

**ASHESI UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**  
**ETHICAL AND PRIVACY CONCERNS INVOLVED IN GHANAIS USING**  
**THE INTERNET**

By

**ANNA-LISA EWURESI AMOWI HAMMOND**

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**THESIS**

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**THE INTERNET**

By

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**APRIL 2014**

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:.....

Candidate's Name:.....

Date:.....

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertation laid down by Ashesi University College.

Supervisor's Signature:.....

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Date:.....

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## **ABSTRACT**

The internet has become an unavoidable tool for development and communication in Ghana and so it is ignorant to avoid the increasing disregard for ethics and privacy on the internet and the lack of awareness of how our data and personal information are protected. This thesis research is aimed at gathering information on the awareness of Ghanaian internet users on these issues and making recommendations for software and application developers and policy makers on these issues.

**Key Concepts:** Privacy, Ethics, Data Protection, Internet use, Internet user behavior.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction:

In the past century, the internet as a connection of networks that allows transfer of data has become one of the most relied on modes of communication worldwide. It is a tool used by individuals and businesses to stay connected, share information, collect data, update potential and regular customers on changes in services or products provided and so much more. In the last decade, the internet has changed slowly from being a sensation for computer scientists and other technology inclined people and turned into the biggest instrument the world depends on not only for convergence of information, communication and technology but also as a tool that companies can use to gain a competitive advantage over businesses. The internet also enables people from different countries and continents to interact and learn from each other without having to leave their homes.

With the addition of Social Media sites like Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, and such, the internet also allows everyday users to stay connected with friends and family, gather data, share information and download or upload music, video and image files easily.

## 1.2 Background:

According to the Internet World Statistics website, the world's total population as at 2011 was just under 7 billion and out of that number, over 2 billion people, which represents a penetration percentage of 32.7% made use of the internet. Of the entire world population, a little over 1 billion people represented the continent of Africa with 139 million a penetration percentage of 13.5% of that number representing the number of people who made use of the internet. (Miniwatts Marketing Group) Ghana, in 1999 had a total population of 18.5 million and 20,000 people out of that number were confirmed internet users. According to Internet World Statistics, this number continued to rise from 2 million internet users out of a population of 24.7 million in 2011 to 3.5 million internet users out of a population of 25.2 million as at June 30 2012. As at 30 June, 2012, Ghana had a registered 1.6 million Facebook members. (Miniwatts Marketing Group)

## 1.3 Problem Statement:

With the increasing number of people putting content online and the increase in type of content such as audio, video, photography and stories, it is important to note the ethical and privacy issues involved. It has been observed that although social media and websites have privacy and ethical considerations, it may be that Ghanaians are not aware of these considerations or, although they are aware, they do not make use of them. Ethics are defined as a set of moral principles that govern an individual or a group on what is seen as acceptable behavior. (Merriam Webster Inc.) Computer ethics is a set

of moral principles that govern the usage of computers. One of the common issues of computer ethics is violation of copyright issues. Duplicating copyrighted content without the author's approval, or accessing the personal information of others are some of examples of the violation of ethical principles.

Privacy is the state of being free from intrusion or disturbance in one's private life or in the private affairs of a person. (Merriam Webster Inc.) Although it has been argued that there is so much information about us online that personal privacy may be a thing of the past, the aim of my research is to gather data on if Ghanaians are aware of the ethics and privacy issues involved in the usage of the internet and the risks of posting content online. This data will be useful in advising Ghanaian software developers and other developers that create or are interested in creating for the Ghanaian market. It will be available for them to work based on what Ghanaians expect with respect to privacy and ethics and to know how best to protect their data and information while giving them the best internet usage service possible.

The problem that I am trying to understand is if Ghanaian internet users are aware of the ethical and privacy issues involved in using the internet and if there is any way that internet application developers in Ghana can help raise awareness of privacy measures and present these privacy measures in an easily accessible and understandable way.

#### 1.4 Objectives:

I hope to finish with a research paper that has thoroughly investigated awareness of the ethics involved in posting and taking Ghanaian visual content from the internet, and also awareness of the privacy issues involved in using the internet, with recommendations for software developers on how to make these settings easily understandable and on how much information to give to users. I want this research paper to gather as much information as possible to educate others and also to find out for my own curiosity whether Ghanaians are aware of these issues. This paper will also fill the gap that I have found with respect to the information that is available on internet ethical and privacy issues in Ghana.

The specific objectives that this study will cover are as follows:

- How much Ghanaians know about the importance of ethics and privacy in using the internet
- How much of an effect ethics and privacy have on the usage of the internet by Ghanaians
- How Ghanaian internet users would like to be informed of the significance ethics and privacy have on their internet usage.
- To provide a set of recommendations for the use of privacy in software designed for Ghanaians.

## 1.5 Research Questions:

Two main questions I would like my research to answer are, 1. On the side of both content generators and subjects, is there an awareness of the ethical issues in posting visual content online? Some sub questions that can help in answering this main question are:

How many Ghanaians are online? Are there different profiles of online users? What are some of the things that Ghanaian internet users do online? Do those things have ethical dimensions? What are the ways in which they demonstrate lack of knowledge of these ethical dimensions?

And 2. Do Ghanaian software application developers create an environment that encourages ethical usage of the internet? Some sub questions under this are:

How do Ghanaian software and app developers provide privacy? How well do Ghanaian internet users know and use privacy policies? How do software developers make privacy settings available to the user?

## 1.6 Motivation:

As an avid internet user, I have had online accounts and used the internet for over ten years and I only realized recently that I was unaware of how much information I was releasing to the public through the internet and how this information may be easily accessed by other people. After the Snowden incident in 2013 where Edward Snowden (a former American

National Security Agency employee) leaked some information on how much personal data the NSA was keeping on the American public (Poitras, Greenwald and MacAskill), I began to take a keen interest in the Ghana media laws, the laws that govern our use of the internet, and the Data Protection Act of 2012. I also began to take note of the ways in which I could protect my data on the internet and in doing this I usually asked people for guidance only to find out that they knew very little of how they could protect the data on the internet and how the data and information about themselves was being protected. I noticed that some web sites and social media sites had privacy settings and sometimes explained to users after much research how they protected their information but it was my opinion that these explanations were usually obscure and not easily understandable by the lay man. My reasons for asking these questions therefore, are mainly based on my intellectual curiosity about the topic and my wish to know more about this field. It is also based on observations I have made from my active social media and internet usage.

### 1.7 Hypotheses:

This research paper is being written with the assumption that Ghanaians are not really aware of the ethical issues surrounding internet usage and that they use the internet with disregard of the internet-related ethical issues. A study conducted in 2004 in selected West African countries including Ghana showed that there was very little awareness of internet-related ethical issues and described Ghanaians as “passively optimistic” explaining that we are unconcerned about such issues and look to the state to regulate internet usage

and the issues that may develop as a result of it. (Brunet et al.) In conducting this research, I expect to find that although most Ghanaians are unaware of the ethics involved in internet usage, there are a few that have begun to make a conscious effort to be ethical in their usage of the internet with regards to copyright and privacy. I also expect to find that although the content generators (people posting online) may be aware of these issues, the subjects of their content are not aware especially when it comes to the aged, semi-literate and illiterate Ghanaians that are not technologically competent.

## 1.8 Outline of Thesis:

### Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter presents the specific area of study, gives a brief background into the study, outlines the motivations of the researcher and also presents the objectives of the study.

### Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review for this thesis identifies and discusses various literature related to the study under the following topics:

- General history of the internet and its use in West Africa, specifically, Ghana.
- The idea of the internet as a physical place and the ethics and privacy involved in seeing it as such.
- Information on ethics, internet security, internet privacy and media law.

### Chapter 3: Methodology and Limitations

This chapter gives detailed information on the methods used in the research and the research design used in the study. It outlines the methods used for data collection and analysis and examines the characteristics of the design or methodology that impacted or influenced the application or interpretation of the results of the study.

#### Chapter 4: Research Findings, Analysis

This chapter presents the findings and results of the research project

#### Chapter 5: Recommendations and Conclusions

This chapter summarizes the entire thesis project and provides recommendations. It will discuss the findings of the research in relation to the research problem and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introduction:

I must begin by stating that it was very difficult to find literature that focused on internet-related ethics and privacy in Ghana. This may be due to the fact that Africa is a late adopter of the internet and also due to the fact that in African countries the internet is not as widely used as in the Western world. Figures show that 15.3% of people in Africa use the internet as compared to the 84.7% of internet users in the rest of the world. (Miniwatts Marketing Group)

My almost futile search for relevant literature only proved to me that this topic should be researched and documented to provide relevant data on the topic of ethics and the internet in Ghana. Ethics are defined as the principles of right and wrong that are accepted by an individual or a social group. They can also be defined as a system of principles governing mortality and acceptable conduct. Ethics are a very important part of using the internet because they will help govern the usage of the internet and will help users to do what is right and know what is wrong. Internet privacy encompasses the right of personal privacy concerning the storing, repurposing, sharing with third-parties, and displaying of information that relates to oneself through the Internet. Internet privacy can be classified under computer privacy. Privacy concerns have been a concern since the beginning of large scale computer sharing.

