Patterns of Internet use by the Teenagers: An Inquiry of School students of Nagarjun Municipality

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Abstract

The internet has changed the whole perspective of information dissemination and communication systems, making the world a global village through the World Wide Web. However, studies regarding the patterns of teenagers' use of the internet in Nepal in the light of their attitudes and purposes for using the internet are scarce. This study aims to identify the patterns of teenage students towards the use of the internet. This study adopted a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach, based on a sample of 91 students from government and private schools in Nagarjun Municipality, Kathmandu, Nepal. Data were collected from the selected students through questionnaires, analyzed, and presented with the help of tables and graphs. Respondents were selected using convenience sampling technique. Primary data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire. The study found that 49% of respondents spent 20-60 minutes daily on the internet. Mobile phones were the most common mode to access the internet. 24% of the respondents stated that the purposes of internet use were to seek general information and communication. Similarly, about 73% of teenagers learnt to use the internet themselves. Results showed that users frequently used the internet for educational and entertainment purposes. It also revealed that mobile phone usage leads to an increase in internet accessibility. The study recommended for the productive use of the internet in education. It provides meaningful data for developing policies on education and enhancing digital literacy in developing countries.

Keywords: internet usages, teenage, internet accessibility, digital literacy

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Introduction

The internet is a self-organizing network of networks, through interconnectivity, provides communication between different computer platforms. It has attracted internet accessibility to the larger number of users. The internet also provides the infrastructure for the publication and distribution of different types of information and information services in various formats particularly through the World Wide Web (the Web), an interconnection of millions of websites and web pages belonging to different organizations and different types of digital information contents and services. Information and communication technology (ICT) has revolutionized every walk of human society. Large-scale computerization, invention of the internet, and the influx of the World Wide Web have made extensive and fast dissemination of information and turned the world into a global village. Initially, the Web was developed at CERN (Geneva) by Tim Berners-Lee and became almost a synonym for the internet itself (Poulter, 2003). The rapid development of the Web in the 1990s supported a new era of documentary and pictorial communications, as well as a containing stream of innovative applications in such areas as electronic publishing, multimedia, digital libraries, distance education, knowledge mining, and electronic commerce (Kling, 1999). In recent years, the internet has experienced a boom as an information source. The internet is both a communication tool and a source of information; therefore, the primary use of the internet, other than e-mail, is to retrieve needed information using different search engines. The information-seeking patterns of today's users have drastically changed in recent years.

Social media has influenced instructors, students, and other academic stakeholders to unite with each other to promote knowledge construction in the teaching and learning process. (Boateng & Amankwaa, 2016). The way of schooling has emerged with a new format in the present era with the use of the internet. The internet has been highly adopted in teaching and learning methods. Teachers could give variety on their way with the help of the internet, which has added opportunities for distance learning today by providing a way to deliver knowledge to anyone, anywhere and anytime. The use of the internet has become global. The use of social media platforms has impacted positively on individuals by creating diversification between different categories of people, (Mcloughlin & Lee, 2007).

Information literacy is a set of competencies that an informed citizen of an information society ought to posses to participate intelligently and actively in that society. The digital information revolution has implications for the „information literacy" skills expected of citizens in general, and students, teachers and researcher in particular. Studies of the use of internet facilities by students and teachers to support teaching, learning and research in specific Nepali educational institution are presently few. Accordingly, this study was motivated by the desire to collect and analyze empirical information on the use of internet resources by teenagers.

Most developing countries are presently positioned opposite to the developed countries on the digital divide, in terms of the levels of development of information technology infrastructure. Through this type of research, we can strengthen the development of internet usage patterns among researchers, scholars, and nations as well. This research somehow tried to find out the answers to the questions given below:

1) Why do teenage school students use the internet?
2) How much time do they spend surfing the internet?
3) Which social platform do they use most on the internet?

Hence, this study aims to identify the patterns of teenage students towards internet use. This research helps to find out the purpose of using the internet by school teenagers and the time they spend surfing the internet.

