

Abstract

Despite a number of studies exploring the uses and gratifications of social network sites (SNS) in Sub-Saharan Africa, few seek to know which gratifications lead to high dependence in the use of a particular SNS and how it enhances the sense of social presence among students. Informed by uses and gratification theory and social presence theory, this paper sought to fill this gap. The researchers used a stratified random sample of 489 students from a private university in Kenya. These students filled a survey between February and May 2018 that focused on the types of social media sites students sought and their gratifications. The data collected was analysed using content analysis, hierarchical and logistic regression. Results showed that students sought various gratifications from SNS. First, they sought SNS that enabled them to communicate, interact, socialize and connect with friends, and family; secondly, to get updates and trending news; furthermore, students sought SNS to access new technologies and innovations. Other gratifications sought were: to transact business; carry out work-related duties; enhance learning; entertain, and enjoy the attributes of the SNS. Purposive value influenced dependence on Facebook and WhatsApp, Purposive value (information) and entertainment influenced dependency on Google, while entertainment influenced dependency on YouTube. There were positive relationships between social presence with purposive value, self-discovery, and entertainment. Some practical implications include: first, the universities should channel the gratifications that students seek in social media to enhance learning activities. Secondly, YouTube should be incorporated into learning and teaching activities.