Because my research is focused on two main ethical areas which are explained in my Research questions, that is the posting of content online and taking of content from the internet and also on the awareness of how users can protect their information and data, my literature review also covers all these issues.

As a result of the internet being known as the storehouse for all information about all people and places, more people are putting content on the internet with the hopes of contributing to the sharing of information with the rest of the world. There is a lot of information being put online about Ghanaians and this may be with a lack of awareness of the ethical issues concerned with the posting of content online. For example, photos taken of Ghanaians by foreigners and Ghanaians are uploaded onto social media networks like Facebook without the permission or even the knowledge of the subjects. There are also no checks on the people pulling photos off the internet and using them for different reasons than they were intended. An example is a billboard for a computer school in Accra using a photo that was pulled from the Ashesi website with no knowledge from the owner of the photo or the owners of the Ashesi website. Another more common example is the usage of photos of celebrities and random people on sign boards and other notice boards of salons, barber shops and boutiques in Ghana, which is something that has been observed by many Ghanaians.

## 2.2 History of the internet and its use in West Africa and Ghana.

My literature review has been separated into sections based on the findings from readings. The first section is based on the history of the internet and its use in West Africa specifically Ghana. To gain some knowledge on the growth of the internet in developing countries such as Ghana, I used as a resource an article published in the Information Development Journal in April of 2009 titled "The growth of the Internet and Knowledge Networks, and their Impact in the Developing World" written by Ingrid Parent and Neil Cruickshank. The paper attempts to describe the growth of the internet and the opportunities this growth presents to the developing world libraries as they facilitate easier access to information and knowledge. From starting out as a tool for connecting people, the internet has become a social networking vehicle that is constantly changing the ways in which people in all countries communicate with each other. The paper starts out by describing the genesis of the internet tracing it to the telegraph and to the United States ARPA (Advanced Research Projects Agency) in 1986 starting out with less than 2000 hosts (connected computers) in 1985 to half a billion estimated hosts in 2008. (Parent and Cruickshank) The first intentional connection to the internet was between the US and Norway in 1973 followed soon after communication between the US and the UK. The paper goes on to give more information of first usages of the network and how the World Wide Web took over with electronic mail and file storage and sharing. This led to the creation of web browsers such as Mosaic and the demand to search the internet which gave birth to Lycos, then Yahoo, Alta Vista up till Google in 1998. The paper then

moves on to discuss the creation of emerging economies and then discusses the Digital Divide and its main causes bandwidth, computer equipment and training which left Africa far behind.

### 2.3 The Internet as a Place:

The next area I explored in my literature review is the idea of the internet as a physical place and the ethics involved in seeing it as such. I consulted an article written by Dan Hunter in May of 2003 for the California Law Review, Titled "Cyberspace as Place and the Tragedy of the Digital Commons". The article simply explains how the "Cyberspace as Place" metaphor leads to an undesirable private control of the previously commons-like internet and the emergence of a digital anticommons. It attempts to explain that the internet which was once a free space has now become a place where soon no one will be allowed to access competitors cyberspace "assets" without a license or permission from the owners. This can be linked to ethics in using the internet by recognizing that private ownership of the internet raises the stakes regarding ethics. Once the internet is regarded as a physical place, it might increase the awareness of ethics in using it or might push people to seriously consider the moral and ethical implications.

The paper starts by describing how the internet used to be a free space where people could form online communities with their own rules and where everything was free, open and filled with possibilities. But in recent times, as with the western frontier, settlers have begun to portion of parts of the internet as their own private property and have begun imposing restrictions and privacy

rules on others. In this article, the author suggests that thinking of cyberspace as a place is leading us to a tragedy of the digital anticommons which is the reverse of a commons; a situation in which a resource is subject to fragmented rights, whereby potential users can exclude one another. It seeks to conclude that unless we change our concept and legalization of the internet, we will create a digital anticommons.

The first part of the article shows why discussions of the Cyberspace as Place metaphor have mistaken the question of how we think about cyberspace with the question of how we should regulate cyberspace. It gives a history of the idea of cyberspace as a place citing instances of it being mentioned in articles such as David Johnson and David Post's 1996 article (Johnson and Post) on the topic and challenges from Jack Goldsmith in 1998. (Goldsmith) It also talks about the idea that cyberspace was an independent place for ruling purposes.

After giving examples of numerous documentations that prove that the internet is a place that needs laws and rules as much as a state or nation, the article moves into part two which focuses on the importance of metaphors and the influence they have on the way people think and act. The paper also shows the importance of using metaphors to explain complex things and the place metaphors have in the present cognitive system. It then begins to explain the effects this metaphor has had on the development of the legal framework for the internet. It explains how the idea of thinking of the internet as a physical place has influenced the rules that have been created and shows evidence to

prove that the view of the internet as a place has helped in understanding online communication environments. Part two challenges the perception that the metaphor is irrelevant to law and puts forward that thinking of the internet as a place should also influence the idea-generation and law-making for the internet.

In the third part of the paper, the author focuses on the influence this particular metaphor has had on development of a legal framework for the internet and concludes that the cyberspace as Place metaphor has greatly influenced the ethical and legal aspects of the internet. It discusses different forms of internet crimes such as hacking, spamming, etc. and examines the illegal aspects of accessing information on the internet. It also examines privacy issues such as accessing emails without permission and downloading content without the permission of the owner who uploaded it onto the internet in the first place. Part three also touches on the argument of whether the internet is public or private space mentioning that if the internet is public space where people can be free then there should be no limits to what people can do on the internet and no issue of privacy since "what a person knowingly exposes to the public, even in his own home or office is not a subject of Fourth Amendment protection", then anything that has been posted onto the internet is now in public space and so is not legally under any protection and can be used by anyone who can gain access to it.

Part four of the article gives some more details of why the use of this metaphor including the concept that like a real place, some parts are private

and some parts are public and things posted on private property (websites or social media sites) should not be accessed by the public. Part four argues that we are leading to a time where no one will be allowed to access information online without a license or some sort of permission from the owner of the content.

In summary, the article is an attempt to discourage creating rules and guidelines for using the internet because it will defeat the purpose of the internet as a free space where people from all over the world can share information and communicate. It puts forward that if this is done, in addition to the many problems that it will create, simple things like searching the internet will become increasingly difficult since a user will have to bypass permissions from websites and this will make searches less thorough. It is important to note that although this article discourages the development of legal or ethical standards for using the internet, the author researched and wrote the article based on the United States of America setting which is completely different from the Ghanaian setting. I nevertheless found this resource useful because it was a discussion on whether the internet being observed as a physical place should have the same rules of copyrighting and privacy that are in the real world, which is very important for my research. The author concludes by stating that one of the main causes of the internet flourishing was its illusion of freedom and anonymity which allowed people to do whatever they wanted to do and so policing the internet halls would take away this freedom that has worked so well. Another effect of seeing the

internet as place is that it will increase the awareness of the internet as a place that needs not only legal regulation but ethical and moral regulation as well.

#### 2.4. Ethics, Internet Security, Internet Privacy and Media Law

This next section of my literature review is directed at finding information on ethics, internet security, internet privacy and media law.

To do this, I read "Ethics and the Internet in West Africa: Toward an Ethical Mode of Integration" by Patrick J. Burnet, Oumarou Tiemtore and Marie-Claude Vettraino-Soulard research which was carried out in 2004 and focused on 5 countries in West Africa including Ghana, Senegal and Cote D'Ivoire.

This paper is a report on a study carried out by a team of three researchers working on three separate continents, Africa, Europe and North America. The study is based on investigations in five West African countries and the aim of the project was to study the manner in which the spread of internet in Africa raises ethical issues that should be identified to ensure compatibility of the technology with development in African countries. The research paper begins by giving some history of internet usage in Africa and the world and then goes on to put forward the hypothesis that the "so-called information and communication network creates - if not imposes - on its users a relationship with the world, the other, and self that differs radically from that of any other means of communication to date" The internet brought about an entirely different means of communication than was existing and with it, a

whole new set of rules. The paper seeks to force us to question ourselves about the ethical issues in Internet Integration in Southern countries, more specifically in West African countries.

In spite of the major barriers faced West African countries as a result of low literacy rates and a lack of appropriate infrastructure, the internet offers a very significant benefit to West African countries and remains a source of diverse and unlimited opportunities. The internet gives researchers access to information, resources and an even greater opportunity to contribute to these resources. The internet is also a major media method and so can sometimes be used for unethical purposes just as traditional media methods are used for unethical purposes even though is recognized as a major opportunity for freedom of expression and democracy. A place where people can be free to act without consequences of society.