Literature Review

Robinson (2005) examined the internet use among African-American college students. The respondents were surveyed by using the 43-item questionnaire to determine the frequency of internet. The results of the study indicated that most of the African-American college students (76%) had used the internet for more than three years. The use of the internet for most African-American college students occurred at school or at the work place with 49% of the responses at home. 47% of the responses indicated they spent an average of two hours per day on-line. A small percentage of the students spent 5-6 hours per day on the internet. 43% of the students used the internet primarily to learn and find school resources.

Manimekalai et al., (2006) investigated the internet use pattern among the students in Annamalai University and found that about 71 percent of the students used internet for their academic related activities and about 29 percent use it for communication purposes.

Mcloughlin and Lee (2007) stated that the use of social media has impacted positively on individuals through creating diversification between different categories of people.

Peluchette and Karl (2008) examined the social networking habits and attitudes of 433 undergraduates at a mid–sized university in the Midwest, and found that the large majority of students (80 percent) used one or more social networking sites. Facebook, they noted, was used most heavily.

Thapa (2009) explained that though internet is common and almost must essentially means of communication in urban area in Nepal, Government is still unable to provide internet connectivity in rural areas of Nepal. Internet use in Nepal won't be completed until we have access in villages, public schools and 4000 plus Village Department Committee in Nepal.

Gibson and Oberg (2010) conducted a study in Alberta schools to know the perceptions of educators and parents on the value of the internet as an educational tool. Overall, teachers and administrators who participated in the study concluded that the internet has a great deal of potential as a teaching and learning tool. The benefits most often cited from use of the internet in schools included immediate access to current and relevant information; worldwide connection and ability to meet the needs individual learners.

Rouis, et al., (2011) aimed to know the effect of use of social media by school teenagers. The research has shown that there is huge use of the internet by the teenagers, causing their academic achievement weak.

Ndaku (2013) discussed about the adverse effect of the internet usage on students. The study shows the result that students spend much of their study time on social media rather than in the academic purpose, which seems to have adverse effect on their study time, diverting their attention from their studies.

Boateng and Amankwa (2016) asserted that social media has influenced instructors students and other academic stakeholders to unite with each other to Promote Knowledge construction in teaching and learning.

Kwan (2017) concluded in their research that parental education and family income significantly moderate the association between the amount of internet use and severity of problematic internet Use. It was that, how the students adopt the internet also depend on how the parents are aware about the use of the internet.

The research has been overlooked with the use of two theories. First one is Social Learning theory by Bandura (1977) and Cultivation Theory by Ullah et al, (2014). According to the Bandura Social learning theory has been widely used to describe the effects of media on various social issues. Meanwhile Cultivation theory is guided to explore the effects and consequences created by the media, here internet. The proper use of the internet really can be great helpful for the students to achieve their academic success, which seems very rare. Teen agers are spending lots of time only to chat and share information rather than finding the new knowledge. The open world created by the internet influences the teenagers for adapting the foreign culture and ignoring the local culture. Media can create great impact among the teenagers, who are attracted towards the virtual world.

The whole study focused on interpreting the patterns of how the teens especially the school students prefer on using the internet and to be cleared about what is internet, who are the teenagers, and what is the relation between teens and the internet.

Research Methodology

This study has been conducted to investigate the present status of internet use patterns among teenagers. Descriptive research design has been used with a quantitative

