# Readership of Health Blogs among Urban Uyo Residents

Iniobong Courage Nda, Ph.D.& Precious Nyishie Eko-Adie

Department of Communication Arts, University of Uyo, Uyo
Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

**Abstract**

*Many more efforts are needed to fully eradicate a wide range of diseases and address many different persistent and emerging health issues. By focusing on providing more efficient funding of health systems, improved sanitation and hygiene, increased access to physicians and more tips on ways to reduce ambient infections, significant progress can be made in helping to save the lives of millions, hence, the application of health blogs. Health literacy is necessary for health communicators and stakeholders to communicate effectively about/on health. Using the survey research method, this study examined readership of health blogs among urban Uyo residents. The objectives of the study were to among others determine ifurban Uyo residents have access to health blogs, determine the frequency at which they read health blogs, and why they read health blogs. Anchored in the Health Belief Model and the Uses and Gratifications. Theory, the study found among other things that Uyo residents have access to health blogs through subscription to some health blogs. The researchers recommend that since health blogs play a vital role in health communication, health bloggers should focus more on the information needs of the people as well as employ the interactivity tool of the health blogs in conveying their messages. Also, the full potential of blogs should be tapped by health communicators and workers to effectively attend to the numerous health needs of the masses in order to improve their lives.*

*Keyword: Readership, Health, Health blogs, Blogosphere, Blog post*

## Introduction

The communication world has experienced a drastic revolution through theemergence of the Internet a network of computer networks. Hassan (2013, p. 786) summarily states that "the Internet is at once a worldwide broadcasting capability, a mechanism for information dissemination, and a medium for collaboration and interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic location". Due to the fast-paced changing nature of the communication system, many trends have emerged as information posted at a website is directly available to audience in that one can find answers to virtually any subject matter one keys

into the computer.As we see today, the Internet has spread its wings and now habours many branches of which blogs are part of in addition to social media platforms like Facebook, twitter and the like.

The term blog is a blend created from the words web and log (weblog); it provides a discussion or informational website published on the World Wide Web consisting of discrete, often informal, diary-style text entries (posts). A blog can also be seen as an online diary or journal located on a website. The contents of a blog comprise text, pictures, videos, animated GIFs and scans from old physical offline diaries or journals and other hard copy documents. Blogs span within various spheres, entrepreneurship, technology, adventure, food, and personal development blogs, health, online marketing, travel blogs, photography blogs and a wide variety of subjects yet emerging. According to Cline and Hayne (2001), more than 70,000 websites disseminate health information in excess of 50 million people who seek health information online or with likely consequences for the health care system. The Internet is not solely a location to gather health information as people frequently use online spaces to tell their stories and connect with others. This is the case of online journals or blogs, which are updateable public records of private thoughts. Previously termed weblogs, blogs gained popularity in 1999 by providing individuals with the ability to write about their thoughts and feelings in a free, dedicated space.

Blogpulse, a trend-discovery system for blogs, monitors over 155 million blogs with over one million updated daily. This signifies an exponential growth in the number of blogs (Marcus, Westra, Eastwood,& Barnes, 2012). According to these researchers, within the next five years from now, the number of existing blogs must have doubled or tripled considering the pace and space of change in the blogosphere – a term used to refer to the blogging community.

Health blogs are niche blogs that are a specialisedarea in the blogosphere – a term used to refer to the online community. Health

blogs provide special information on health matters which help to promote healthy living. According to Batta (2013, p. 131), "Good health, besides life itself, is the most important human resource. Without good health not much is possible. Politics, education, agriculture, trade and commerce depends on an optimal enjoyment of good health in all aspects." The 'all aspects', refers to physical, mental and social, occupational, including spiritual aspects of life. This enjoyment is only possible through knowledge/information at one's disposal, the essence of health communication of which health blogs proffer to be a veritable source even in an evolving age as this.

Health blog platforms do not only give information to their audience but create room for comment and feedback. Batta (2013) captures the process as a continual give and take about health. Some key ingredients that make for health communication are observed byRatzan (1994) to include 'informing', 'influencing', and 'motivating' 'individual', 'institutional', and 'public' audiences about health issues.

NwagbaraandNda (2017) note that "staying healthy has been the major concern for many Nigerians. This is because good health is not only for our personal good but for the good of others. A healthy population leads to national growth and development, hence, the emphasis on healthcare delivery to all citizens."