The use of the internet raises the question of regulation. There have been many discussions on the subject including a conference in Paris in 2000 called the INFOethics2000 that dealt with the ethical, legal and societal challenges of cyberspace. The general theme of the conference was the right to universal access to information in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and its goal was to stimulate reflection and debate on the ethical, legal, and societal challenges of the information society. Some of the issues discussed were the role of public authorities in access to information, the "fair-use" concept in the information society, and protection of human dignity in the digital age. UNESCO intends to develop an action plan with the following objectives:

- To facilitate broader and fairer access to information and communications networks and services and provide information;
- To facilitate, through the use of international conventions, the application of legal exceptions to copyright for developing countries;
- To promote freedom of expression while protecting privacy on global networks; and
- To consolidate monitoring and information activities focusing on progress in the development of the information society within member states (UNESCO 2000).

Some scholars have considered global regulations based on the notion of universal ethics but have also thought that this would either create cultural assimilation and extinction or on the contrary, the possibility of a true representation of the world in all its complexity and diversity, giving more people from all across the globe a chance to interact with each other and to connect with others.

The significance of ethics is also important to consider because if there is no understanding of why it is necessary in the first place, it may be near impossible to get people to follow ethical rules or to use the internet governed by them. The paper goes on to discuss why ethics matter and begins this by asking some serious questions about ethics and the internet such as "How do our individual, collective and institutional communications practices raise ethical questions?", "What answers have been, or could be agreed?" More specifically, research on internet has led to certain questions which include

questions on privacy and the role of the government in regard to illicit or offensive content, regulations, censorship and awareness-training for internet users. There were also some regulation questions on not only if it should be regulated but also if it can even be regulated. There were also some questions on whether the responsibility to make internet usage better should be an individual or a collective responsibility and how we can ensure respect for the right to privacy and individual freedom and human rights. The research paper showed that Africa's fascination with technology has led to most people focusing on the lack of technological and financial resources in African countries. Most people brush aside any ethical questions related to the internet and the ethical dimension only surfaces as a secondary consideration and only in a limited part of the population and is seen as far less important than other more important factors. The paper also highlighted the different behaviors and types of internet users. The active users, who actively develop ethically responsible characters and take the time to reflect on consequences of and problems in relation to the usage of the internet and seek information and training. The second kind are the passive users who do not often stop to think about the consequences of their actions on the internet and usually take a passive attitude when discussing ethics and the internet. There are also the latent and aware users whose characteristics are described based on their level of ethical awareness.

The research led the team to develop an ethical mode of integration that will act as a reference for national policy in African countries and for individuals using the internet. This model can also be used beyond Africa and applied on

a larger scale. It then went on to examine each of the countries in detail as well as the way the internet affects the culture of a nation and how far the members of that nation has exposure to different cultures. In Ghana, it was found that most informants thought about the problems of awareness-raising in relation to themselves as well as their children and were concerned about how easy it was to access pornography and download it on the internet. Some felt that it was necessary to prevent the broadcasting of certain content and thought that it should be made a legislative or legal issue instead of an ethical issue. In Ghana, it is difficult to influence the content put online which makes censorship difficult and filtering of immoral content almost impossible.

The paper goes on to propose a model of ethical behavior profiles for West African countries which described each section of internet users as aware, latent, active or passive, with the most significant groups being active or passive users. Active users are those who adopt ethically responsible behavior and take the time to reflect on the consequences of and the problems related to usage of the internet. Active users may participate in seminars and conferences and read books on ethics. Passive users on the other hand are the users that do not often stop to think of the consequences and also the problems related to internet usage. Even when they show a slight but still certain level of sensitivity to the problems and issues of internet usage, these users are not really concerned by them and will even resist messages that are geared towards awareness of these matters. Latent users are unaware of the issues whereas aware users are aware but not as involved as active users. According

to the article, the following are some facts to consider when attempting to categorize a group of people.

- Those who recognize that problems are related to Internet use will have a greater tendency to seek information about these issues, process it, and apply it in changing the ways they act.

- A high level of constraint (for example, political or technological) reduces the likelihood that users will seek or process information on the consequences of Internet use. This is because they know that the information will hold no value or meaning for them.

- The level of involvement is an indicator of a user's passive or active nature, as far as the search for information on the Internet's impact is concerned.

Ghana along with most of the African countries was found to be in the passively optimistic group. They are not consciously concerned with ethical issues and do not acknowledge the existence of internet- related problems and are also not aware of any kinds of constraints in finding possible solutions. This is possibly due to their attitude of noninvolvement and their low awareness of internet-related ethical issues and constraints. The paper recommended that serious awareness-raising should be done in Ghana.

In summary, internet users in selected West African countries showed a very low level of interest in the ethics of using the internet because not many of them have access to the internet and so are unconcerned with internet-

related ethical issues. Most of the informants for the study suggested that more access to the internet would reduce problems associated with it and called on state intervention to reduce costs of accessing the internet.

The different aspects of media law can also be found in the second edition of Peter Carey's "Media Law", in a chapter that focuses on the internet and media law. The main challenges of the law that have been created as a result of the widespread and growing use of technology for transfer and dissemination of information and services to global audiences.

Although the internet was historically an anarchic and lawless place, in recent times, many people have recognized the need for some degree of regulation but the nature of the internet as a communications system that inherently does not recognize national laws or geographical frontiers, produces challenges for the law far beyond anything it has had to cope with to date.

One of the first things to deal with in relation to the internet in media law is data protection. Data protection legislation can be traced back to the 1970s and the threat to personal privacy by the advent of the internet and the facilitation of rapid data manipulation. The Younger Committee on Privacy recommended the introduction of some guiding principles for the use of computers which manipulated personal data. The guiding principles recognize that information should be held only for a specific purpose and should not be used without appropriate authorization and if to be used for other purposes, arrangements should be made so a subject can be told about or have access to information held concerning him or her. The Data protection act passed in

1984 set up a Data Protection registrar Office and ruled that all processors of personal data had to register their processing and to comply with a set of eight data protection principles. The latest legislation, the Data Protection act of 1998 took things much further by broadening the meaning of processing and creating a new category of 'sensitive personal data', enhancing data subjects' access rights and banning transfers of personal data to other countries.

The next thing to consider is defamation. Defamation refers to an abusive attack on a person's character or good name or a false accusation of an offence or a malicious misrepresentation of someone's words or actions. Because the internet provides a very quick and immediate source of releasing information with a global audience of millions, it is a tool that people use to spread information which may sometimes be malicious. The defamation laws are designed to stop people from spreading false information about others or for misrepresenting people's words or actions or using them against the person but it has not been very successful in preventing cyber bullying or the use of people's information against them possibly because most people are unaware of these laws.

Another important part of internet and media law is the copyright law which involves contents of websites for example like literary and artistic works. Although photos, videos and books are protected by copyright, many people have seen the development of the new technology as posing a very significant if not insurmountable, threat to the protection of copyright works because virtually anything that can be reduced into digital form can be transferred to

any user of the internet free of charge. Recently “databases” have been included as copyright works since January 1998.

In addition, the Copyrights and Rights in Databases regulation law bestow protection upon information retrieved and stored on the internet as being commercially valuable and so must not be extracted or re-used without the owner’s permission. These laws are all supposed to protect the rights of users of the internet and also of other people from being defamed or abused on the internet. The book outlines these laws in an effort to ensure that the rights of the individuals are protected. Where these laws do not work, it is the hope that the ethical and moral codes of the society will protect the people and the information they put online.

I consulted an article from Ghana Web on whether the internet in Ghana needs to be policed or not. The article written by Theophilus Tawiah observed that the internet will continue to be an integral part of human communication and serves as a medium for enhancing democracy and information transformation. He also noted that the embrace of the internet has also led to the increase of online fraud, cyber bullying, abuse, defamation, libel, harassment and racism. A lot of countries have begun to police the internet with the hope of identifying individuals and groups who break the law. The article addresses the key issues facing the use of the internet and also analyses the challenges that need to be surmounted in order to control the use of the internet by Ghanaians. On social media sites, people regularly invade the privacy of celebrities, politicians, etc. and defame them. The tort of defamation

protects internet users from invasion of privacy through undesired publicity or mockery. The concern has been raised that in trying to police the internet use and prevent defamation, there is the need to ensure that there is no threat to the freedom of speech that is guaranteed by law. (Tawiah) The article goes on further to discuss whether the policing of the internet prevents people from exercising their human rights. Article 18(2) of the 1992 constitution establishes that everyone has the right to privacy. Article 21(1) (a) of the 1992 constitution also gives the right to freedom of speech and expression. The right to privacy and right to freedom of speech and expression are not absolute rights because they may be interfered with by the state under certain circumstances. There may be a justified reason to invade your right to privacy because of someone else's right to freedom of expression. The monitoring of activities on the internet will invade your right to privacy but may be in the interest of national security. "The real threat to the life of the nation, in the sense of a people living in accordance with its traditional laws and political values, comes not from terrorism but from laws such as these" The balancing act between the rights to freedom of speech and expression that is fully realized on the internet and on social media and the rights that these same internet users have of privacy can only be determined in a court of law (Tawiah). The article concludes by saying that the best solution at the moment would be for Individuals and institutions to put security controls in place to ensure that they are not abused by other internet users. This they can do by making use of the existing security and privacy settings that they find on the internet.

