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NETIQUETTE: Towards Digital Etiquette in Africa

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14.1 Introduction

To refer to the advancement of information technology (IT) as a revolution would be to give it the best description available. There is rarely an aspect of human existence that the IT revolution has not touched—and at the core of this movement is technology so powerful, it just cannot be dismissed. The Internet, together with all its components and various aspects, has such power over humanity that its influence cannot be overstated.

According to Kemp (2021), as of January 2021, 59.5% of the global population of 7.83 billion, approximately 4.66 billion, use the Internet in one way or another. Nearly two-thirds of the global population will have Internet access by 2023. There will be 5.3 billion total Internet users (66% of the global population) by 2023 (Cisco, 2020). With almost six

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out of every ten people making use of the Internet, it is no wonder that the Internet has such a strong influence globally. There are many who spend a greater portion of their waking hours on the Internet.

Even the African continent, where it is estimated that 23% of its population has no access to a mobile-broadband network, was still able to achieve 21% growth in 4G rollout in 2020. This was during a time when growth in access to broadband was negligible in all the other regions (ITU, 2020). Virtually, all urban areas in the world are covered by a mobile-broadband network, although there are still significant gaps in rural areas. In essence, however, it is only a matter of time before the entire world is covered with Internet access.

Shea (1994) asserts that the two main purposes why people employ the Internet are to communicate with other people and to retrieve information. Among the uses of the Internet, communicating and socialising with others ranks among the top reasons people log on to the Internet. Hofstetter (2004) states that communicating with others is the most powerful use of the Internet.

The pervasive use of the Internet to communicate is not surprising since social interactions have always been a part of the human experience. Human beings are wired to be social, with our deep motivations to stay connected as basic as our need to seek pleasure and avoid pain (Lieberman, 2013). However, with the new tools and technology at the disposal of humanity especially the Internet, humankind has, to date, its great opportunity for socialising. Ours has become a world that looks and feels a lot closer socially. Technology has all but erased the great distances, physical and otherwise, that existed between individuals.

14.2 Digital Citizenship

With the Internet and other forms of digital technologies taking over the lives of individuals, there has arisen a need for the proper and codified behaviours around the use of these technologies. All users of digital technologies have rights to the use of the digital technologies available, but it is important that they act responsibly in making use of new technologies.

It is these rights and responsibilities of digital technology users that have given rise to the concept of Digital Citizenship—the norms of appropriate, responsible behaviour concerning digital technology use (Ribble & Bailey, 2007). Frau-Meigs et al. (2017) summarised the concept of Digital Citizenship as creating, working, sharing, socialising, investigating, playing, communicating, and learning with using digital technology in a competent and positive manner.

Embedded within the concept of digital citizenship is the idea of digital natives—individuals who by virtue of being birthed in the digital age tend to take the Internet for granted. The digital native is so immersed in the digital world that he or she does not see it as anything out of the ordinary. For these individuals, the Internet is very much a natural part of their daily lives, fully integrated into their daily routines (Mossberger et al., 2008). Dingli and Seychell (2015) define *digital natives* as “individuals who do not find the complexity of the digital era and constant updates in the field of technology problematic” (p. 9).

Ribble and Bailey (2007) identified nine elements that together make up digital citizenship. These are:

- i. *Digital Access: full electronic participation all society;*
- ii. *Digital Commerce: the buying and selling of goods online;*
- iii. *Digital Communication: the electronic exchange of information;*
- iv. *Digital Literacy: the capability to use digital technology and knowing when and how to use it;*
- v. *Digital Etiquette: the standards of conduct expected by other digital technology users;*
- vi. *Digital Law: the legal rights and restrictions governing technology use;*
- vii. *Digital Rights and Responsibilities: the privileges and freedoms extended to all digital technology users, and the behavioural expectations that come with them;*
- viii. *Digital Health and Wellness: the elements of physical and psychological well-being related to digital technology use;*
- ix. *Digital Security: the precautions that all technology users must take to guarantee their personal safety and the security of their network”* (p. 10).

It is important to note that the concept of digital citizenship is not restricted to only the activities of the individual when it comes to engaging with digital technology. Richardson and Milividov (2019) defined a digital citizen as someone who—through the acquisition of the right competencies— can engage in an active, positive, and responsible manner with both online and offline communities. It is the expectation of positivity and responsibility on users of digital technology, viz. the Internet that forms the basis of this chapter.

14.3 Netiquette

As implied, every society has expectations of its citizens. These expectations are what keeps society functioning with civility. In African traditional culture, etiquettes, as well as social formalities, differences in individual status, procedures, and roles of institutions are held in very high regard because they provide the foundation of community life (Chernoff, 1979). According to Idang (2015), in spite of the various different ethnic nationalities that inhabit the continent, there are always shared values among the various tribes. Any deviation from these expectations could result in interpersonal chaos that would eventually destroy society.

