental well-being (BBC, 2003). Similarly, life is now fast and hectic, and the mobile phone has become indispensable to keep up with the fast pace of life and new demands of daily live (Hazan, n.d). How would life look without the mobile phone? What might the nature of communication were mobile phone services suddenly and unexpectedly cut off?

In 2013, the mobile telephone network in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states was severed as a counter insurgency measure when the then government of President Goodluck Johnathan declared a state of emergency in the three states. The use of Thuraya services at a point was also banned by the military in the affected states. While the mobile network was restored in Adamawa and Yobe in July, 2013, Borno state was without a mobile telephone network for over six months (17th May, 2013 to 3rd December, 2013).

This study examines how residents of Maiduguri, communicated in the absence of mobile phone service during this period of over six months. What was the nature of daily communication absent mobile telephony among the residence of Maiduguri? The study has the following objectives:

- to ascertain forms of external or long distance communication during the shutdown;
- to ascertain the means of internal or short distance communication (within Maiduguri) during the shutdown;
- to study the communication challenges faced as a result of the shutdown of mobile phone network;
- to establish how communication evolved during the shutdown of mobile phone network.

Mobile phone in Nigeria

The introduction of the Global System for Mobile Telecommunication, popularly known as GSM in Nigeria in August, 2000, was a defining moment in the history of the country. Prior to the introduction of this important communication technology, Nigeria's telecommunication industry had been monopolised by government-owned Nigeria Telecommunication Limited (NITEL) and characterized by obsolete telecommunication infrastructure, non-availability of telephone lines/epileptic service delivery and inefficiency. For instance, the total available telephone lines in the country before GSM was below 500,000. This was grossly inadequate for the country's huge population (Udutchay, 2008; Wilson and Gapsiso, 2014: 59–70).

More than a decade and half after the introduction of mobile phone services in Nigeria, telecommunication infrastructure across the country had developed speedily, spurred by several competing operators, such as MTN, Airtel, Etisalat, Globacom, Multilinks Telkom, Visafone etc. This growth in, and competition for, the delivery of telecommunication services has been driven by an overwhelming demand for mobile phone services by Nigerians. The regulatory agency –The National Communication Commission – has continued to introduce necessary measures to enhance the quality of service delivery and steady growth of the industry. Some of these measures include the introduction of unified licensing, which made it possible for fixed wireless operators to offer GSM service. Equally significant is the granting of 3G licenses to some operators. The 3G as is popularly called is the most advanced technology on GSM, which enable the operators to offer both data and voice services, ensure the increase of range/quality of services available to subscribers, effect lowering of cost of acquiring and using of services, and so forth (Udutchay, 2008; NCC, 2016).

It is estimated that Nigeria has over 187 million inhabitants (Worldometers, 2016). In the earlier years, when only fixed telephone lines were available in Nigeria, the service was restricted to urban areas. Rural telephony was not available. However, with the introduction of mobile phones, rural areas became included in service areas (Wilson and Gapsiso, 2014). Currently, mobile networks in Nigeria have the fastest growth on the continent. The penetration of telephones in Nigeria increased from 0.5% in 1999 to 8% in 2004. There were 16 million telephone subscribers in Nigeria and 18,587,000 mobile phone lines in 2005. In the same year, there were 1,223,000 fixed lines in the country. Mobile phone penetration is rated at 103% (National Bureau of statistics, 2006; Ndukwe, 2005). Odukoya and Nkadi (2008) found that in 2006, there were 31.1 million mobile phone subscribers in Nigeria and at least 15 million subscribers were connected in 2007. In 2011, it is estimated that Nigeria had about 86.2 million mobile phone subscribers (Kombol, 2009). In 2012, Nigeria had the most mobile phone subscribers in Africa with more than 93 million subscribers (BBC News, 2012). Currently, Nigeria is one of the nations expected to reach 100% mobile phone penetration. Nigeria mobile phone active subscribers stood at 148.74 million at the end of the first quarter of 2016 (NCC, 2016; Ericsson Mobility Report, 2015).