Ghana has in recent times become concerned with the protection of personal data and privacy on the internet. (Daily Guide Ghana) In 2012, the Ghanaian parliament passed the Data Protection Bill into an Act to set out the rights and responsibilities of data controllers, data processors and data subjects in relation to personal data. The Act will establish a Data Protection Commission which will then make it a point to ensure that the country uses the internet for administrative and business activities and would regulate the uses that may cause people to lose confidence in the use of the internet. This would go a long way in encouraging the development of ICT mediator platforms and technologies. The legislation will deal with personal data on the internet which has in recent times reached significant proportions. (Daily Guide Ghana)

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction:

The purpose of this study is to gauge the awareness of Ghanaians towards the ethical and privacy issues involved in the usage of the internet. For this research, ethics as already explained above are defined as the set of moral rules or beliefs that a society lives by. The research study explored the views of Ghanaians when it comes to the generation and usage of visual content such as pictures and videos on the internet. For my literature review, I explored the different kinds of ethical considerations in using the internet, copyright and other media law, the image of cyberspace as a physical place and more.

The research methodology is important as it shows the path the researcher takes to conduct the research collect and analyze data (Kumar).

This section will explain in detail how I gained this information, who I gathered it from and how the information was gathered and analyzed to make sense towards answering my research questions.

#### 3.2 Research Purpose:

The purpose of this study was to investigate the level of awareness that Ghanaians have with respect to ethics and privacy in using the internet. The

research will also give recommendations to Ghanaian software developers on how to develop for the Ghanaian market.

### 3.3 Research Approach:

For this research, I chose the qualitative instead of the quantitative method. Qualitative research can be defined as the process of attempting to understand the unique interactions in a specific situation. This may be not necessarily to make predictions on what might occur but to make sense or understand in depth the characteristics of the situation and the meanings that are drawn from it by participants. It may also be to observe the way the participants react to these specific situations. The aim of qualitative research is to truthfully present findings to others who are interested in what you are doing. Qualitative research also seeks to provide an understanding of human experiences, their perceptions, motivations, intentions and behavioral differences based on description and observation of a subject.

There are different types of qualitative research methods. They include but are not limited to case study, ethnography, phenomenology, historical, action research, content analysis, grounded theory and generic qualitative method. The type that best fits my research is content analysis. Content analysis is used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts. Researchers will quantify, analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such words and concepts and then make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer, the audience and

even the culture of the people. This led to my choice of a qualitative descriptive study which will be explained further on.

### 3.4 Research Design:

This research design is aimed to capture appropriate data and have an appropriate plan for analysis for the subject under investigation. There is clear and reasonable justification for the methods and tools chosen. The research was opened up to gather data from an estimated sample size of 80 participants. Online questionnaires were opened up to 80 internet users with the aim of gathering information on user behaviors with regards to ethics and privacy. There was also the use of purposive sampling to interview some Ghanaian software developers and website managers on their experiences pertaining to ethics and privacy in using the internet. The final interviews were done with DreamOval Limited and Humans of Accra because they were easy to get information from due to my personal connections. Some other developers were reached out to but did not respond. All participants for both the questionnaires and the interviews were selected regardless of age, sex and ethnic background. The online questionnaires were aimed at Ghanaian respondents so that the recommendations that will be made later will directly focus on Ghanaian internet users.

The participants were recruited through networks and connections with website and software developers and website managers. The online participants were mostly recruited over the internet and through the snowballing. All the participants were informed that participation was voluntary

and that they could withdraw at any time without it affecting them in any way. Each participant was required to read and agree to an informed consent form before partaking in the study and because the research was anonymous, their identities were kept strictly confidential. Responses ranged from Senior High school Graduates to Masters and Professional studies graduates and their ages ranged from 15 to 50 year olds.

### 3.5 Instrumentation:

The instrumentation that was used to collect the data for this research was as already mentioned above in the research design section, questionnaires and interviews. The interviews were structured but participants were allowed to add any information they considered important. The questionnaires consisted of a mix of close and open ended questions geared towards getting as much information from the participants as possible. The sample questionnaires are attached under Appendix B.

### 3.6 Procedure:

The study was considered to be one of little or no risk to participants and the probability of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research was not greater than any ordinarily encountered in daily life, or during the routine of normal physical or psychological examinations or tests. The procedure for collection of data was approved by the Ashesi University Human Subjects Review Committee as being of no harm to participants.

### 3.7 Data Processing and Analysis:

For the online questionnaires, the online software Google Docs was used to gather the data for processing. I used a qualitative descriptive study because I had fewer than 100 respondents. This was to help me offer a comprehensive summary of the data collected. A form of content analysis was employed for the interviews. A critical look was taken at the documents, text or speech to see what themes emerged or stood out. What did the participants talk about? And how the themes they mentioned related to each other. Because the content analysis here was driven by my theory of insufficient awareness, I was on the lookout for themes that were directed towards or in line with how much the participants are aware of and what their experiences had informed them of the awareness Ghanaians have of ethics and privacy in internet use.

### 3.8 Ethical Concerns:

This study presents very little risk to participants in any way that pertains to experimental treatment or exposure to physical or psychological harm. Care was taken to ensure that all participants understood the nature of the study and that it is voluntary. The Informed consent form will show that any identifying details of their participation was kept confidential.

### 3.9 Limitations:

The limitations of the study are those characteristics of design or methodology that impacted or influenced the application or interpretation of

the results of the study. They are the constraints on generalizability and utility of findings that are the result of the ways in which you chose to design the study and/or the method used to establish internal and external validity. For this study there were limitations on the time period with which the study was carried out. A longer time period would have allowed for more respondents and would have allowed the researcher to have more knowledge before beginning the gathering of data. There was also a limitation on resources available which prevented the researcher from providing incentives for participation in the study which would have increased respondents. The last thing that limited the study was the lack of appropriate connections by the researcher which led to a failure to gather more data from software and application developers in Ghana.

## Chapter 4

### Research Findings and Analysis

#### 4.1 Introduction:

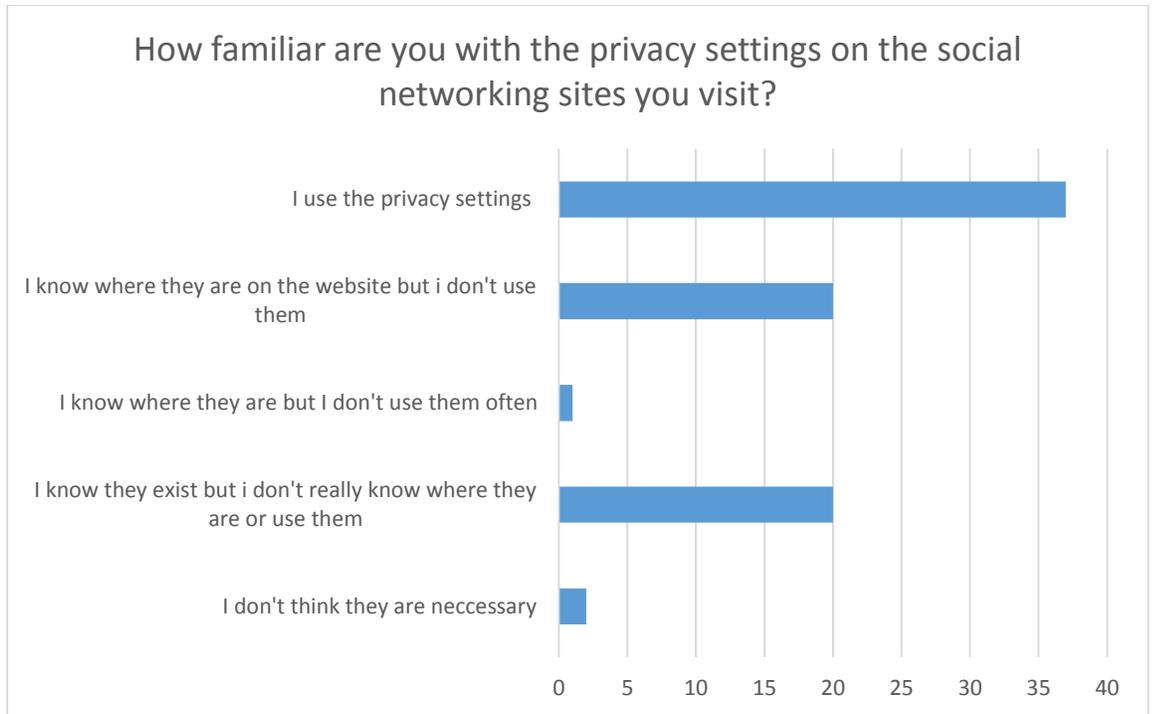
This section of the research paper is aimed at reporting the findings made based on the methodology applied. The objective of this research was to discover how much Ghanaians are aware of the privacy and ethics in using the internet and to make recommendations on how much of an impact software developers can have on how Ghanaians use the internet in regards to privacy and ethics. This chapter simply presents the findings and results of the research project.