In Nigeria, there are several health blogs available to readers. According to the *Nigerian Lists.com; Top 10 Nigerian Information Blog 2018,* "These health blogs are actively working to educate, inspire and empower their readers with frequent updates and high quality information" (n.p.). They include '*Healthable'* a health blog dedicated to revitalizing the way people eat, move, sleep and live and has been over five years on the Internet. There is also '*Sound Health Doctor*'- an online health and fitness blog founded in 2016. '*Health Save Blog*' is another blog that offers contents about health from cancer, diabetes, weight loss, and exercise to mind and body health. '*Radiant Health Magazine,'* a bi-annual print and digital magazine dedicated to the African Woman,

features health and wellness, fitness, healthy eating, beauty and style and expert advice. On the list also is '*Nigeria Health Watch';*it provides informed commentary and in-depth analysis of health issues in Nigeria.

The features of these blogs enhance theblogs as part of journalism and confirm Hassan's(2013) assertion that blogs have remained a source of news. They can create and report, thereby bridging the line between news and opinions as everyone is an active participant in the blogosphere. With already existing health blogs, readers are arraigned with a number of options from which to get health information. Batta (2013) terms the media a "healing tool" of which health blogs are part of especially in a Techno savvy age. Uyo urban residents are expected to take advantage of this platform in order to improve their health as well as the health of others.

**Statement of the Problem**

Productivity from time is directly proportional to the state of well-being of an individual. The need for proper and adequate knowledge on health is inevitable especially in information driven society as the case is today. Health is as important as life itself to every living thing.As a result, humans employ every strategy possible: following nutrition tips, fitness, well-being, reproductive health, weight control and many others so as to stay healthy or at most manage their health condition. Hence, timely, accessible and credible health information is critical for improving health outcomes.

In recent years, blogging has become a dominating trend providing information on special topics like politics, business, lifestyle, agriculture, business, and controversial publications - an aspect the famous Nigerian blogger Linda Ikeji was known for. Recently, the health trend is making waves in the blogosphere; people such as medical practitioners share their day-to-day experiences including personal and professional ideas as it relates with the medical sector.

Findings have shown that health and fitness blog rankstop among the most popular blogs around. Health blogs provide a wide variety of options to whatever tip one needs to know about one's health like specific workout plans to target problem areas, supplements that can help their readers get the most out of their workouts, various types of diet plans as well as tips and tricks for sticking to them.

Regarding the need for health communication, in many countries, blogs have become a veritable source of information on health-related issues. Health communicators need to know the readership of their messages/campaigns in the light of satisfaction and reliability in order to channel their messages through the right medium so as to reach the audience more effectively and efficiently. To this extent, this study seeks to ascertain the readership of health blogs among Urban Uyo residents.

**Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are to

i. Determine if urban Uyo residents have access tohealth blogs.
ii. Determine the frequency at which Urban Uyo residents read health blogs.
iii. Find out the reason why urban Uyo residents read health blogs.
iv. Ascertain the specific interest in reading health blogs by the residents of urban Uyo.
v. Find out whether residents of urban Uyo are satisfied with the health information fromhealth blogs.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised from the objectives of the study:

i. Do urban Uyo residents have access to health blogs?
ii. How often do urban Uyo residents read health blogs?
iii. Why do urban Uyo residents read health blogs?
iv. What is the specific interest in reading health blogs among the residents of urban Uyo?

v. Are urban Uyo residents satisfied with information from health blogs?

**The Concept of Health Communication**

The concept of health is a long deliberated phenomenon that has accrued contributions from different scholars and cultures. Though one can bargain wealth, the matter of health is a must do since the entire human activities rely on good health for productivity and efficiency.

According to Ekpu (2013), there is no single yardstick for measuring health. Health is often taken for granted, until it is lost. The definition enunciated by the World Health Organisation in 1948 has been the most accepted. They define health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".Though everyone aspires for a complete state of health and well-being, it has not been fully attained. In this light, Batta (2013, p.132) indicates that "people of the world and specifically Africans and Nigerians can only ignore health issues at their own peril."

Svalastog, Donev, KristoffersenandGajović (2017) capturehealth as a dynamic state of wellbeing characterized by a physical, mental and social potential, which satisfies the demands of a life commensurate with age, culture, and personal responsibility,noting that if the potential is insufficient to satisfy these demands the state is disease. Bircher (2005) provides a more sophisticated definition of health to involve a dynamic state of well-being characterised by physical, mental, social potential, which satisfies the demands of a life commensurate with age, culture and responsibility. He further notesthat insufficiency in satisfying these demands becomes a state of disease.