Mobile phone communication

Mobile phone has become a common feature of the modern social landscapes. It is an essential companion in the daily lives of the people. Over the past years, the importance of mobile phone communication has attracted a number of studies (Wilson and

Gapsiso, 2014; Plant, 2009; Kreutzer, 2008; Okaba and Ito, 2003; Elangovan and Aruchelvan, 2013: 229–233, Lisa, 2015) notes that a mobile phone has become a necessity globally, providing the ability to keep in touch with family and business associates, affording access to email, storing data, taking pictures, and even serving as walkie talkies. Moreover, it has become a status symbol (brand name, range, phone plan) in addition to proving convenient and offering a sense of security to owners. Similarly, Plant (Plant, 2009) notes that there a range of interesting applications of mobile phone in various fields, and that in an age of intelligent machines linked in perpetual communication, new networks of knowledge, information and empowerment across the globe are being perpetually created. Heeks (Heeks, 1999) notes that mobile phones have become an essential infrastructure, connecting people together throughout the world, analysing data, transferring information and managing knowledge in order to expand human capacities.

In more developed countries such as Germany, Britain, France, USA and South Korea, the mobile phone plays a decisive role in both private and professional lives. Mobile phones rank alongside face-to-face communication and e-mail as the most important means of communication. Interestingly in South Korea, where the mobile phone is already by far the most important means of communication, some believe that communicating via mobile phone is actually more important than face-to-face communication (Life Studies, 2009).

Mobile phones, according to Kingston (2016) are the perfect way for people to stay connected with others and provide the user with a sense of security. In emergency circumstances, mobile phones help to reach victims quickly and save lives. Internet access, GPS technology, and camera and video function all contribute to altering the course of events and recording/reporting them.

Wajcman et al. (Wajcman et al 2007) in a similar study looks at the impact of the mobile phone on work/life balance in Australia, indicating that the vast majority of phones are used for conversation (97%) and SMS texts (87%). Half of the respondents report using the voicemail facility to recover messages. Other uses point towards the convergence of media and telephony functions: around a third use the mobile to capture or send visual images; a further quarter to play games; a similar proportion use their phone to enter competitions or to vote on SMS polls; about the same number for accessing the internet; and just under a quarter use their phone as an MP3 player or a radio. Calls on the mobile phone are predominantly for social or leisure purposes or for managing home and family. Others are for interpersonal contacts, calls related to work or study.

In the economic domain, according to Jensen (Jensen, 2007), access to mobile phones helps small entrepreneurs overcome information asymmetries in the market place that have traditionally led to their exploitation through middle men. The Kerala fishermen in India who find out about the best prices for their catch before landing in a particular port serves as an excellent example. Similarly, Tenhunen (Tenhunen, 2008) notes that mobile phones increase the efficiency of the market, facilitate alternative, political patterns, and invigorate traditional networks of kinship and village sociality.

The proliferation of mobile phone networks in just a few years has transformed communications in sub-Saharan Africa. It has allowed Africans to leapfrog from the landline stage to the digital age. For example, in 2002, roughly one-in-ten owned a mobile phone in Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Ghana. Since then, mobile phone ownership has grown exponentially. Mobile phones are now as common in Egypt, South Africa and Nigeria as they are in the United States (commonly used for calls, texts, photos, video, social networking). In some African nations, such as Kenya, Uganda and

Tanzania, mobile banking is also relatively common. Other activities – accessing political news and social networks, getting health and consumer information and looking for a job – are somewhat less frequent (Pew Research Centre, 2015).

During the early years of mobile phone usage in Africa, the short messaging service (SMS) was at the heart of the revolution. Currently, the frontier for mobile use in Africa is the internet. The mobile phone has now become a personal computer for many Africans; internet access via mobile phone has surpassed the number of desktop internet users in Nigeria, as in much of Africa (Imhoitsike, as cited in Ogunlesi, Busari, 2012; Ogunlesi, Busari, 2012). According to Ogunlesi and Busari (Ogunlesi, Busari, 2012), what was not too long ago regarded as an object of luxury and privilege all over Africa has become a basic necessity, an essential part of everyday life. Estimates suggest a billion mobile phones in use on the continent in 2016.

In sub-Saharan Africa governments endorse mobile phone usage as a means to grow or promote the idea of a cashless society. Ogunlesi and Busari discuss the use of mobile phones for banking purposes, importantly including mobile money transfer services. The successful M-PESA mobile money initiative by Safaricom in Kenya inspired similar initiatives across the continent, from South Africa to Nigeria, from Tunisia and Sudan to Gabon. It is now a widespread practice among Africans to use mobile means to pay bills, buy airtime, purchase goods, make payments, and transfer money to relatives via mobile banking platforms (Ogunlesi, Busari, 2012).

Mobile phones also impact the fields of education, agriculture and health care. Mobile learning initiatives are on the rise. Nokia spearheaded the MoMath initiative in South Africa (a mathematics teaching tool that targets users of the instant messaging platform).