#### 4.2 Awareness of Ghanaians with Regards to Ethics and Privacy

From the interviews, I was able to deduce that most Ghanaians are interested in privacy and ethics in using the internet in that they did not want their information to be easily accessible to people over the internet. On speaking to the Founder of the Humans of Accra website which deals in taking photographs of random people living in Accra for their website, he told me that usually, on taking photos of people, most of them wanted to be sure of where their photographs and stories will end up. As a photographer, he has to guarantee that trust and protection will be given to the subjects. He also observed that on numerous occasions, some subjects requested that their photos not be put on the internet and that some refused to be a part of his site immediately upon hearing the word 'internet'. He suggested that

Ghanaians needed to be educated on the internet so they know that the internet is not a bad thing but is a great tool for information sharing and for putting Ghana out there not as the African country portrayed in the news but because some people had misconceptions of the internet, they were not making good use of it. He also suggested that people were given more information on how they can protect themselves and their information on the internet.

From the questionnaires, when respondents were asked how familiar they were with the privacy settings on the social media sites that they visited, it was found that out of 80 respondents, 37 of them use the privacy settings, 21 of them were aware that the privacy settings existed and knew where to find them on the website but did not make use of them and 20 respondents knew where they are, but did not make use of them. 2 of the respondents answered that although they knew where the privacy settings are they do not use them because they do not think they are necessary (Figure 4.1).



*Figure 4.1: Familiarity of privacy settings on social networking sites.*

Out of these 37 who used the privacy settings, none of them had any idea of how the social media sites whose privacy settings they used actually protected their data. 38 out of the 80 respondents said it was neither easy nor difficult to identify the privacy settings and an equal number of 17 respondents said it was difficult and easy to identify them. This may mean that the ability or inability to detect the settings does not necessarily have an effect on whether the users used the settings or not. The respondents that indicated that they did not know about the settings were the same respondents that indicated that they found it difficult or regular to locate them (Figure 4.2). This postulates that the reason why some people do not make good use of privacy settings are not because they do not know where the settings are.

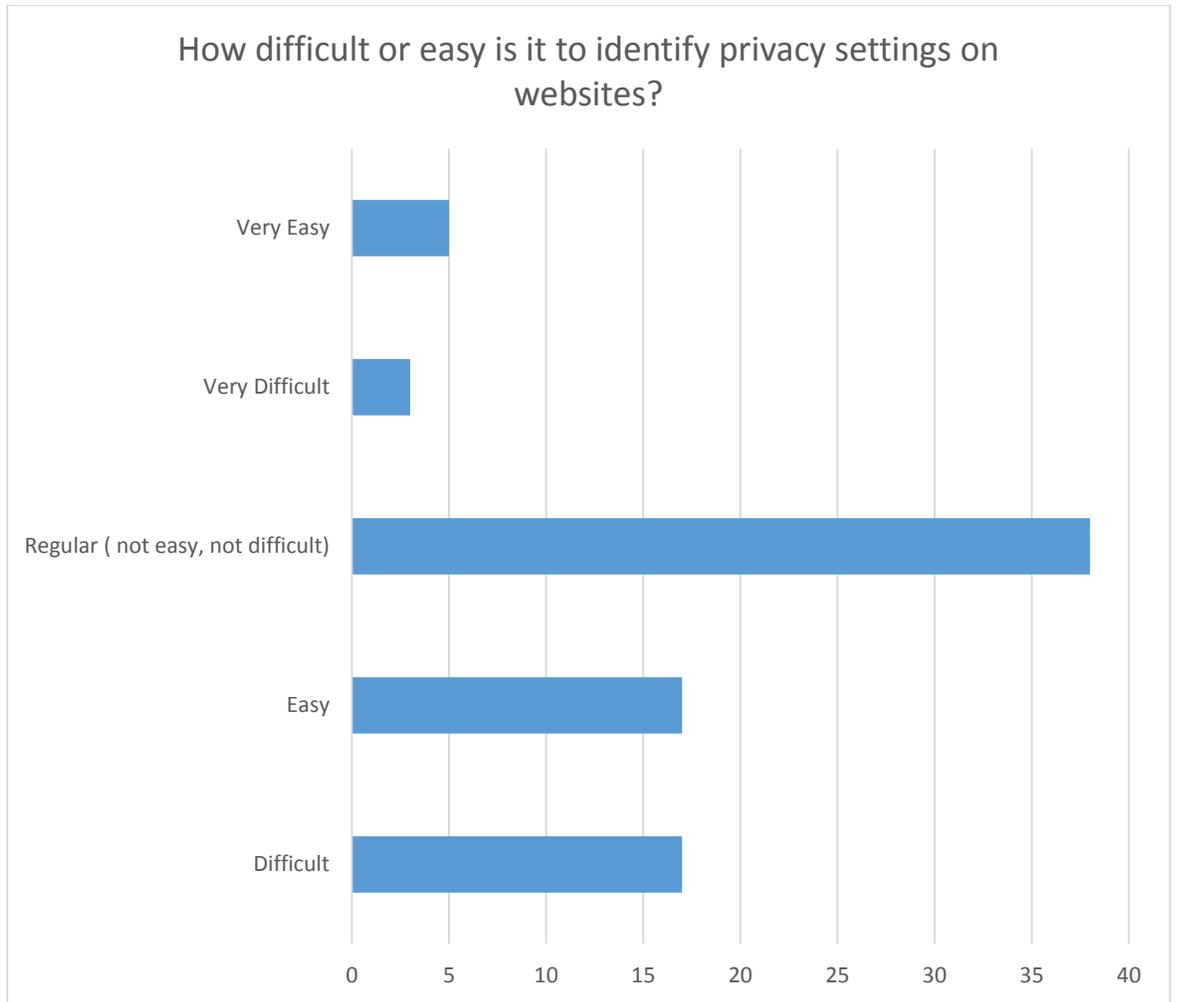
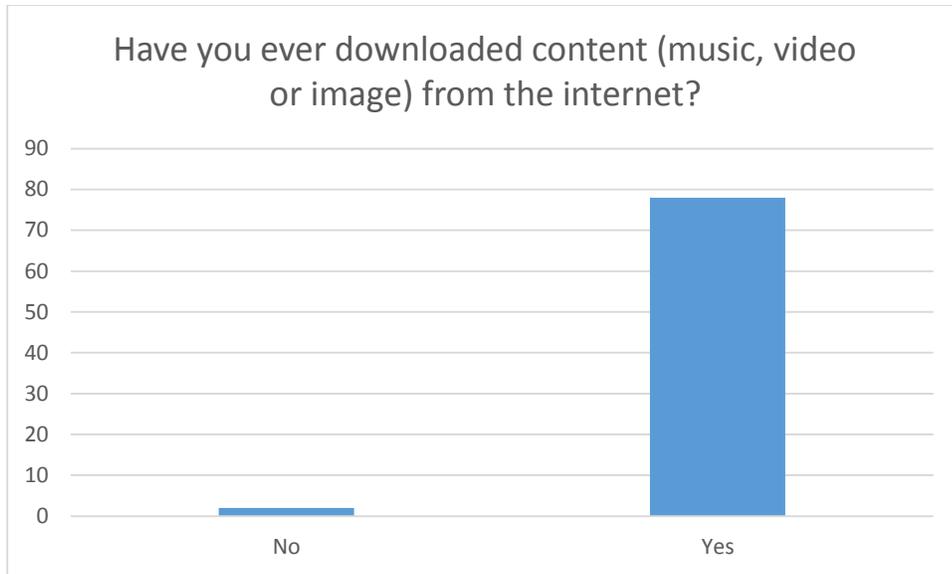