Infante, Rancer, and Womack (1997) cited in Batta (2013) gives a background to the development of health communication field and traces it to the growth of satisfying communication as well as charges of insensitivity, lack of trust in the health care system operated by physicians, dentists and other health professionals.The purpose of disseminating health information is to influence

personal health choices by improving health literacy. As a matter of fact, health spans from an individual to the entire public. That is, the well-being of an individual can positively or negatively affect public health. It is then expedient for people to see health as personal and strive on their own to get health information through the most appropriate means available to them.

**Health Literacy and Blogs**

In actual fact, getting information about health from blogs has to do with having accessibility through an internet enabled device. However, due to the divergent transformation of the internet, through a click or inserting key words, a reader is served with information from different health blogs having contents pertaining to the subject matter based on the information keyed in.Similarly, Don Nutbeam ( ) citesthe US Institute of Medicine 2004 report as having defined health literacy as: The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.

The Institute's definition goes on to recognize the social context of health decision-making: based on the interaction of the individual's skills with health contexts and broad social and cultural factors at home, at work and in the community.The Institute of Medicine definition examines health literacy as a set of individual capabilities in the four domains of cultural and conceptual knowledge, speaking and listening skills, writing and reading skills and numeracy. According to Don Nutbeam (), the conceptualization of health literacy as a set of capabilities also implies that health literacy is partly knowledge-based, and may be developed through educational intervention. Health education could also raise awareness of the social determinants of health, and be directed towards the promotion of actions which may lead to modification of these determinants (Chisolm& Buchanan, 2007).

Crespo (2007), writing on *Virtual Community,* acknowledges that in addition to wiki format, community organizer based on myspace model, the third way of using the Internet to promote community health is to use blogs to exchange information.Through this

medium, people can post unfiltered information and opinions,thus transforming the way people talk with each other and share ideas. Miller are Pole (2010) are of the opinion that blogs that focus on healthcare (whose exact number is unknown) have the potential to provide interactive support networks for caregivers and patients generate real-time discussions about health news or policy, extend social and political mobilization efforts, and offer providers another form in which to collaborate and consult.

McNab (2009) avers that there are countless blogs on health topics written by specialists and non-specialists alike that are read, commented on and shared globally; and suggests that if they are credible and accurate, they should be encouraged and supported. Furthermore, as access improves, people are increasingly using the Internet to find health information. Where Internet access is low or connection speeds are slow, the rapid growth in the use of mobile phones and other devices promises increased mobile broadband access. Noteworthy also is that there are more than four billion mobile phone subscribers globally, two-thirds of them in developing countries, with the fastest growth in the African continent. Multiple mobile or "Health" projects are being piloted. Hence, the potential to use mobile phones for public health information is enormous.

**Review of Studies**

Several researchers have come up with studies with the focus on healthblogs. Among such include the study by Bissonenette-Maheux and Desroches (2018) on women's perceptions of usefulness and ease of four healthy eating blog characteristics.The study's main focus was on healthy eating blogs (HEB), its perceptions and usefulness by 33 French-Canadian women, and the characteristics of these blogs that might increase potential user's intention to use them as tools to improve their dietary habits.The studywas conducted qualitatively using semi-structured individual interviews. A standardized open-ended interview questionnaire based on the Technology Acceptance Model was used to identify women's perceptions about characteristics of type of blog content delivery, RD blogger's delivery of information, blog layout and

blog design.The data revealed that the most useful characteristics of type of blog content delivery identified by women were recipes, hyperlinks, and references. In line with this study, it establishes the connection between health information gotten from health blogs and behavioural change on health blog readers andalso the characteristics that draw blog readers to reading blog contents. The study also presentsblogs as supporting tool in communicating health information which is the major focus of the current study in relation to blog readers in urban Uyo.

Also Burke-Garcia, Gary and Wright (2018) took a look at the perceptions about disseminating health information among mommy blogger. This study projected social media as potentially powerful channels for communicating health information in a culturally sensitive and influential ways to key audiences. The study's objectives were to explore Mommy Blogger's perceptions about sharing health-related information on their blogs with their readers. The survey methodology was employed with the use of open-ended questions. The results revealed that a majority of the respondents (87.2%) reported that they have written about issues in the past; 97.3% reported that they would consider writing about health issues in the future, and 96.3% reported that their readers like to read about health issues on their blogs. The study relates to the current study because it affirms the use of blogs using Mommy Bloggers as a consideration for disseminating health information as well as accessing relevant health information from their readers; which presents an opportunity for public health research and communication campaigns to more broadly promote their messages, thereby contributing to their behaviour change objectives.