approach. The research is intended to find out the ways how the students are entertaining themselves with the internet. This research work is based on the survey done through the questionnaire and the interview with the students, teachers, and parents. The population frame for this study comprises the school students of two schools from classes eight, nine, and ten. The study areas selected are the government school and another private school. For this study, a total of 100 questionnaires were distributed to the school students dividing them into two halves, 50 in government school and 50 in private using convenience sampling techniques. The respondents were teenagers in the age group 13 to 16, so as per our convenience we went to the students. Among the respondents, 20 students from class ten 20 from class nine, and 10 from class eight had been called for responding to the questionnaire. Class teachers from the particular classes helped us to have the selection of the students. Interested students were called to take part in filling out the questionnaire. Among them, 91 responses were returned. So, the research is based on only 91 responses. The data collected in the form of a questionnaire were edited, coded, tabulated, and classified for analysis. Finally, the processed analyzed data were presented in the form of tabulation and graphical diagrammatical representations.
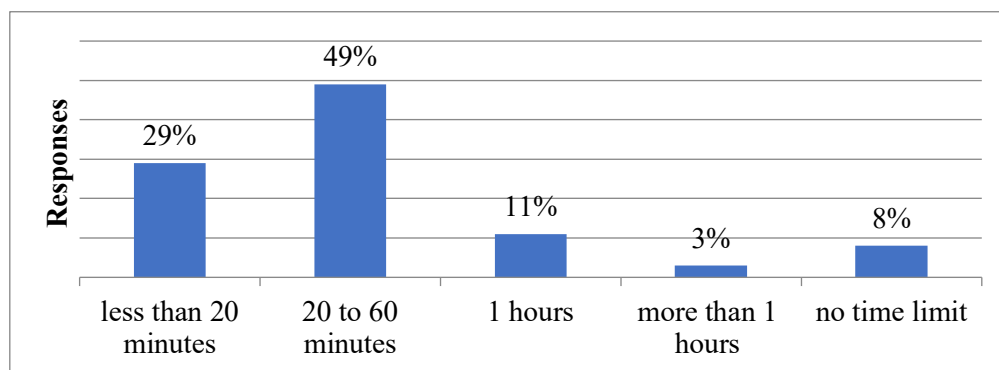
Results

Time Spent on Using the Internet per day

Here the study attempted to know the time spent by teenage students on using the internet per day. As to the response of the students, 49% of teenagers spent 20-60 minutes surfing the internet, 29% of them used the internet for less than 20 minutes, 11% of them used the internet for 1-4 hours, 3% use for more than 4 hours and whereas the 8% of ten agers didn't have the fixed time limit. The time limit for the use of the internet was very high among students. The internet has opened a wide scope for students who have a desire to know more. Students used the internet before the school starts or after the school was off.

Figure 1

Time Spend on Using Internet Per Day

Source: Field Survey

Experience in using the Internet

The survey sought an understanding of the experience of internet surfing. The majority of teenagers had only one year of experience, whereas the surprising result was that many of them had more than 4 years of experience. Based on the figure above, it is noted that 29% had 1 year of experience, 24% had 2 years of experience, 20% had 3 years of experience and 27% had experience using the internet for more than 4 years.

Figure 2

*Experience of Using Internet*
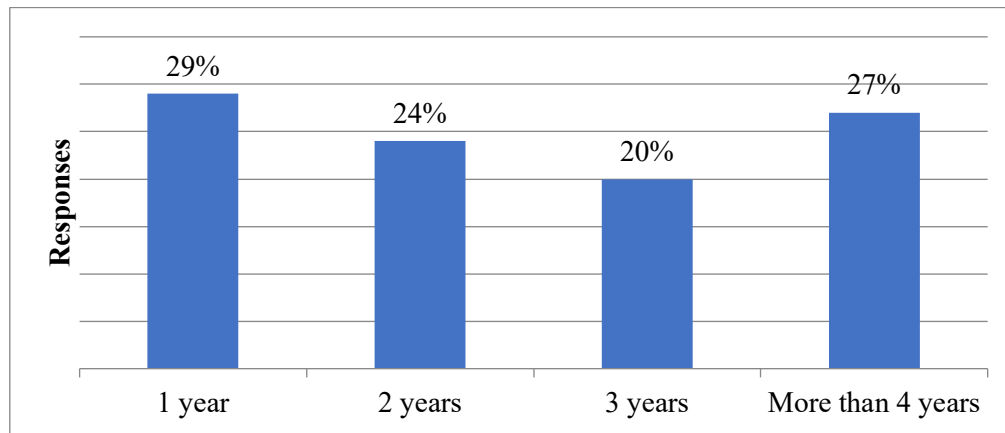
Source: Field Survey

Means of communication used to surf the internet

The questionnaire sought data from the respondents about the means of communication they used to surf the internet. 69% used the internet on mobile, 20% used it on laptop, 4 % used it on Desktop and 7% used the internet on other means of communication such as tab, pad. Nowadays, mobile is not only used for making and receiving calls but very widely used for internet use too. The development of smart phones, which provides the service of internet browsing and collaboration of telecommunication for internet service, has made it easy for the use of the internet in mobiles.