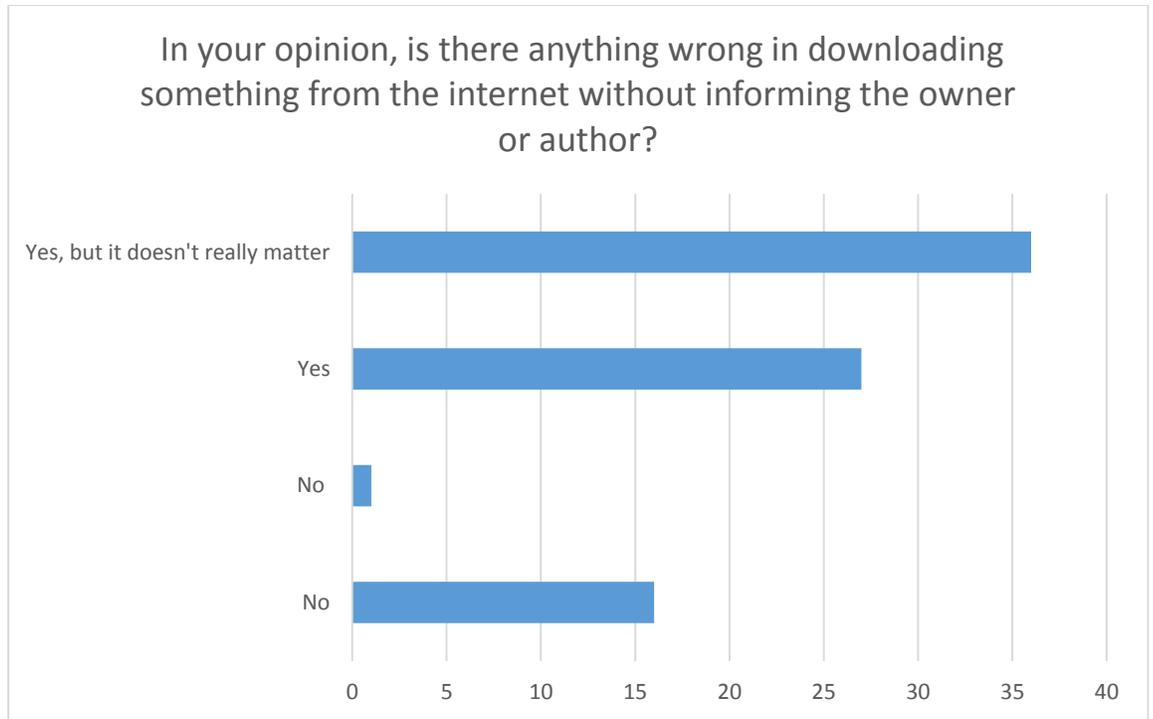
Figure 4.2: Identifying privacy settings on websites.

One of the objectives of my research was to find out if Ghanaians were aware of the ethical and legal issues that involved the usage of the internet and so the survey questions asked the respondents if they had ever downloaded any content (music, videos or image) from the internet without permission from the owner. Out of the 80 respondents, 78 said they had and 2 said they had not.



*Figure 4.3: Download behavior*

The respondents were also asked if they were aware that it was not right to download content without permission from the owner or from unauthorized sites and only 33.7% said that they knew this was not right. 21% said that they didn't think there was anything wrong with it with the remaining 46% saying that although they were aware, they did not think that it mattered. One respondent added that he felt such rules were unnecessary and should not exist at all in the Ghanaian context.



*Figure 4.4: Knowledge of ethics*

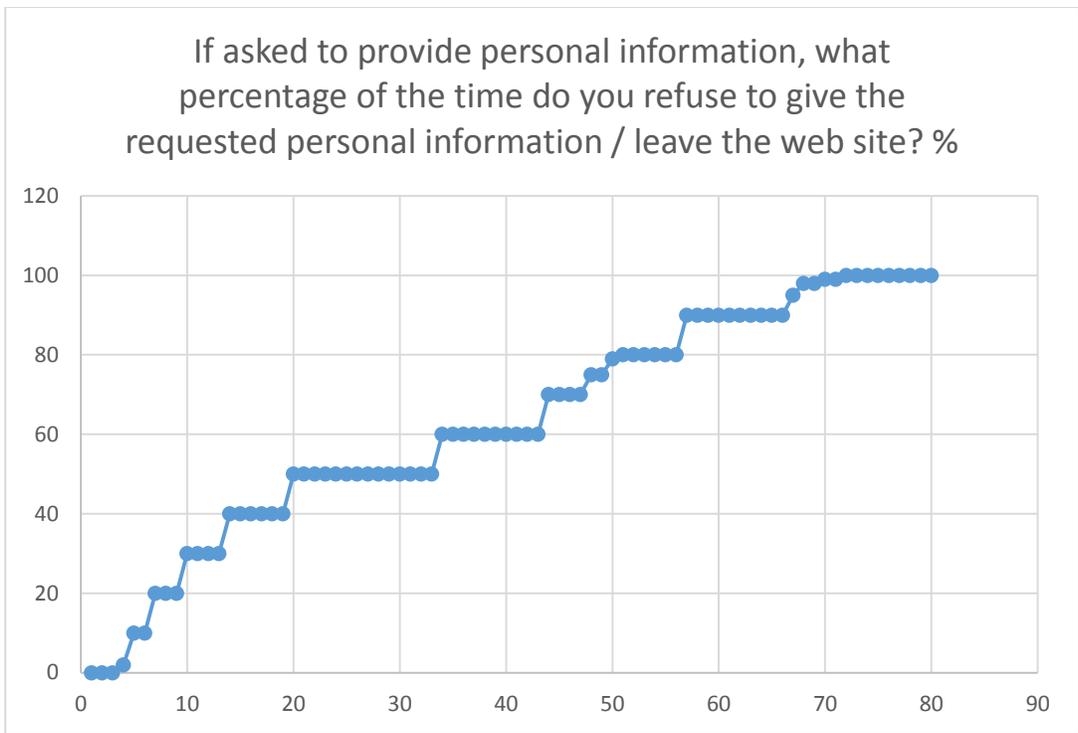
The respondents were asked to provide the reasons for which they downloaded from the internet without the owner’s permission and the answers ranged from it being too tiresome, unimportant and unnecessary. Some respondents indicated that they assumed once an item was on the internet, it was up for free use and most of them stated that it was difficult to locate the rightful owner of something on the internet even if they wanted to do it the right way.

### 4.3 How Information and Data are protected by Users

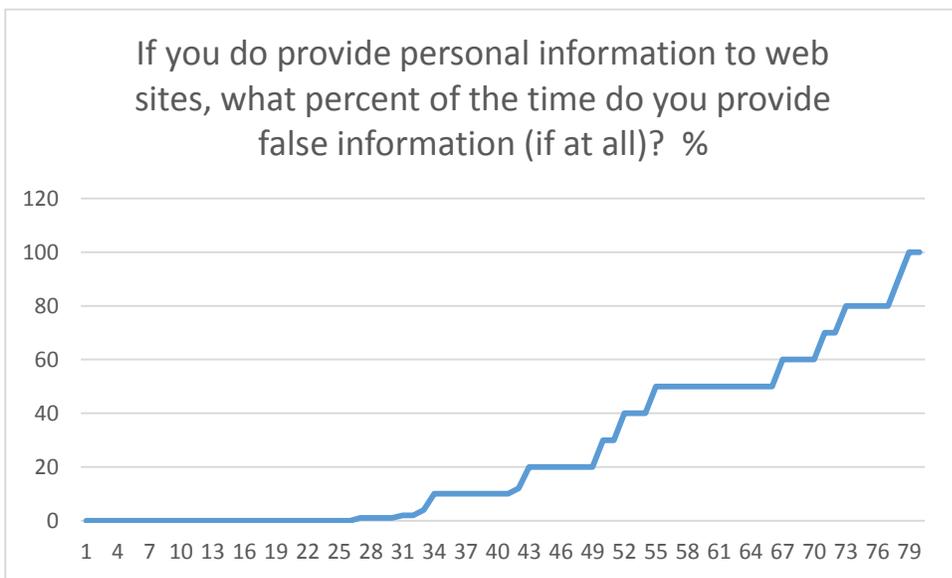
From the interview with the Humans of Accra photographer and founder, he explained that to ensure that his photographs were not used for some malicious use on the internet, he made sure that his photographers

watermarked all photos before putting them on the site. He confessed that although he could not prevent people from saving or copying his content, he could help to reduce or prevent this by watermarking them. Although such measures had been taken to prevent people from stealing content from their website, he also remarked that he had a number of times noticed people using his photographs on the internet for their profile pictures on Facebook, or as a background to their website. On some occasions, some organizations and individuals have reached out to him to seek permission to use Humans of Accra photos for their work or for their branding needs.