In Nigeria, Edu-Mobile by Cscharis Technologies created a mobile learning programme that imitates a typical school environment for teachers and students. Others available in Nigeria include Efiko, My School, and PassNowNow. Ogunlesi and Busari regard mobile phones as a an a affordable, popular means for transforming Africa's struggling educational system. In agriculture, mobile phone-based initiatives have been designed to help farmers improve productivity. In Nigeria 10 million mobile phone are used by farmers. Such initiatives as the e-wallet supported by the Federal Government and the MTN livestock Trackingsolution (LTS) by MTN Nigeria, were designed to convey information, provide access to farm implements, share weather information, convey market prices for crops and create micro-insurance schemes. All of this helps farmers to make better decisions, translating into higher-earning potentials. In the realm of health care, both urban and rural communities benefit. "mHealth" is changing the landscape of disease prevention and control. For example, in Nigeria m4change programmes equip health extension workers with ComCare, a mobile phone decision support application designed to improve the quality of antenatal care services. Mobile phones are playing an increasingly vital role in mediating the provision of improved healthcare to Africans (Pathfinder, n.d; AHO, 2015; Ogunlesi, Busari, 2012).

The mobile phone has given voice to the common African through the ability to reach political leaders and representatives through texts, messages, and social media posts. Groups can be mobilized quickly, be it for a wedding or naming ceremony, or to mobilize citizens to enforce change. The mobile phone proved to be very important during conflicts in Northeast Nigeria, which has been bedevilled by insurgency since 2009. Mobiles have been useful in refugee and internally displaced people's camps, allowing displaced persons to locate family members and access services.

The place of mobile phone in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised. Like other African countries, the pervasiveness of the device has rendered it indispensable, even for rural dwellers in the North East region. Jacob and Akpan (Jacob, Akpan, 2015) note that although the standard of living in Northeast Nigeria is below the national average (and listed by the nation's National Bureau of the Statistics in 2015 among the poorest), mobile telephony has a comparably high penetration. Radio remains the most popular medium, but the mobile phone has achieved quite high penetration in a relatively short time. Within this short period, it has become entwined with everyday social life by way of calls, text messaging, social networking, mobile banking, mobile shopping, etc. Common relational activities – pleasantries and inquiries about the welfare of friends, neighbours and family – have largely transferred to mobile phone conversations. As a function of a strong oral culture, this extends to families, which maintain unusually strong ties even across extended families. Interestingly, among low-income groups calls to family members make up a substantial part of daily mobile phone talk time.

The insurgency in Northeast Nigeria has strongly affected the use of mobile phone. Because of frequent and unexpected attacks on roads at the peak of the Boko Haram attacks, especially on the Yobe Maiduguri axis, businessmen and women contacted suppliers to supply goods rather than travelling to pick-up points. Phones were widely used at the peak of insurgent activity in 2012, 2013 and 2014 to minimise the risk of being caught in an attack, ambushing or bomb blast.

Maiduguri, like any capital city of the Northeastern states, is estimated to be home to about two million people. An urban centre, every adult who can afford to do so owns a phone or pays to use one. As a capital city of a state bordering Cameroon, Niger Republic and Chad, cross-border business requires substantial

mobile telephony. Maiduguri, too, hosts international and federal Nigerian governmental agencies – the World Health Organization, UNICEF, Lake Chad Research Institute etc. The University of Maiduguri attracts staff and students from all over Nigeria and Cameroon, Niger and Chad. All these bodies are major boost to mobile telephony. Maiduguri provides service through all of the major mobile companies in Nigeria (MTN, Globalcom, Etisalat and Airtel).

At a point when the mobile phone had become a necessity, service was shot down for over six months in Maiduguri.

Theoretical framework

The paper is built around the technological determinism theory. Marshall McLuhan in 1962 stipulates that media technology or channels of communication shape how individuals in the society think feel, act and how society operates as it moves from one technological age to another. McLuhan promotes the position that channels of communication or technologies bring change in family life, the workplace, schools, friendship, religion, recreation and sees every new form of media. The theory presents media technology as a key mover of social change (Wood, 1997; Griffin, 1997). These technologies extend society's reach, increase efficiency and filter or organize and interpret social existence.

Method

This study uses a methodological approach that shows how people in Maiduguri managed the long period of mobile phone

shutdown. 100 questionnaires were administered to residents of Maiduguri who owned and used mobile phones at the time of the network shutdown, from 17 May to 3 December 2013. The study also observed and took note of communication-related situations during the period.

