



Issues Engulfing Operation of Internet Café in Kano State

Mukhtar Shariff Ahmad, Salim Jibrin Danbatta, Abdullahi Abba Abdullahi, Aisha Ahmad Darma,

Ahmad Muhammad Ahmad

Kano State Institute for Information Technology Kura,
Nigeria

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Abstract: *This paper aimed at discussing issues engulfing operation of Internet Cafes in Kano State. The history of Kano being a center of commerce, trade and industries give rise to modern business technology which is Internet technology that resulted to Internet Café business in Kano State. Internet café is a place that houses computers, scanners, printers and other electrical and electronics devices with which people get access to internet services like research, e-commerce, e-banking, e-learning and e-mails. Operation of this business within and outside Kano metropolitan faced with different issues specifically related to the survival of the business and these include: electricity, technology, security, customers and license were thoroughly discussed. Data and information were collected by means of methods of fact-finding techniques which are: questionnaire, interview and observation from Internet Café or Cybercafé owners and their customers in order to find the actual problems engulfing them. Data collected were analyzed using a simple percentage method. Findings reveal the problems militating against Internet services as well as recommended solutions that would facilitate successful operation of Cybercafés businesses economically and financially in Kano State.*

Keywords: *Internet Café, Cybercafé, Kano State, Operation, Service, Metropolitan, Technology, Entrepreneurship, Electricity*

I. INTRODUCTION

With the involvement of information and communication technology (ICT), many businesses come onboard especially modern businesses that relied largely on internet technology for easy accessibility and interaction. One of these businesses is Internet café. As asserted by [7], Internet café is a place that houses computers, scanners, printers and other electrical and electronics devices with which people get access to internet services like research, e-commerce, e-banking, e-learning and e-mails. It also provide other computer related businesses that include but not limited to digital photograph, spiral binding, lamination, photocopying, checking result for students, scratch card marketing, university and institution online registration services, electricity payment and many more.

Today, internet cafés in Kano state are spreaded all over within and outside the metropolitan city managed by young people between the ages of 18 to 30. Some of the owners of the internet café are secondary school leavers who may have attended roadside computer institution. But majority of them have attended higher institution of learning or degree holder. So most of them were located within or near academic institution or formal organization on the main roads as well as market places within and outside the city.

There were many computers in the internet café to serve the need of diverse users. The benefits of which have great impact on computer profession as it is means of survival for many computer graduates. It is also a means where students get more practical as there is a little or none given in their various institution of learning. It also made distance learning possible where student take lecture in the comfort their home, thereby reducing the cost of travelling for study, energy and resources. It also provides job opportunity for teaming professionals and youths through entrepreneurship, thus, reducing the rate of unemployment in the state in particular and the country in general [2].

Although, there were many setbacks in term of operational and delivering of services which include: signal downturn at irregular interval, electricity problems, security and many more attributed to the issues engulfing operation of Internet Café in the state Kano.

II. BACKGROUND HISTORY OF KANO STATE

According to [11], Kano State is a state located in Northern Nigeria. Created on May 27, 1967 from part of the Northern Region, Kano state borders Katsina State to the north-west, Jigawa State to the north-east, Bauchi State to the south-east and Kaduna State to the south-west.

The capital of Kano State is Kano. The state originally included Jigawa State which was made a separate state in 1991. It is the most populated state in Nigeria with over 10 million people according to the census 2006. It has 44 local governments area of the state. The predominated indigenous Language is Hausa spoken by Hausawa, the inhabitant of the state [7].

Although, Subsistence and commercial agriculture is mostly practiced in the outlying districts of the state. Some of the food crops cultivated include: millet, cowpeas, sorghum, maize and rice for local consumption while groundnuts and cotton are produced for export and industrial purposes during the colonial period.

Commercial activities in Kano first developed with the establishment of the Kurmi market by the Emir of Kano Muhammadu Rumfa in the 16th Century. Subsequent leaders made significant contributions to the emergence of Kano State as a leading commercial center in Sudanic Africa. Kano is the second largest industrial center of commerce after Lagos State in Nigeria and the largest in Northern Nigeria with textile, tanning, footwear, cosmetics, plastics, enamelware, pharmaceuticals, ceramics, furniture and other industries [1] and[11].