From the questionnaires, 76% of the respondents said that when they were asked to give personal information on a website there was over a 50% chance that they would refuse to give that information or leave the site. 32% said they usually provide false information about themselves when forced to do so (Figure 4.5). When asked for the reason, most said this was because they were unfamiliar with the site or with the group or individual running the site (68 responders indicated this was very important) and also because they were concerned that the information would be intercepted or stolen. Refusing to give the information was their way of ensuring that their personal data and information was protected. Some users mentioned that they had email addresses with fake names and fake information that they usually used to register for accounts on website that they did not trust.



*Figure 4.5: Personal Information*



*Figure 4.6: Providing false information*

#### 4.4 How Information and Data are protected by Websites

Included in the objectives of this research paper is the awareness of how much Ghanaian internet users are aware of how their information and data are protected on the website and whether they would like to have information on these measures of protection. From the interviews, I realized that although website managers did their best to protect the data themselves and assumed that the server or software they were using would protect the data for them but they were unaware of what exactly the website did to protect the information and if it actually worked. Out of 80 respondents, 79 of them indicated that they would like to have more information of how much of their information was kept or shared with others, which represents 98% of the respondents. After the Edward Snowden incident of 2013, it came to the attention of internet users that the United States government was keeping track of their personal information and data without their permission. According to the NSA, the websites that they had gathered this information from had made it known to the users that their information could be accessed but most users do not read or understand the terms and conditions and so were not aware of this. (Poitras, Greenwald and MacAskill)

93% of the respondents said that they would like to have knowledge on how websites protect the information that they keep which led to the observation that most people were unaware of how much of their information was retained by websites and what the sites did with that information. Making this information available would increase trust that people have with these

sites and help them make informed decisions of what kinds of information to upload to these sites. It would also help people to make better decisions when choosing what kinds of sites to create accounts on (Figure 4.6).

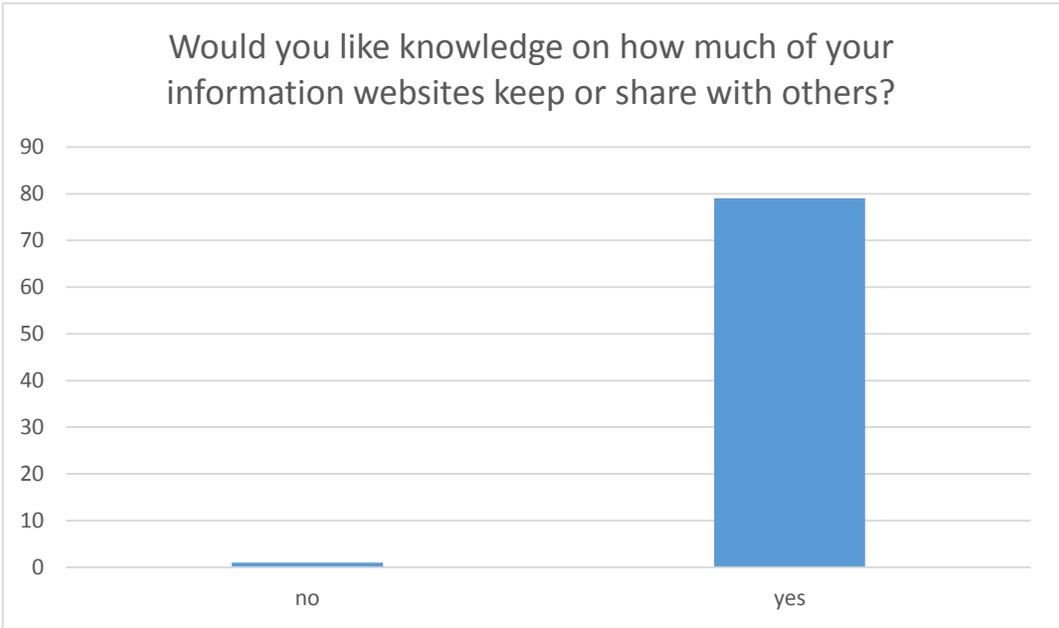
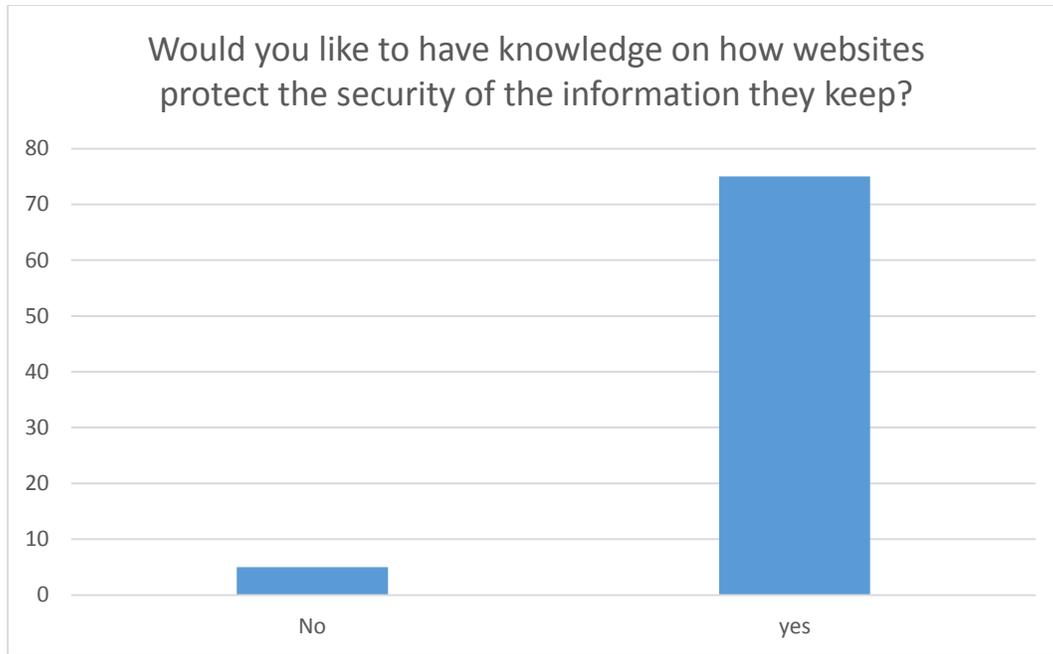
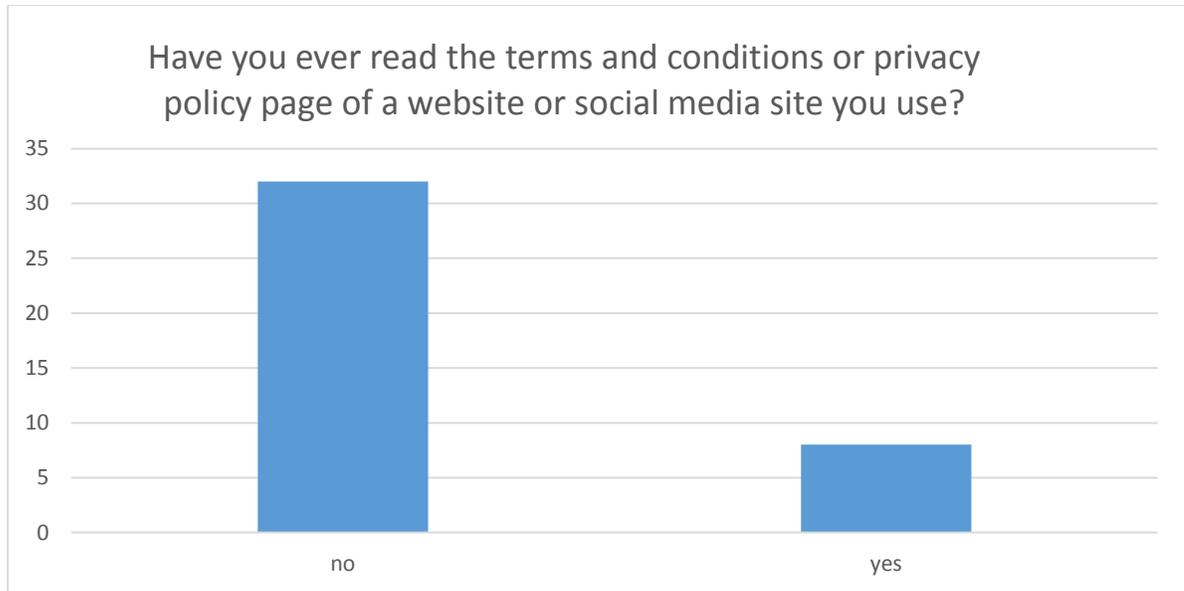


Figure 4.6: Knowledge on protection limits.



*Figure 4.7: Knowledge on protection methods*

Usually, the websites or social media sites and applications have a privacy policy page where they may give some information on how they protect the privacy of the user. From the questionnaires, I found that 80% of the respondents have not read the Terms and Conditions of the social media websites that they visit and had also not paid attention to the information on the privacy policy page.