The modern age is full of modern technology. Different means of communication could be used. The development of computers, laptops, and even mobile phones is the factor of flourishing the use of the internet. From the above data as well we can come up with the reality that maximum numbers of the respondents use the mobile phone to surf the internet. Laptops are also found to be used by teenage students. The use of the computer seems to be very less to surf the internet. Some of the respondents also use the tab or pod to surf the internet. It gives the real image of the internet by the school students.

Figure 3

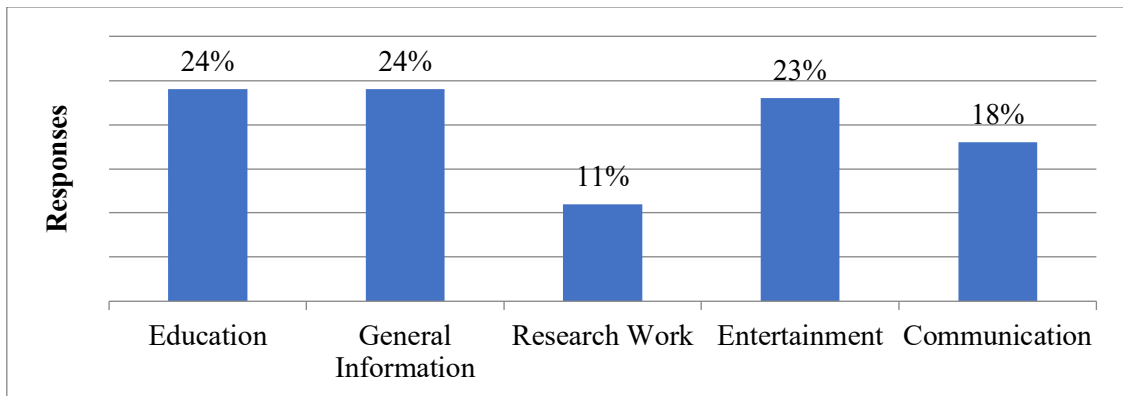*Means of Communication Used to Surf the Internet*
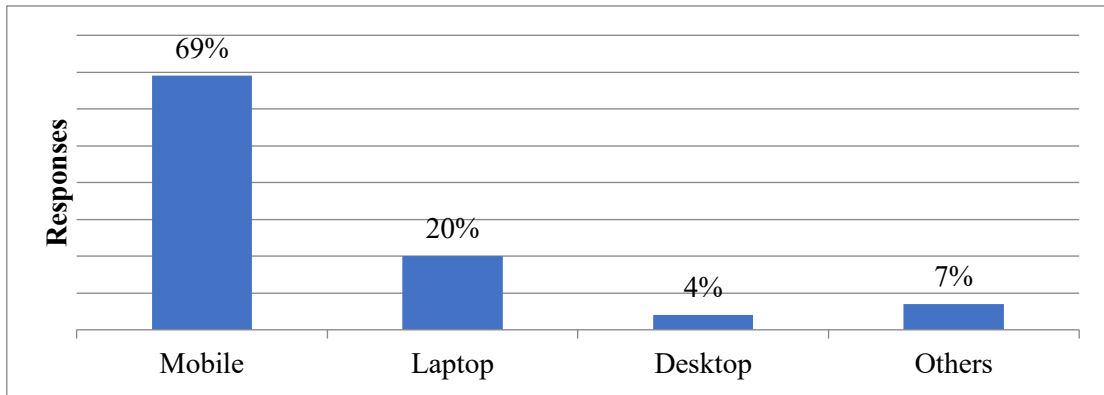
Purpose of using the Internet

Figure 4 depicts the main purpose of using the internet.