The tourist attractions area is include and not limited to:

- Kurmi Market established in the 15th century,
- Kano's centuries-old city wall,
- Gidan Rumfa (Emir's Palace, the oldest continuous site of authority in Nigeria).
- Goron Dutse Hill.
- Dala Hill

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to [7] Internet cafés are places with computers which people can use to access internet services usually for a fee. They also render computer related services like printing, desktop publishing, passport and serve as a regular café with snacks and drinks being served. On the other hand busy engaged in buying, selling and repairing personal computers. Also closed definition is given by [10] that An Internet café, also known as a cybercafé, is a place which provides Internet access to the public, usually for a fee. These businesses usually provide snacks and drinks, hence the café in the name. The fee for using a computer is usually charged as a time-based rate.

However, the cost of internet connection by an Internet Service Providers (ISP) is always at high, which made it difficult for the owners of internet café to subscribe for yearly basis. [3] opined that in developing countries like Nigeria the cost associated with access to the internet is high. This makes it compulsory for internet café owners to increase the cost of the access to the internet. Most users access internet through cyber cafes' while very few access it from their offices.

[5] made the assertion that Internet Café owners should look for an ISP that is capable of offering the minimum quality of service that are intended to be offered to customers. Remember the success of cyber cafe business depend largely on the support get from your ISP. This actually makes the selection of the best ISP difficult.

However, some Internet Café offered free access to internet services just to attract customers to other services provided. For instance Jedi Café, a cyber café located in Happy Valley, Hong Kong Island, offers a perfect spot for the public in social gathering and leisure. It provides customers free access to the Internet services as well as an area for to meet together in a casual environment under an economical manner.

Although, this only happened in developed countries because they have internet infrastructure available where internet disparity is not an issue. But in Nigeria in general and Kano in particular Internet Café is losing momentum due to lack of patronages which is attributed to poor Internet services, Power supply, emergence of smart phone that swallowed almost all the Internet services provided at Internet Café and lack of government support.

IV. BENEFITS OF INTERNET CAFÉ IN KANO STATE NIGERIA

Internet Cafes have great impact and importance to Kano State. Below are some of the enumerated benefits in different perspectives:

1. Computer Professions Benefits

- Internet Cafés are serving as main and reliable laboratories for computer students/learners as little practical is given in schools.
- They are places where some computer students are going for their industrial work experience scheme (SIWES) to vividly expertise on their profession. Some students even prefer to be working in Internet Cafes after or before school hours.
- They are alternative job opportunities for computer graduates and professionals generally.

2. Educational Benefits

- They are serving as libraries to students. Nowadays, students prefer to go to Internet Cafés to take on research, for it has more simplicity and a good alternatives. Moreover, one can print documents to have his own copy not like libraries where one can only borrow the documents or copy by his hand.
- Promotion of computer literacy in the city by providing affordable computer access to citizens.
- Making examinations registration and result checking easy. It is the eight place for checking examination and admission information like UTME, POST UME, Direct entry etc.
- They sell examination scratch cards to students. In inturn, reduce the burden of buying from banks and other selling centers.
- They serve student who cannot operate computer and in turn pay for service of buying time to serve himself.
- They are places where students did many tasks like assignments, presentations and projects.

- Internet café serve as a center for distance learning where student can take lecture as its unfold within and outside the country.

Employment benefits

- Interesting individual can apply for a job online as many websites today exist to bring job opportunity very closer to you.
- Internet Cafés are now forming a big job opportunity for all interesting individuals in the city, it requires not much academic knowledge but excess practical experience of computer and business management. Many Internet Cafes enterprenurers are not computer graduates but just acquire the skill from professionals either at the Internet Cafes, business centers etc or computer training and certificate institutions like KSIIT, HIIT, HIITS, SKYNET and SHAMLAD etc.

Economic benefits

- Some Internet Cafes pay taxes to their local and state government from water and electricity.
- They are legal business that provide employment for many people. They buy from and sell to the society; therefore they are part of money circulation in the city.