Findings

This section discusses key findings of the study. First, it explores the general means of communication during the shutdown of mobile phone network. Second, we discuss the means of both local and long distance communication (beyond Maiduguri or Borno state) during the period. Finally, we analyze the communication challenges encountered during the period and discuss our findings concerning communication preferences during the period.

Means of communication during the shutdown of mobile phone networks

The study found that generally, Maiduguri residents during the shutdown of the mobile phone network relied on the means of communication as shown in *Table 1*.

*Table 1***Means of communication**

Means of Communication	Frequency of Occurrence	%
Face-to-face	21	12
Letter Writing/short notes	14	8
Social Media (Facebook, WhatsApp and Emails)	90	52
Internet Calls	8	4.6
Sending people on errands	38	21.8
Internet Bulk SMS Service	2	1.1
Radio Message	1	0.5
TOTAL	174	100

Table 1 indicates that social media occurred most often among alternative means of communication, with 52% – partly because it was platform that people relied on for communication during the height of the insurgency because it posts even conventional news. Interestingly, this is followed by sending people on errands at 21,8%. Face-to-face communication came in at 12%. What ordinarily would have been a voice call conversation via mobile phone was now done by visiting such person. Writing short notes increased to 8%, internet calls to 4,6%, internet bulk SMS to 1,1%. Other means of communication during the period included radio message at 0,5%, indicating that the technology is almost inaccessible to residents, since it has been overshadowed by modern technology (it is still used by some organization, such as the security agencies). Security personanel were observed with “walkie talkies” – an accessory of radio message technology.

Means of long distance communication (outside Maiduguri) during the absence of mobile phone network

The study findings in respect of communication that went beyond Maiduguri and Borno State that residents relied on the following means of communication shown in *Table 2*.

Table 2

Means of long distance communication

Means of Communication	Number of Respondents	%
Face-to-face (Visits)	1	1
Letter Writing	6	7
Social Media (Facebook, WhatsApp and Emails)	50	55
Internet Calls	6	7
Sending Errand	24	27
Internet Bulk SMS Service	2	2
Others (Radio Message)	1	1
TOTAL	90	100

Residents during the period had to adopt ways to meet their long distance communication needs. Residents needed to communicate with people outside Maiduguri or Borno state. The study found out that most of the respondents (55%) relied on social media, such as Facebook chat and messages, WhatsApp and emails to meet their long distance communication. It was observed that the Cyber cafes were the access points as several visits to the centres indicates that people were using their mobile phones instead of the usual PCs for chatting on Facebook or WhatsApp. Sending travellers on errand, with 27% was next to social media. Letter writing and internet calls

recorded 7% each. Face to face and Radio Message recorded the least respondents, as face to face required that the respondents travel out of Maiduguri or Borno State to communicate. Not many people relied on that because of the inconveniences and risk involved. The radio message as indicated earlier is not an old technology that is not easily accessible.

Means of short distance communication (within Maiduguri) during the absence of mobile phone network

To communicate within the neighbourhoods and Maiduguri township, residents relied on other means of communication shown in *Table 3*.

Table 3

Means of short distance communication

Means of Communication	Number of Respondent	%
Face-to-face (Visits)	20	22.2
Letter Writing/Short notes	8	9
Social Media (Facebook, WhatsApp and Emails)	40	44.4
Internet Calls	2	2.2
Sending people on errands	20	22.2
Others	0	0
TOTAL	90	100

Most of the respondents relied on Social media, with 44,4% for communication within Maiduguri. This is quite unusual, considering that other alternatives such as face-to-face and sending people on errand, which have 20% each, could have topped the respondent's

means of communication within the city. However, it was observed that people deliberately reduced movement across the city for fear of falling into the insurgent's spontaneous attack or bomb blast. Thus, people leave messages via the social media and sometimes chat with those they met online at a particular time. People who write letters and short notes are 9%. Internet calls recorded the least percentage of two, an indication that there were simpler alternatives, than going through the rigours of waiting to connect because of slow internet network.

The communication challenges faced as a result of the absence of mobile phone network

The study found that there were communication challenges during the period, as shown in *Table 4*.