Shi, Poorisatand Salmon (2018) in their study on the"Use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) in Health Communication Campaigns" took a look at potential dualism between message and message impact, in which the act of forwarding and modifying messages by receiver-sources itself becomes a measure of message impact. With the use of content analysis, it was noted that individuals often repost, link to, or embed messages or images from these less

network-centric social media into their SNS postings, thereby creating hybrids that fit the focus of the review. The study concluded that SNSs have great potential to alter the way in which health communicators approach the design and implementation of campaigns. This review is in conjunction with the present study in that among other social networks, blogs incorporated with other platforms can make a far reaching impact in the communication of health information.

Lagu, Kaufmanand Asch (2008) in a study on"Content of Weblogs Written by Health Professionals" examined the scope and content of medical blogs and approximated how often blog authors commented about patients, violated patients' privacy, or displayed a lack of professionalism. Using content analysis,the study revealed 271 medical blogs and found out that over half (56.8%) of blog authors provided sufficient information in text or image to reveal their identities. The above study is related to the present work in the sense that it shows how medical weblogs which are a segment of health blogs have emerged as a new connection between health professionals and the public. It also brings to the fore the opportunity presented by blogs (health blogs) to aid both health professionals and their public to synergise in the use of health blog platforms so as to enhance communication and appropriate information reception and treatment of health issues.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored in the Health Belief Model and the Uses and Gratifications Theory. The Health Belief Model was developed by Geoffrey Hochbaum and his colleagues in 1950. The central tenet of this theory is that one's thoughts and feelings control one's actions. It proposes that:

1. Health behaviour preventive or curative is determined by internal use (perceptions, beliefs, knowledge) or external reactions (mass media or interpersonal communication) that trigger the need to act.
2. Once an individual is motivated to act, the actual behaviour will be determined by personal perception of "cost benefit". In other words, an individual weighs the benefits of an action before deciding to act.

3. Individual's beliefs or personal perception of his ability to undertake a particular action can affect his motivation to take such action.

This theory is relevant to this work because one's motive in search of health information is determined by the benefits one derives from seeking for health information from any source whether through personal contact with health professionals or through mediated channels such as health blogs which is a part of the new media (Internet) evolution or traditional media such as television, radio or newspapers. This supports the study objectives of determining whether urban Uyo residents have access to health blogs and their specific interest in health blogs.

The Uses and Gratifications theory, on the other hand,was propounded by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974). It assumes that since individuals differ, each person seeks out different messages and uses those messages differently. This is because messages from the mass media are one among many social or psychological factors that cause audience members to select different media contents to which they give attention as well as experience divergent perception. This approach points to the fact that the different individual characteristics contribute in producing certain effects on the media audience similar to such produced by media messages.

The relevance of this theory to the study is that individuals select media messages to satisfy their needs which invariably depend on the level of awareness hence the need to find out reasons why urban Uyo residents read health blogs and their satisfaction with health information from health blogs. This means their needs influence what media content they choose, how they use certain messages and what gratification these messages give them. Supporting this position, Nwagbaraand Nda (2017) note that the approach emphasizes respondent's choice of using health blogs platform in finding solutions to their health issues which depends on their level of awareness and satisfaction they derive from accessing health information using health blogs.

**Research Methodology**

The study adopted the descriptive survey in data gathering. According to Babbie (2013), this method is useful in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly. Wimmer and Dominick (2011) see descriptive survey as an attempt to describe or document current conditions or attitudes to explain what exists at the moment. This method is suitable for this study because it describes the attitudes, opinions, behaviours, or characteristics of the population, in this case urban Uyo, towards readership of health blogs.

The population of the study was the projected population of urban Uyo in 2019 by the National Population Commission (NPC) which stood at 472,534. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire which was designed to answer the research questions raised. The instrument was validated by communication and research experts.

The sample of the study was 400, determined using the Taro Yamane formula. Two sampling techniques were adopted for the study. First was the cluster sampling in which urban Uyo was divided into four clusters, according to the four clans that make up the area namely Oku, Etoi, Offot and Ikono clans. The cluster sampling was necessitated by the desire to ensure that every part of Uyo was included in the research. Given that the sample was 400, each clan produced 100 respondents. Secondly, the convenient sample was used to access the respondents in each of the clans. To this effect, the first 100 respondents in each cluster that met the requirement of accessing and reading health blogs were administered the questionnaire.