Figure 4

Purpose of Using the internet

The figure revealed that 24% of teenage students surfed the internet for general information, 24% of them used it for academic purposes, 23% surfed the internet for various entertainment purposes, 11% of them surfed the internet for gathering information for their research work and 18 % used for communication purpose. The majority of the respondents used the internet for education and finding general information. Very little use of the internet could be seen in their research work by the teenage students. It seems that the maximum use of the internet is for educational purposes. Whereas the use of the internet for seeking

information related to general uses as well as entertainment purposes is the most. The teens are very attracted towards the entertainment and maintaining social touch. So they surf the internet to have entertainment, communication, and assist the research work as well as for the communication.

Source of Learning Internet Use

      Figure 5 shows different sources that teenage students learned to use the internet from. Among all respondents, 71% revealed that they learned to use the internet by themselves, 19% of them were guided by elders, and 10% learned from academic courses. Here, I found none of the students was found who had attended any external course or training.

      The use of the internet and defining its purpose is not easy. Before using them, the users should have good knowledge about the internet. Based on the responses of the respondents, most of them said that they learned themselves to use the internet. Whereas, some learned it with guidance from elders. Very less respondents learned it from the course book. Here, it could be seen that teens are using the internet at home more than at school. It seems that the schools have not provided both theoretical as well as practical knowledge about the use of the internet to their students.

**Figure 5**

Source of Learning Internet Use
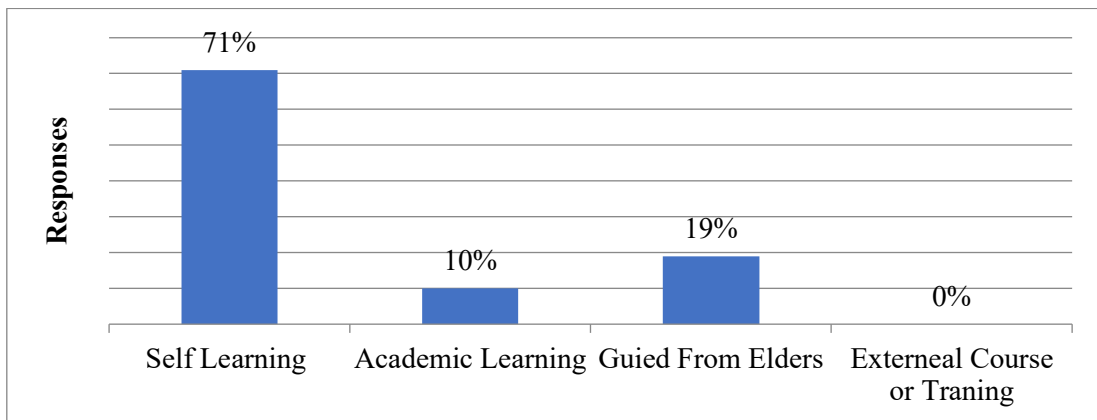
Site that is visited the most

      The research intended to find the best site that the teenage students visited frequently. The study found majority of the respondents visited social sites. The data revealed that 33% of teenage students visited social sites for communication, 30% visited entertainment sites, 22% visited academic sites, and 13% visited news and information sites. Very few respondents ie. only 2% of teenagers visited the science and technology sites. From

the result of the above data, we can conclude that the internet is yet to come to meaningful use for teenagers.
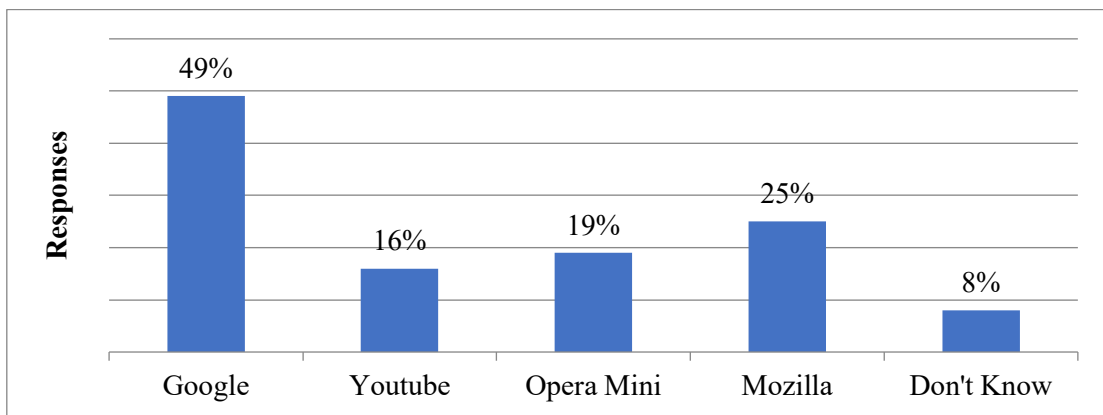
Figure 6