*Figure 4.8 Knowledge of Terms and Conditions and Privacy Policy*

This indicates to me that although they requested more information on how the website that they visit protect their information, they did not make use of the few resources available to them possibly because they were not easy to identify and understand.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the research informed us of the behaviors of Ghanaians with respect to ethics and privacy in the internet. I found that it was difficult for some respondents to get access to and understand the privacy settings and privacy policy of the websites they visited. Majority of the respondents requested that there be more information available on how websites protected their information and on how the protections affected their freedoms on the internet.

## Chapter 5

### Recommendations and Conclusions

#### 5.1 Introduction

The focus of this thesis was to investigate the awareness of Ghanaian internet users on the ethical and privacy issues involved in using the internet and to gather enough information to make recommendations to software and application developers on the best way to present these issues to users so they could make the best use of them. It was found that Ghanaian internet users were aware of the ethical concerns in using the internet but did not think they were important enough to hinder their use of the internet. They were also concerned about their privacy and with the way websites protect their information. The literature review expanded on the history of the internet in Ghana and explained that most Ghanaians may not have fully understood the risk of using the internet because of the late arrival of West Africa to the digital age.

#### 5.2 Addressing the research questions

In response to the objectives of the thesis and the research questions, the research can lead to a conclusion of the following.

- Ghanaian internet users do not recognize the importance of adhering to ethical rules/constraints.
- The privacy policies of most websites/social media sites are not easily

- presented or understandable
- Ghanaian internet users are unaware of the measures taken by websites to protect their information and would like to have more information at their disposal.
  - Ghanaian internet users would prefer different and less stringent privacy measures on mobile sites in comparison with regular websites because mobile phones are more personal and usually not shared with another user.
  - The amount of personal information stored by the servers used by websites is information that should be easily accessible and understandable by users. The users should also know when social media sites share their information for purposes of data analysis or advertising.

### 5.3 Recommendations

During the course of the thesis paper, the research has shown that Ghanaian internet users would prefer to have more information than they already have on privacy and protection of their data. This leads me to conclude and suggest recommendations on the use of the internet by Ghanaians.

First and foremost, it is my recommendation that Ghanaians be given more education on the use of the internet. Most public schools that teach ICT do not have access to enough computers and have no access at all to the internet. Students upload information about their personal lives daily without the knowledge that this information can be accessed by others. It is also important to educate people of older generations and those who are illiterate

on the merits and demerits of using the internet and how they can safely use it to push themselves and their businesses, as well as how much of an advantage it could be to them.

Secondly, it is my recommendation that the Ghanaian software developers and application developers do more to make the privacy policies and measures accessible to users and easier to understand. From the research findings, it is clear that although the users admitted that they had not paid attention to the privacy policies and terms and conditions of the sites they used, they did want more information, which brings thoughts as to why they do not use the information given. This may probably be because the information is not easily presented or is not easily understandable by the layman. Making the information less technical and easy to find will make sure that the users have enough information to make informed decisions about how much information they put online.

A third recommendation is that there should be easier ways of identifying the owners of content and of paying for content online so that users are encouraged to download content legally.

Fourth, people should be informed of ways in which they can protect their data on the internet and ways in which their information is kept and used by the websites they entrust this information to. Users should have a say in what sites use their information for.

## 5.4 Future Research

This thesis has added to the information that is available on the use of privacy and ethics in Ghana and has helped to fill the gap on the information available. This research was focused mainly on awareness and so further research could be done on finding a set of standards or guidelines for developers to use in providing users with privacy information. Further research could also be used to determine whether the Ghanaian parliament could police the usage of the internet and make more stringent laws on the use of the internet and social networking sites. This research could lead to better policies and laws to govern the use of the internet since the Ghanaian internet laws such as the Data Protection Act are mostly outdated and have no relevance to modern use of the internet.

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## APPENDIX A- Informed Consent Form

Dear reader,

This questionnaire was prepared by Anna-Lisa Hammond a final year student of Ashesi University College as part of her final year thesis project. The aim of this research is to gauge the awareness level of Ghanaians with regards to the ethics involved in posting visual content on the internet and taking visual content off the internet.

You are not under any obligation to fill this questionnaire or answer the researcher's questions and you can decide to stop participating at any time without any effect on yourself however, we recommend that once you have started, you complete the questionnaire to facilitate the research process. You may decide to remain anonymous to protect your identity but at the end of the questionnaire you will be given a chance to leave contact details if you wish to receive a copy of the report of the research. This study will in no way harm you physically, emotionally, financially or otherwise.

Thank You,

For more information please contact: Anna-Lisa Ewuresi Amowi Hammond ([ann-lisa.hammond@ashesi.edu.gh](mailto:ann-lisa.hammond@ashesi.edu.gh) | 0271301127)

Ashesi University College

*This research protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Ashesi University Human Subjects Review Committee. If you have questions about the approval process, please contact Chair, Ashesi University HSCR, ([rdouglass@ashesi.edu.gh](mailto:rdouglass@ashesi.edu.gh)).*

## APPENDIX B – Sample Questionnaire

### Online Privacy Questionnaire

This survey is part of research into Internet Ethics and Privacy. Please complete all questions and feel free to share it with others. You are not required to give any identifying information about yourself. Completing the form should take a little over 5 minutes of your time. Please note that this questionnaire is for GHANAIAN NATIONALS only.

Continuing with this survey means that you are consenting to be a participant in this research project. You are free to discontinue participation at any time at no additional cost or penalty to you what so ever.

This research protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Ashesi University Human Subjects Review Committee.

Thank you.

\* Required

#### 1. Age Range \*

- below 15
- 15-20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41 and above

#### 2. Level Of Education \*

Please indicate your current completed level of education.

- Junior High School
- Senior High School
- Tertiary Education
- First Degree
- Masters Degree
- Other:

**3. Occupation \***

- Executive
- Upper Management
- Middle Management
- Entry-Level Management
- Non Management
- Student
- Homemaker
- Other:

**4. How long have you used the Internet? \***

Select from list

 ▼

**5. How many hours in a day, on average, do you spend on the internet from Home? \***

 ▼

**6. How many hours in a day, on average, do you spend on the internet from Work/School? \***

 ▼

**7. How many hours in a day, on average, do you spend on the internet from other locations? \***

Church, Friend's house, cafe, etc.

 ▼

**8. How often do you use the internet for each of the following? \***

	Sometimes	Often	Never
Entertainment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Educational	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work-related research	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal finance (banking, stock trading)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Current events (news, sports, weather)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Travel-related (research, reservations)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Product information gathering	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making purchases from online merchants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicating with others (chat/email)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**9. Have you ever read the privacy policy or terms and conditions of the social media/website you visit often? \***

**10. Have you ever downloaded content (music, video or image) from the internet? \***

- Yes
- No

**11. Did you download this content with permission from the author or owner? \***

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

**12. In your opinion, is there anything wrong in downloading something from the internet without informing the owner or author? \***

- Yes
- No
- Yes, but it doesn't really matter
- Other:

**13. Please give the reason why you downloaded this information without permission? \***

Example: I did not think it was important, I don't know how to locate the author or owner, etc.

**14. Have you been asked to provide personal information at web sites you visit? \***

Personal information is any information that can be attributed to you individually (name, address, email address, telephone numbers, names of family members, social security or credit card number, financial information, medical history, etc.)

- Yes
- No

**15. If asked to provide personal information, what percentage of the time do you refuse to give the requested personal information / leave the web site? % \***

**16. If you do provide personal information to web sites, what percent of the time do you provide false information (if at all)? % \***

**17. If you have refused to disclose personal information or given falsified information, how important to you were the following issues? \***

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not a reason
You are unfamiliar with the company/individual running the site	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You don't trust the company/individual running the site	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The site does not disclose how they plan to use your information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The value you will receive from the site is not worth the information you give	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You generally prefer to be anonymous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They asked for particularly sensitive pieces of information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You are concerned that the information will be intercepted or stolen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It takes too much time to fill out the forms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**18. How familiar are you with the privacy settings on the social networking sites you visit? \***

- I know they exist but i don't really know where they are or use them
- I know where they are on the website but i don't use them
- I use the privacy settings
- I don't think they are necessary
- I don't know where they are
- I don't know about the privacy settings
- Other:

**19. How difficult or easy is it to identify privacy settings on websites? \***

- Very Easy
- Easy
- Regular ( not easy, not difficult)
- Difficult
- Very Difficult

**20. Would you want different settings for Mobile sites and desktop sites? \***

**21. Would you like knowledge on how much of your information websites keep or share with others? \***

**22. Would you like to have knowledge on how websites protect the security of the information they keep? \***

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.