In each of the clusters, the respondents were met in their places of work/business or residence. A number of respondents completed and returned the instrument on the spot while others who were not able to do so scheduled a date on which the researchers retrieved copies of the questionnaire from them. However, those who were unwilling to participate in the research despite persuasion by the

researchers were left out of the exercise. The exercise lasted one month. The data gathered were analysed using frequency tables and percentages, guided by the research questions.

**Presentation of Data and Analysis**

To achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher administered a total of 400 copies of the questionnaire to respondents in the different clusters. Out of the 400 copies, 10 (ten) were not returned. A total of 390 copies out of the 400 administered were found useful for data analysis as seen in the table below:

Table 1: **Return of Questionnaire by Clan**

| Clan | No. of questionnaire retrieved | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Etoi | 98 | 25.1 |
| Offot | 95 | 24.4 |
| Ikono | 99 | 25.4 |
| Oku | 98 | 25.1 |
| **Total** | **390** | **100** |

**Source: Field Survey 2019**

The table above shows the number of questionnaires that were retrieved from the various clans. Although 400 copies of the questionnaire were sent out, the researchers were only able to retrieve 390 copies of the questionnaire from the respondents. There was,therefore, a shortfall of 10 copies of the questionnaire.

**Table 2: Respondents' Access to Health blogs**

| Option | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 310 | 80 |
| Sometimes | 80 | 20 |
| No | - | - |
| **Total** | **390** | **100** |

**Source: Field Survey 2019**

The Table two above shows that a greater percentage 310 (80%) of the respondents access health blogs. With the technologically advanced society, access to the Internet is becoming common place hence the frequent visits to health blogs by urban Uyo residents in

order to stay abreast of up-to-date information on health. Also, 80(20%) of the respondents only sometimes access health blogs. Several factors such as lack of time, data, power outage, network connectivity, among others, could give rise to this.

**Table 3: Frequency at which Respondents Read Health Related Posts from Health Blogs**

| Options | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Daily | 40 | 10 |
| Weekly | 70 | 18 |
| Monthly | - | - |
| Occasionally | 200 | 51 |
| No specific time | 80 | 21 |
| **Total** | **390** | **100** |

**Source: Field Survey 2019**

The Table above indicates that a greater percentage 200 (51%) of the respondents read health blogs occasionally.This implies that some respondents read health blogs from time to time or at infrequent intervals. Respondents who access health blogs daily make up the crop of respondents who rely heavily on health blogs for up-to-date information on health. Other respondents 70(18%) access health blogs weekly while 80(21%) of the respondents did not have any specific time they access health blogs.

**Table 4: Respondents' Reasons for Reading Health-Related Posts from Health Blogs**

| Options | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| For information | 200 | 51 |
| To seek for guidance/opinion | 80 | 21 |
| To learn from other people's experience | 30 | 7 |
| For specific enquiry | 80 | 21 |
| **Total** | **390** | **100** |

**Source: Field Survey 2019**

The Table above shows that 200 (51%) of the respondents read health blogs for information. We are in an information age where

the hunger for information is widespread. This explains the quest for information on health issues by urban Uyo residents. Amidst other sources of information on health, most people still depend on health blogs for information.Other respondents read health blogs for guidance/opinion, to learn from other people's experience and for specific enquiry. Staying healthy has been the desire of many persons hence the several reasons for reading health blogs.

**Table 5: Respondents' specific interest in reading health blogs**

| Option | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Nutrition/dietary plans | 90 | 23 |
| Work out plans | 70 | 18 |
| Fitness | 40 | 10 |
| Health tips | 30 | 8 |
| News | 50 | 13 |
| Research | 32 | 8 |
| Do it yourself (DIY) | 78 | 20 |
| **Total** | **390** | **100** |

**Source: Field Survey 2019**

Table 5above shows respondents' specific interest in readership of health blogs. While most of the respondents (23%) read health blogs for nutrition/dietary plans, others had other specific interest for so doing. This goes on to emphasize the importance urban Uyo residents give to issues pertaining to their health.

**Table 6: Respondents' Satisfaction with health information from Health Blogs**

| Option | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 200 | 51 |
| To some extent | 100 | 26 |
| Not sure | 90 | 29 |
| **Total** | **390** | **100** |

**Source: Field Survey 2019**

The Table above shows that 200 (51%) of the respondents are satisfied with health blogs.The greater level of satisfaction shows that health blogs are a reliable source of health information to most

urban Uyo residents. While some of the respondents are satisfied to some extent, others (29%) are not sure whether they are satisfied or not. Those in this category are urban Uyo residents who may not have frequent access to health blogs.