Most Visited Site
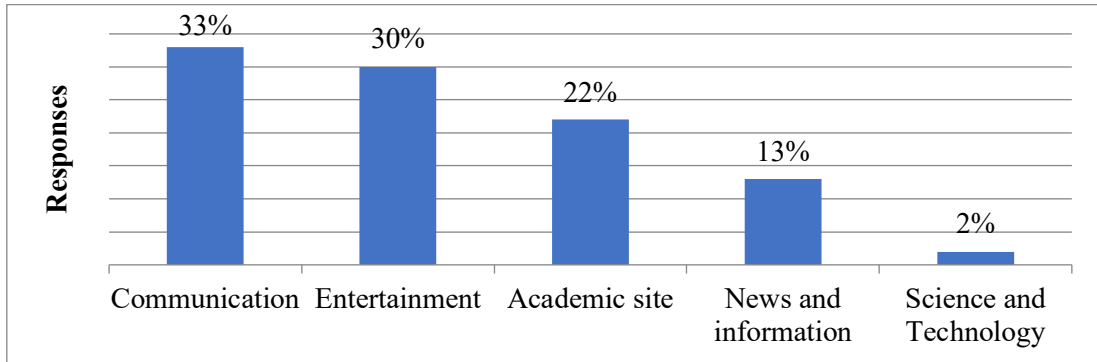
Search Engines used

When the respondents were asked to name the two search engines that they knew, 49% mentioned Google, 19% took the name of Opera Mini, 16% mentioned YouTube, and 25% stated Mozilla. 8% of the respondents even didn't know the names of any search engines.

Students use Google and other search engines to find word meanings and synonyms. When they were asked to find any information about their text or their new course they preferred to Google.

**Figure 7**

Search Engines Used Most

Name of Social sites

Figure 8 reveals the social sites used for information sharing and social networking. Among all respondents, most of the respondents are used to Facebook comprising 59% of the total respondents. 35% of the respondents shared their creative content through TikTok, and 50% of them shared through Instagram. However, 15% of the respondents could not give the name of any social sites. The result shows that Facebook seems to be the most commonly used social site, whereas Instagram and Tiktok are also popular among teenagers.

Figure 8

Name of Social Sites
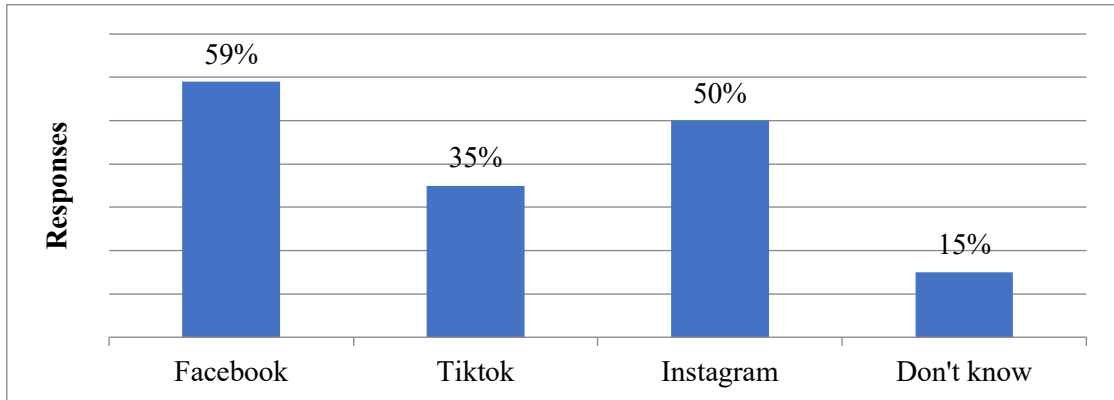
Discussions

This research aimed to identify the patterns of teenage students in Nepal towards internet use, offering insights into their internet habits, preferences, and educational impact. The findings align with previous studies while highlighting unique aspects of the Nepali context.