General benefits

- Internet Cafes promote security by providing job opportunities to computer professionals. Lack of job to computer professionals can make them to be hackers or threat to public security.
- Internet Cafés connects Kano State to the Internet making it part of global village.
- Many job vacancies are not actually advertise through media but Internet which can only accessible via Internet Cafés.
- They help people to keep in touch with many family friends through social networks and emails.
- They are places where many people spend their leisure times.
- They help in making Kano a busy city more especially in night hours.
- Internet Cafes encourage Internet Service Provider (ISP)to invest in the city; they are the giant customers of the ISPs as they patronize for full service per year unlike individual persons who patronize on daily, weekly or monthly basis.

V. STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

Like every other business, Internet Cafes are facing some challenges in Kano which pose threats to the business. Below are challenges faced by Internet Café in view of their sources:

1. Electricity
2. Technological problems
3. Customers
4. Security
5. License

1. **Electricity:** - The problem of electricity crippled many business in Nigeria in general and Kano in particular. Kano Electricity Distribution Company (KEDCO) has attributed the drop in electricity supply to the wheeling of 15 megawatts of the 50MW allocated to it to Gazoua in Niger Republic as part of Nigeria's bilateral agreement with the country.

The company's Chief Technical Officer, David Omoloye, also explained that the strike action embarked by the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) and Nigeria Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) has further worsened the situation [4]. So this led to the closed down of most of Internet Cafes in Kano while others manage to survive despite a sudden increase in fuel price last year.

However, some attributed the loss of power supply to Niger Delta Insurgents who launched numerous attacks on oil infrastructure in Nigeria since February. These attacks have caused the already-vulnerable African economy to spiral further toward a recession [6]. Due to this problem many companies in Kano have closed down. As asserted by [9] Over 400, 000 workers have lost their jobs in the northern Nigeria city of Kano, while over 400 companies have closed down, following epileptic power supply in the city. Most of these companies are private which include Internet Cafes.

2. **Technological Problems:** - The problem includes: unstable signal and strength of network by the Internet Service Providers (ISP). Internet Café owners do worry so much about low turnout of customers. This is due to fluctuation of internet services which made them to spend all their time without satisfying the purpose of coming to the Internet Café. Some may be due to modem which caused the same problem. A customer from AT and T complain that he has unstable Internet connection for about 2 weeks. His Internet keeps dropping for about 10+ times in few hours. He called AT&T and was advised to get another MODEM [13]. For most of Internet Cafes' owners identifying and extending technical problems to appropriate technicians is a worrisome. Availability of smart phones takes away almost all the customers of Internet Cafes. Because with smart phones you can easily browse internet, download, upload, e-learning, send and receive emails as well as other related services.

3. **Customers :-** In most of the Internet Café, owners do complain that customer normally comes with their friends who are not going to buy time but sit and keep disturbing others who require silence and Internet Cafés are design for one man one system.
4. **Security:-** The busiest time Internet Cafés operating are evening and night time. During these times, they loss their customer because not much people are comfortable in living their home activities at night hours. This is due to curfew imposed since 2012 as a result of insurgency attacked in Kano that brought about a draw backs to the Internet Cafes in Kano State. Internet Café security has to do with protection of physical infrastructure which may include: the building or room where computers, network equipments are arranged by a security man. Negligence on this aspect may cause a serious destruction on the part of Internet Café owners.
5. **License:-** Most of the Cafes that operate today are not fully licensed. Some registered with cooperate affairs commission (CAC) without bordering to register with Nigerian Communication commission (NCC). Obtaining both license allow company like Internet Café to operate legally without any obstacles. Some of the list of registered Cybercafés companies according to NCC are as follows [8]:

Table: 1

S/N	CAMPANY NAME	ADDRESS	LICENSE NUMBER
1	SADMART internet Café & Business Center	Shops 9 & 10, Kaltume House, Maiduguri Road, Kano State.	CL/CYB/008/07
2	Cyber Hut	No KS 12, Kabuga Housing Estate Gwarzo Road, Kano	CL/CYB/085/07
3	Great Matador Nigeria Bookshop Co. Ltd	No 89, Ibo/Niger Road Sabon Gari, Kano State.	CL/CYB/084/07
4.	Dini Digital Solutions & Management Consult Ltd	No 13, Kano State Housing Corporation Shops, Zoo Road, Kano	CL/CYB/107/07
5	Digit one	No 16 Beirut Road, Kano State	CL/CYB/137/07
6	Number Eight Nig Ltd	Suite 1, Buhari Shopping Complex, Hadejia Road, Kano	CL/CYB/142/07
7	Friends Classic Cafe	No 7c, Murtala Mohammed way, Kano	CL/CYB/152/07
8	Addins Internet Café	No 9 Badawa Shopping Complex Kano State.	CL/CYB/153/07
9	Sasil Net Cafe	Kano	CL/CYB/156/07
10	Heat Communications Ltd.	No 149 Daneji Mandawari, Sabon Sabon Titi, Qtrs, Kano State	CL/CYB/015/08
11	Kanobits communication Ltd	No 10b Gandun Albasa Qtrs, Kano State.	CL/CYB/039/08