**Discussion of Findings**

Based on the objectives of this study, findings were discussed in relation to the five research questions raised. The implications of the analysed results were also analysed in this section.

**Research Question One: Do Uyo Urban Residents Access Health Blogs?**

From the data analysed in tables one, it could be deduced that urban Uyo residents access health blogs. Table 2 show that 310(80%)of the 390 respondents have access to health blogs, while 80 respondents representing 20% access health blogs sometimes. The above findings indicate that urbanUyo residents access health blogs. Though access to health blogs does not directly imply readership, it shows that in one way or the other urban Uyo residents make use of health blogs.

Identifying the various means through which respondents' access health blogs is in line with Crespo's writing on virtual community where he notes that blogs can stand alone or function as a part of other earlier mentioned applications. The study by Bissonenette-Maheux and Desroches (2018) also presents blogs as a supporting tool in communicating health information which is the major focus of the current study in relation to blog readers in urban Uyo. The implication of this finding is that more people are likely to access health blogs through their mobile phones with internet access. It is also obvious that apart from other sources of communication such as the traditional media, the Internet also present residents of urban Uyo with the opportunity of reading health blogs which contains health information from recognized sources. This makes blogs a convenient source of information for readers who want to find out information regarding their health.

**Research Question Two:How often do Urban Uyo Residents Read Health Blogs?**

One main objective of this study was to know the frequency at which urban Uyo residents read health blogs. This however is pre-determined by respondents' actual reading of health blogs,as earlier stated that access does not directly imply reading. So to ascertain the frequency, the issue of whether respondents read health blogs had to be established. Two hundred (200) representing 51% of the respondents read health blogs occasionally, 80(21%) respondents have no specific time while those who read health blogs weekly constituted 18% that is, 70 respondents, while 40 respondents that make up the remaining 10% read health blogs daily.

This is an indication that though blogs have been in existence, many urban Uyo residents have not become active readers of health blogs which implies that even though the source of health communication has been available, it is becoming a popular trend in which people could identify with through interactive participation to improve their health and well-being. Burke-Garcia, Gary & Wright (2018)affirms the use of blogs as a consideration for disseminating health information as well as accessing relevant health information from their readers.

**Research Question Three: Why do Urban Uyo residents Read Health Blogs?**

There are various reasons as to the readership of health blogs. From the analysed data in table 4, it was found that 200 respondents representing 51% read health blogs for information while 80 respondents representing 21% read health blogs for specific enquiry. The implication of this is that, if peopleread health blogs for specific enquiry only, it might affect their frequency in reading health blogs. This could be the reason why most people read health blogs occasionally as discovered previously in research question two. Notwithstanding, the information purpose for reading health blogs could spur readers to more frequent patronage of health blogs.

It was also found that 21% of the respondents read health blogs to seek for guidance/opinion of others. This reason makes it critical to understanding the nature and far reaching abilities of health blogs in terms of interactivity and meeting professionals of health care to help consumers make health-related decisions. Because blogs pave room for comments and feedback, it makes communication transactional where consumers are put through on areas that need clarifications thereby boosting confidence in the source of the information. This is to say that consumers can relate virtually and interpersonally with professionals as they would physically. This applies alsoto the respondents constituting 7% that read health blogs to learn from other people's experience.

This finding is in line with the study of Bissonette-Maleux and Desroches (2018) which revealed that there was a sense of proximity and connection between the blogger and blog readers that was helpful in improving their dietary behaviours.Other reasons for reading health blogs included research purposes which constituted 49% of the respondents. This indicates that most people likely read health blogs to research on topics that border on health concerns. Findings also show that 21% read health blogs as part of their routine, 23% when they have a health challenge and 7% because of their health history.

This means that health challenge could be a propeller for search of health information from health blogs as revealed in the finding. If respondents read health blogs as part of one's routine, the tendency to remain updated on certain issues is guaranteed which means there is possibility of knowing what one wouldn't have had knowledge on if one were to rely on reading health blogs when the need arises. As earlier noted, health information is set to improve one's health and that of others; hence a well-informed person can dish out same knowledge to others which would help in no little way.

