



Full Length Article

Use of social networking websites among NGOs in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana



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ABSTRACT

NGOs in Ghana use social networking websites for various purposes: e.g. to establish relationship with stakeholders, raise funds, and advocate for the vulnerable in society. Factors affecting the extent of use of social networking websites among NGOs in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana was analysed using a stepwise regression analysis. Background characteristics of NGOs were found to determine the extent of use of Social Networking websites among NGOs in Greater Accra region of Ghana. Specifically, ownership of a website, perceived usefulness of social networking websites and type of NGO mainly determine the use of social networking websites.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are non-state, non-profit oriented groups who pursue issues of public interest (Fisher, 2006). The World Bank (2001) describes NGOs as private organisations that are involved in relief services, promotion of the interest of the poor, protecting the environment as well as the provision of basic social services and community development.

NGOs in Ghana often work in areas such as health, the environment, gender, advocacy, technology development and dissemination, small enterprise development and credit mobilization. Issa (2005) described NGOs in Ghana as the “third sector” since they are indispensable to the economic development in Ghana.

The history of the involvement of NGOs in the development of Ghana dates back to the 1930s. As of 1930, three NGOs had officially registered in Ghana. The number increased to 80 in 1980. By December 1996, there were 320 foreign and local NGOs operating in Ghana (Bob-Miller, 2005). Five thousand (5000) local and foreign NGOs had registered with the Ministry of Manpower and Social Welfare of Ghana, as of January 2008 (Ghana News Agency, 2008, January 23) prior to the collection of data for this study.

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Nomenclature

Definitions, acronyms, abbreviations

Background characteristics of NGOs	Background characteristics refers to type of NGO (local or international), presence or absence of a public relations unit, the ownership of a working website or otherwise and perception (perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use) of social networking websites.
Extent of use of social networking websites	This is defined to include the amount of time spent on social networking websites in hours per week.
International NGO	International non-Governmental organisations for the purpose of this study included NGOs whose policies and systems are from the non-Governmental organization's headquarters based outside Ghana or any non-Governmental organization that had outfit(s) outside Ghana.
Local NGO	Local NGO in the context of this study referred to NGOs that had headquarters and operations in Ghana. local NGOs also included national NGOs (operating on a national scale or in more than one district), community based organisations (CBOs) operating in one or more districts and faith based organisations (FBOs) that were founded on religion and were attached to the founding religious body.
NGOs (Non-Governmental Organization)	Independent development actors who operate on a non-profit or not for profit and voluntary basis in the course of providing development services
Perceived ease of use	The degree to which an individual believes that using social networking websites would be free of physical and mental efforts
Perceived usefulness	The degree to which an individual believes that using social networking websites would enhance his/her job performance
Social Networking Website	Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system, e.g. facebook.
TAM	Technology acceptance model

NGOs in Ghana face a number of challenges in contributing to the development of the nation. The effective execution of activities of NGOs for that matter: depend on active communication and networking with donors, stakeholders, businesses, and governments (Holmén & Jirström, 2000). That notwithstanding, there is also a greater call for NGOs to account socially and financially to their major stakeholders (Aye, 2002), and for NGOs to improve on the poor networking among the organisations (Galaa, 2005).

NGOs have used technologies to address the challenges of complex communication processes and relations among stakeholders over the years. Langman (2005) reported of the use of print media in the 18th and 19th century and radio broadcasting and television in the 20th century to improve communication among major stakeholders. The advancement in Information Technology has led to the introduction of new forms of media and Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) such as Social Networking Websites to address the communication challenges of NGOs.

Meyer (1997) concluded that: social networking websites have the potential to improve performance and impact of NGOs in community development in developing countries such as Ghana. Kenix (2008) reported that NGOs use social networking websites to promote activism and create an avenue for advertising, fundraising and for the marginalized to voice their concerns. Furthermore, social networking websites serve as an interconnected portal for instant information and medium that bolsters organisational accountability.

MacLaughlin (2007) identified that the type of organisation does not significantly influence the use of the web among organisations. Barnes and Mattson (2009) also reported that the majority (79%) of the largest and International NGOs use social networking and video blogging, compared to smaller or local NGOs. According to Kang and Norton (2004), public relation practitioners of NGOs use the Web for organisational goals.

1.2. Purpose of the study

Very little empirical research exists to examine the factors that determine the use of social networking websites in Ghana. A number of studies have sought to understand the factors that contribute to the acceptance and use of information technology. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), (Davis, 1989) is one of such theories researchers have applied to Internet-related technologies and services, such as: Internet banking, online shopping, and software applications (Suh & Han, 2003). Researchers use TAM to predict user attitude towards using the technology, subsequent behavioural intentions and actual usage.

This study applied the TAM model to determine the best predictors of the extent of use of social networking websites among NGOs from the background characteristics of NGOs in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Specifically, the study objectives were to:

1. Describe the background characteristics of Non-Governmental Organisations in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

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