The above are some of the Internet Cafes Registered by NCC. This allowed them to operate as an entity providing Internet Services in Kano State.

VI. METHODOLOGY

According to [12], Methodology is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. It comprises the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge. In another words means various Methods used to obtain relevant information or data about a case study.

In the case of obtaining data and information on the loss of patronage by internet café in Kano state, three methods are employed as listed below:

- i. Questionnaire
 - ii. Structural Interview
 - iii. Practical observation
- i. **Questionnaire:** - This is one of the methods used to find data or information to a large number of respondents. These are series of short and simple question which were formulated and distributed to various people in the area of study to answer or write their views and suggestions. This is made in order to obtain relevant information and data for the purpose of study. Finally the questions were collected by the researcher for computation. A sample of this is obtain in Appendix A.
 - ii. **Structure Interview:-** This is referred to as oral interview. It is a method of obtaining data by the researcher in terms of asking question on one to one interaction where information is obtained right from the source. Discussion was made in relation to Internet Cafes operations with management and customers.
 - iii. **Practical Observation:-** This is a method of obtaining data base on practical observation of the Interne Café by the Researchers in the area of study. In view of this, the Internet Cafés, management, locations, customers and nature of their services were observed and analyzed.

VII. HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

Hypothesis is a thought or proposition whose validity is to be established. Hypothesis provides the researcher with the guide or direction in searching for the solution to the problem under investigation.

In this case, the thoughts suggested were judges right or wrong at the completion of the project in view of challenges faced in running Internet Cafes in Kano State. The Following hypothesis:

1. Electricity as a constant challenge facing the city.
2. Security as the insurgency activities in the state affects business in the city
3. Internet Service Providers and Strength of their services.
4. Customers and problems of their friends
5. License as a means of identifying registered and unregistered Internet Cafes

VIII. DATA ANALYSIS

Here the researchers are going to analyses the data collected based on questionnaires distributed to people, data collected oral interviews and practical observation by the researchers themselves. The data after being collected and presented, are then finally analyzed.

There were various questions asked to two parties which are the Internet Café Managers and the users or customer. The question asked were simple with clear expressions. Moreover, they are asked based on writers hypothesis. These were made in order to prove the writer thought about the challenges faced in running Internet Cafés in Kano State. At the end we would be able to judge the validity of the hypothesis made.

Hypothesis of challenges

Electricity as a constant challenge facing the city.

Questions asked

Electricity usage by percentage per week

- i. Generator
- ii. KEDCO
- iii. SOLAR

Result of the response

Table 2

Usage percentage	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%	Total
KEDCO	6	42	6	-	6	-	60
Generator	-	6	-	6	42	6	60
Solar	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: from the above table of samples, it has indicated that no Internet Café that uses power generated from the Solar.

Discussion

The table above shows that KEDCO does not evenly distributed power to the inhabitants of Kano city where most businesses are situated. The situation is not only in the city but also all over the state; because Internet Café separate all over fourty four local Government of the State.

From the result, ninety percent(90%) of the cafes are spending lot of money on fueling their generator. Ten (10%) are not even using public electricity (KEDCO), and those using it no matter how pay tax after spending a lot on fueling and maintaining their generators.

Hypothesis two

Security as the insurgency activities in the state affects business in the city

Discussion

From practical observation and some oral question, the researchers gathered that: number of customers attending evening and night browsing in most of Internet Cafes dropped drastically. As most of the Cafes and customers said it was attributed to the banning of motorcycle operation from 9pm till 6am, as a result of Insurgency operation that erupt the city since 2012.

Hypothesis three

Internet Service Providers and Strength of their services.