**Research Question Four: What is the specific interest in reading health blogs among the residents of urban Uyo?**

Table 5 has information on the specific interest of respondents in reading health blogs. The data shows that 23% havespecific interest in nutrition/dietary plans.18% indicate their specific interest in work out plans, 10% went for fitness, 8% for health tips, 13% for news, another 8% for research while 20% of the respondents had specific interest in Do It Yourself (DIY). This means that with the level of interest respondents have in reading health blogs, active involvement and participation in reading health blogs such as commenting and interacting with the bloggers is anticipated. This corroborates with the Health Belief Model used in this work whose central tenet is that a person's thoughts and feelings control his or her actions.

The implication of this is that respondents who show some level of interest in reading health blogs would be motivated to take actions that can be beneficial to him/her. Those that perceive health to be important show more interest in reading health blogs.Lagu, Kaufman, and Asch (2008) stress the importance of health blogs in bringing to bare the opportunities presented by health blogs to aid both health professionals and their public to synergise in the use of health blog platform so as to enhance communication and appropriate information reception and treatment of health issues. Doing this will expand the capacity of health blogs in addressing various health needs of the public.

**Research Question Five:Are Urban Uyo Residents Satisfied with Information from Health Blogs?**

Table 6 has information on the details of respondents' satisfaction in health blogs. 51% of the respondents show a high level of satisfaction with information from health blogs. This constitutes a greater percentage representing respondents' views on health blogs. On the other hand, 29% are uncertain as to their satisfaction of health blogs probably due to the perceived inconsistency in reliability of health blogs, while the remaining 26% are somewhat

satisfied with information from health blogs. This is in line with the Uses and Gratifications theory used in this work. The theory assumes that since individuals differ, each person seeks out different messages, and uses those messages differently.

Lagu, Kaufman and Asch (2008) from their finding aver that blogs are a growing part of the public face of the health professionals. They offer physicians and nurses the opportunity to share their narratives. They also risk revealing confidential information or, in their tone or content, risk reflecting poorly on the blog authors and their professions. These are challenges faced by bloggers and blog readers which should be negotiated.

**Summary**

This study set out to ascertain "Readership of Health Blogs among Urban Uyo Residents"**.** The findings from the study are summarized as follows:

i. Urban Uyo residents have access to health blogs.
ii. Mosturban Uyo residents read health blogs occasionally with a handful reading daily and some at no specific time. This implies thatmost urban Uyo residents read health blogs frequently while others read only when the need arises.
iii. There are several reason urban Uyo residents read health blogs. Fifty-one(51%) of Uyo urban residents read health blogs to get information while others read for research purposes, for specific enquiry, to learn from other people's experience, to seek for guidance/opinion, when they have a health challenge, or as part of their routine, because of convenience and impersonality.
iv. Urban Uyo residents have specific interest for reading health blogs to include nutrition/diet plans,work out plans, fitness, health tips, news, research and Do It Yourself (DIY).
v. Majority of urban Uyo residents are satisfied with the information from health blogs as health blogshave proven to be helpful and reliable in disseminating information on health to its readers.

## Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it is concluded that urban Uyo residents are active readers of health blogs and use the information from the health blogs to meet their different needs. It could further be inferred that since most of the urban Uyo residents read health blogs regularly, they also make use of the tips for healthy living that are contained in the health blogs. Blogs certainly play a great role in health communication. However, the huge potential of blogs needs to be fully tapped to result in a more dependable source of information with regard to health. With the exponential growth in the blogosphere evident from the readership of urban Uyo residents, especially among the youths, access to health blogs should not only be guaranteed but contents expanded to address the numerous health queries from readers. This is a call for public health professionals and health communicators (health bloggers)to focus on specialized areas in order to meet the special interest of the respondents as regards their health. This is only when satisfaction is guaranteed.

In this digital age and with reliance on the Internet due to its accessibility, most people especially the youth depend heavily on information from the Internet. Therefore, health blogs if appropriately harnessed can present tremendous options as well as increase in readership in order to aid in the making of informed decisions pertaining to good health. Those who read health blogs are most likely to be influenced to make medical decisions thereby helping them manage their own health.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations aremade:

i. Since residents of urban Uyo read health blogs,access to the Internet should be strengthened in order to improve the use of blogs for communicating health related messages. Likely challenges which impede accessibility such as poor electricity supply, internet connectivity, lack of data, among others, should be addressed.

ii. Health communicators should take advantage of blogs to provide professional and interactive-based healthcare services to the populace, so as to improve readership. This is because the satisfaction of the readers is dependent on the contents and quality of information in the blogs.
iii. Blogs and the internet should be addressed as part of the larger health communication system with topics of special interest to the public well plunged and newer ones explored. The specific interest of the readers should be borne in mind to increase interest and readership.
iv. Since health blog is interactive, the transactional quality of its use should be addressed and used by government and other stakeholders in the health sector in order to maximise the potential of health blogs for the overall health of the citizenry.