The data revealed that 49% of teenagers spend 20-60 minutes daily on the internet, with a notable portion (29%) spending less than 20 minutes. Only 3% use the internet for more than four hours a day. These findings suggest a moderate level of internet engagement among teenagers, consistent with Robinson's (2005) study, where African-American college students also demonstrated varying internet usage patterns. However, the duration of use among Nepali teenagers appears shorter, possibly due to different socio-economic factors and access levels.

The results indicated a diverse range of internet experiences among teenagers. While 29% have only one year of experience, a significant 27% have more than four years of internet use. This discrepancy might be due to the rapid adoption of mobile technology in urban areas, as highlighted by Thapa (2009), who pointed out the uneven distribution of internet access across Nepal. The presence of young teens with over four years of experience underscores the early exposure and adaptability to digital tools.

A majority (69%) of teenagers use mobile phones to access the internet, with laptops (20%) and desktops (4%) being less common. This preference for mobile phones aligns with the global trend of mobile internet usage, as observed by Manimekalai et al., (2006) in their study of Annamalai University students. The widespread use of smartphones in Nepal, supported by affordable mobile data plans, has facilitated internet access even among younger populations.

Teenagers primarily use the internet for general information (24%), academic purposes (24%), and entertainment (23%). This distribution reflects a balanced use of the internet for both educational and recreational activities, similar to findings by Peluchette and Karl (2008), who noted the prevalent use of social networking sites among undergraduates. The significant use of the internet for academic purposes indicates a growing recognition of its educational value, which Gibson and Oberg (2010) highlighted in their study on the educational benefits of internet use.

A substantial 73% of teenagers learned to use the internet by themselves, with only 22% receiving guidance from elders and 10% learning from academic courses. This self-taught approach suggests a high level of digital literacy and curiosity among teenagers. The lack of formal education in internet use, as observed, points to a potential area for educational institutions to address, enhancing structured digital literacy programs.

Social sites (33%) and entertainment sites (27%) are the most visited by teenagers, with academic sites (22%) following closely. This trend mirrors the social and entertainment-driven internet use noted by Peluchette and Karl (2008). However, the low percentage (2%) visiting science and technology sites indicates a potential gap in utilizing the internet for more specialized knowledge areas.

Google is the most recognized search engine (49%), followed by Yahoo and Opera Mini (19.11% each). The dominance of Google aligns with global trends. Facebook is the most used social site (52%), with Twitter (17%) and Instagram (9%) also popular. The relatively low awareness and use of other social platforms reflect the specific preferences of Nepali teenagers, potentially influenced by regional digital cultures and access levels.

Conclusion

The research focused on the internet usage patterns of teenage students in Nepal, particularly the time spent on the internet, the purposes of using it, and what tools and sources they use to access the internet. This study highlights the digital habits of teenagers in the developing country, showing the way they make use of technology when it comes to various aspects of their lives, be it educational or entertainment purposes. The majority of teenagers spend 20-60 minutes online daily, while the rest spend over four hours online. The length of experience with the internet varies among teenagers, with a great number surprisingly having over four years of experience. Most teenagers prefer using mobile

phones, followed by laptops, though a few have desktops and tablets. These teenagers use the internet to fulfill a variety of purposes, such as general information and school work, entertainment, and communication. Surprisingly, most teenagers are self-taught in using the internet, with a few having learned from elders or through academic courses. The teenager finds it as very joyful to work on internet because it is very easy to find out information on internet through the different search engines so they take it as blessing for modern age. Through the result we can easily reach to a conclusion that internet is yet to come in meaningful use among the teenagers. This research calls for the need for better integration of internet use in educational settings in Nepal and majorly calls for guidance towards teenagers to more productive and educational uses of the internet.

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