Table 4

Communication challenges

Challenges	Frequency of Occurrence	%
Uncertainty in delivery of letter or notes and slow or no feedback	14	6
Large number of users in internet cafe's and long waiting period to get connected	94	38
Cost of access to café services	82	32
The risk and stress of travelling to make calls in neighbouring states	10	4
Inconveniences and financial implication of sending errands	30	12
Wasted time in visits for face-to-face communication	20	8
TOTAL	250	100

The table shows that most respondents faced the challenge of large number of users in the cafe (38%), which is an indication that there was high turnout respondents who access internet in order to use the various online communication platforms. All that interested people was access to this platform despite the cost of access and challenges of using internet facilities (32%). The least of the challenges was the risk and stress of travelling to make calls, which has 4%. It was observed during the network shutdown, that some went as far as Azare town in Bauchi state to make phone calls. Upon the restoration of mobile phone network in Yobe state, residents of Maiduguri travelled, daily to Damaturu, Yobe state capital city to make phone calls. However, this drastically reduced with insurgent's attacks on the Maiduguri-Damaturu highway became frequent and residents who were returning from making calls were often affected. A case in point was the Benisheik attack that saw the slaughtering of a large number of victims, many of whom went to make calls in Damaturu and were caught up in the attack. The incidences of attacks on the highways increased in relation to increased reliance on the internet platforms as a major means of communication. Those who were not conversant with the internet platform requested family members or friends to help them deliver their messages via the social media platforms.

Nature of the means communication during the shutdown of mobile phone network

The study sought to ascertain the nature of the means of communication, whether there were new means of communication, or whether people fell back on the old conventional means personal encounters, and whether the new media mattered during the period.

Table 5

Nature of the means of communication

Means of Communication	Number of Respondents	%
New means of communication	0	0
Falling back on old means of communication such as sending people on errands and face-to-face, letter writing/short notes	72	44
Relying on social media that were initially not seriously used (WhatsApp, Internet calls)	92	56
TOTAL	164	100

Table 5 shows that the nature or the means of communication tilted more towards the new media, which has 56%, an indication that the new media is an important means of communication even in times of emergency or absence of the network of a technology that becomes a necessity in everyday life of Maiduguri residents. Falling back on the old forms of communication such as sending people on errands, face to face and letter writing/short notes, which has 44% shows that even though these means of communication have been overtaken by new media, they are still important when we consider the numerous challenges that affects the effective use of the new media.

The study found that people relied on their mobile phones, in spite the absence of mobile networks to communicate via the social media platforms. It was observed that the internet cafes were busy and always-filled internets users from morning till the close of the day by 6:30 PM. The University of Maiduguri Cafe was open 24 hour for users. It was observed that WhatsApp platform became popular among residents. It was observed that because of how important the mobile phone had become in the lives of residents,

there were people who travelled to neighbouring states of Bauchi and Yobe to make phone calls. It was observed during an incident at the Maiduguri International Airport within the period of the mobile network shutdown. There was no communication on the status of delayed flight. The Station Manager has to rely on radio message facilities at a radio room to communicate with the head office.

Discussion of findings

The new media is an important means of communication. This study shows that the social media topped the respondents list of means of long and short distance communication, which also a pointer that technology has a great influence in the affairs of the residents of Maiduguri, especially in their communication activities. Interestingly, in the absence of mobile networks, the mobile phone was still useful in communicating via the social media platforms such as “Facebook”, “WhatsApp” and email. This finding concurs with Lisa (Lisa, 2015) to have advanced that mobile phone has become a necessity globally, providing the ability to keep in touch with family, business associates, and access to email. It is also in line with Marshal McLuhan’s position that media technology organize and interpret our social existence. Cost has always been a challenge to full utilization of new media technology; however, his study shows that in spite the cost of access and use of the internet facilities, people were still interested in using the internet facilities. The major challenge was the long waiting period to us the use the internet facilities.

The study has also shown that there are means of communication that might not be too efficient in certain situations. For example, writing letters and short notes appeared to be on the low side because of the uncertainty of delivery and the delay or lack of response. The emergence

of online platforms such as email and SMS has influenced or changed society's disposition to the surface mail and short notes. Technology has caused a shift from conventional letter writing to e-communications.

The study also showed the importance of face-to-face communication in especially short distance communication. Although less convenient, paying visits to communicate face-to-face is a useful means of short distance communication.

The mobile shutdown showed through this study that new media plays an important role in the communication activities of Maiduguri residence.

Conclusion

The speedy penetration of mobile telephony in Nigeria has resulted in an increased dependence on the device. The instant shutdown of the mobile network was equivalent to cutting off a major means of fulfilling a daily necessity of reaching out to other people. The shutdown has shown that technology determines social change and that the old means of communication, irrespective of conditions, has been overtaken by new media and users will go to any length to ensure access to modern technology even when previously common options are available. In the absence of one new technology, another new technology is widely preferred over a throwback to less technical means of communication.

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