**References**


Babbie, E. (2013). The practice of social research. 13th ed. Wadsworth Cengage Learning: New Zealand.

Batta, E. (2013). Health communication issues. In Wilson &Batta (Eds.),*Science, health &environmental communication: global issues & local perspectives.* Ibadan:University Press Publishing House.

Batta, E. &Iwokwgh, S. (2015).Optimising the digital age health-wise: utilization of new/social media by Nigerian teaching hospitals.*Procedia Socialand BehaviouralSciences,* 176, 175-185.www.sciencedirect.com.

Bissonenette-Maheux, V. &Desroches, S. (2018). Women's perceptions of usefulness and ease of use of four healthy eating blog characteristics: A qualitative study of 33 French-Canadian women.*Journalof Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics,* 118 (7), 1220-1227.www.sciencedirect.com.

Burke-Garcia, A., Gary, L.,& Wright, B. (2018). Perceptions about disseminating healthinformation among mommy bloggers: quantitative Study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 7 (4).www.researchprotocols.org.

Chu, W.&Chan, (2017). How, when and why people seek health information online: qualitative study in Hong Kong.*Interactive Journalof Medical Research, 12, (12).* www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5743920

Cline, W. & Haynes, M. (2001). Consumer health information seeking on the internet: the state of the art.*Health Education Research,* 16 (6), 671-692. https://doi.org/10.10.1093/her/16.6.671.

Crespo, R. (2007). Virtual community health promotion.*Preventing Chronic Disease Public Health Research and Practice, and Policy,* 4 (3). www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov.

Crossman, A. (2019). Convenience samples for research: *A brief overview of the sampling technique*.www.thought.co.com.

Ekpu, F. (2013). The concepts of health and diseases.In Nkana N., Ekpu, F.,& Robert, O.(Eds.), *Citizenship and peace studies*. Uyo: Clef Prints.

Fayoyin, A. (2016). Engaging social media for health communication in Africa:Approaches results and lessons.*Journal of Mass Communication and Journalism,*6(10),www.omicsonline.org.

Jamie,S. (2019). The most popular blog types-2019.*Makeawebsitehub.com*.https://makeawebsite.hub.com/examples-of-blog.

Kissane, D. (2015). The nine reasons people read blogs. www.doz.com/marketing- resources /blogs-the nine-reasons-people read.

Lagu, T. et al (2008). Content of weblogs written by health professionals.*Journal of General and Internal Medicine,* 23 (10).https://doi.org.

Marcus, A., Westra, A., Eastwood, D.,& Barnes, L. (2012). What are young adultssayingabout mental health? An analysis of internet blogs.*Journal of Medical Internet Research,* 14 (1).www.jmir.org.

Malikhao, P. (2016). Effective health communication for sustainable development.Public health in the 21st century.*Nova Science Publishers*.novapublishers.com.

McNab, C. (2009). What social media offers to health professionals and citizens.*Bulletinof the world health organisation,* 87, 566-566. *Blogs and Health Communication.*www.scielosp.org (scholar.google.com).

Miller, A. & Pole, A. (2010). Diagnosis blog: checking up on health blogs in the blogosphere.*American Journal of Public Health Association,* 100 (8),1514-1519. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov.

Nutbeam, D. (2008).The evolving concept of health literacy.*Social Science &Medicine Journal*67, 2072-2078. www.elsevier.com/locate/socscimed.

Nwagbara, G. &Nda, I. (2017). Uyo urban residents' awareness and utilization of theNational Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) services.*Uniuyo Journal of Communication Studies UJCS,* 1(1).

Senam, N. &Akpan, U. (2014).The survey communication research.*International Journal of Education and Research*, 2(10), 467-478.

Shi, J., Poorisat, T., & Salmon, T. (2018). The use of social networking sites (SNSs) inhealth communication campaigns: reviews and recommendations. *Taylor & Francis in Health Communication*, 33 (1), 49-56. http://ddl.handle.net/10220/48479.

Wimmer, R. &Dominick, J. (2011). *Mass media research: An introduction*(9th ed.).New

Zealand: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.