Question asked

1. Internet Service Providers (ISP)
2. Mode of subscription
3. Signal strength
4. Signal strength in week ends
5. How comfort the Café is ?

Result of the respondents

For question one:

According to the analysis, 30% of the Internet Cafes are using Samanger E.C.N.X while 40% are using telecommunication companies (like MTN, Airtel, Etisalat and glo) and 30% are using the rest of the ISPs to connect to the Internet.

For question two:

Table 3

Mode	No of respondents	Percentage
Weekly	-	-
Monthly	51	85%
Yearly	9	15%
Total	60	100%

Note: Monthly subscription is five times more than yearly.

Discussion

The response of question three, four and five are mixed with lies as many responses differs from what the researchers practically observed. Many Internet Cafes owners fell that ticking appropriately is like disseminating their deficiency to the public. Response from Question six of the customers' questionnaire, practical observation and few oral questions, we gathered that some telecommunication ISPs are somehow problematic during week end. Moreover, the Internet Cafes subscribe monthly because they have no certainty and confidence in the stability of the ISPs signal strength.

Hypothesis four

Customers and problems of their friends in the Internet Cafes

Discussion

Practical observations as how customers do their browsing were made out of the sample of Internet Café within and outside Kano City.40% of the customers came alone and did not cause much problems. While 60% of them came with friends who disturbed others in the Café. This resulted in quarreled with other customers, some of which will never visit that Café again. Eventually lead to the low turnout as the case may be.

Hypothesis five

License as a means of identifying registered and unregistered Internet Cafes

Result from the respondents

Table4

Internet Cafes	Numbers	percentage
Registered	130	34%
Unregistered	252	66%

From the above table, it is indicated that he number of registered Internet Cafes doubled that of unregistered ones. That shows that more than half of the total numbers are not registered which is attributed to 66%. The reason may be due to imposing tax by local and state government. On the other hand, registration fee already increased and now manage by the private organization approved by the state government. These are the reasons but some said they are willing to register provided that government can support them financially.

IX. CONCLUSION

As it has been, here the researchers are going to discuss on what they find to be the important of Internet Cafes operating within the area of study and some difficulty they are facing.

With regard to Kano State, Internet Cafes are places with computers which provides internet access to the public usually for a fee, render computer services and related services like printing, scanning, photocopying etc.

The important of Internet Cafes touches many aspect of life of the people of Kano State. It enhance the process of seeking knowledge and turn into students' library nowadays. it promote computer literacy and standing as constant partners of students in terms of examinations' registration and result checking, schools registration, SIWES, preparation of assignments, project and presentations.

Immense contribution of Internet Café in Kano cannot be overemphasize, it gives rise to economy physically by being part of our legal markets, empowering young people with employment, paying taxes to the Local, State and Federal Government, attracting investors and electronically by enhancing e-commerce transaction in the state.

It promote security by reducing the rate of unemployment, reducing cost of communication and promote socialization and civilization in the state.

On the other hand, it was found that the electricity is the biggest issue engulfing Internet Cafes. The rest in sequence are technical problems which include signal stability and strength, customers and their friends, security as well as license.

Internet Cafes like any other businesses have been a business and job opportunity in Kano state and other cities and towns of the country. In an attempt to study issues engulfing operation of Internet Cafes, the researchers observed from several sources of data from the city in order to get relevant information that will help in studying their operations.

From the findings carried out using the three fact-finding techniques which are: Questionnaire, Interview and observation. Based on these techniques, we are able to find out the issues engulfing operations which are analyzed thoroughly with best alternative recommended.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the aims and objectives of the researchers and the output of the research, the following recommendations were made:

1. KEDCO should give optimum priority to business areas in terms of distribution of electricity in the state especially those that operate day and night so that the business can continue without disruption.
2. Government should put the business in its entrepreneurship empowerment program like how it is done for farming.
3. Joint effort should be made by the Internet Cafes owners to provide physical security in the area of their businesses especially at night.
4. Tax imposed on internet Cafes' owner should be reviewed to support growth and participation in the business.
5. Cost of obtaining license should be made affordable as most of the business are small scales in nature.
6. An association should be formed among the cybercafés' owners in order to get all the aforementioned support by the government as well as project their business interest against unstable signal strength and low internet connection by their various ISP.
7. It is necessary to acquire business skills and how to deal with customers as cybercafés staff.

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