According to Ohler (2010), “citizenship represents doing what is right and responsible within a given social context” (p. 2). Everywhere people congregate, and there is always a need for some rules to govern behaviour. These rules are the etiquette of that society. Strawbridge (2006) defines Etiquette as a “framework of formal rules and customs governing how people behave: a description of what constitutes good manners” (p. 1). Smith (2011), however, argues that to define etiquette as rules is not accurate because although they are rooted in precedents, etiquette is also flexible and perpetually morphing.

Different rules of behaviour apply to different situations. The rules that apply in a typical African marketplace would not apply to a theatre. The rules that apply at home would not apply to a classroom. The rules that govern the behaviour of students in a classroom would not apply to the same students in a library. There is etiquette for places

of worship, etiquette for places of business, and there is etiquette for social gatherings. As a new social setting, the Internet comes with its unique characteristics. It is entirely possible for one to master traditional etiquette but still be found wanting on the Internet, and thus the need for a unique set of rules to govern behaviour on the Net.

It is, however, important to note that though the rules might differ, the objectives of etiquette, whether offline and online, are largely the same—to provide an orderly and civil environment for people to interact and communicate safely. Furgang (2018) states that the goals of online etiquette and traditional etiquette are the same, i.e., to provide a safe, pleasant, and civil environment for individuals to interact. As stated earlier manners are generally fluid but according to (Post et al., 2011), they all rest on the same fundamental principles of respect, consideration, and honesty. Furgang (2018) avers that online etiquette is rooted in traditional etiquette.

As identified by Ribble and Bailey (2007), Digital Etiquette is that element of digital citizenship that has to do with the standards of conduct expected by and of digital technology users. The concept goes by several terminologies. Originally meant for e-mails as one of the earliest forms of online communication, *e-etiquette* (*electronic etiquette*) has been used to refer to digital etiquette. Although the term now broadly refers to all kinds of electronic etiquette. For Internet use in particular specifically though, the term adopted by many is *Netiquette*.

The jury is still out on what two words contract to make up the term, *Netiquette*. For one group, it is a contraction of “network” and “etiquette” (Doyle, 2011; Shea, 1994). For others, *Netiquette* is a combination of “Internet” and “etiquette” (Chiles, 2014; Dhingra, 2018; Grobman, 2002; Sperling, 1998).

A careful observation of the term, *Internet* itself, however, reveals that both schools of thought might be right. Cerf et al. (1974) used the term “*internetwork*” to refer to the earliest workings of what was to be later known as the Internet. In effect, *Netiquette* could therefore stand for “Internetwork etiquette”.

Regardless of the source of the term, however, it is generally agreed that *Netiquette* is a set of rules for behaving appropriately online. Shea (1994) noted that the word *etiquette* was from the French word for

“ticket”—an indication that without the proper behaviour, one was at risk of being prevented from gaining access to a social group. Chiles (2014) defines *Netiquette* as “the social code of the Internet”. Shea (1994) refers to the term as “the etiquette of cyberspace”. Kallos (2004) defines *Netiquette* as the personal or professional use of technology to communicate with “knowledge, understanding and courtesy”.

Kayany (2004) asserts that *Netiquette* is an informal set of rules developed by users of the Net and developed over time to guide online behaviour. To stress the informal nature of *Netiquette*, Vassos (1996) uses the term “a loose code of ethics”. Doyle (2011), on the other hand, uses the term “an unwritten code of conduct”. This is to say that these are not legally binding rules but are deemed as the proper way to act on the Net. In a way, one can therefore say that *Netiquette* is simply communicating properly on the Net.

14.4 Social Media

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a change in the nature of websites led to the second revolution of the Internet. The term Web 2.0 was used to define this gradual shift (DiNucci, 1999). Web 2.0 is a term used to refer to relatively newer websites that are highly interactive and are characterised by content that is generated by interconnected user communities (Shrivastava, 2013). Slowly, the more static, one-way model of websites began to give way to more participatory, interactive websites where content was more user generated than organisation generated. This shift gave birth to what has now become arguably the most defining feature of the Internet to date—Social Media.

The delineation of what even qualifies as *Social Media*, and what does not, is not a straightforward exercise. It is debatable. There is an argument that media by its very nature is social. However, not all media are classified as social media. The term is used by some to refer strictly to only those person-to-person interactions on sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Others, however, use the term to refer to the socialisation characteristics of Web 2.0 sites (Hunsinger & Senft, 2014). Manning (2014) used the term to refer to all newer forms of media that involve interactive

participation. This definition, therefore, makes room for e-mails (short for electronic mail) to be classified as social media.

Meikle (2016) argues that web-based media and technology platforms qualify as social media platforms when they combine public media with personal communication. Before the advent of social media, communication was either private or public. With social media, the line of differentiation has been erased. Individuals are sharing private information—in some cases, too private—for public consumption. By definition, therefore, *Social Media* refers to “networked database platforms that combine public with personal communication” (Meikle, 2016: 6).

This categorisation includes platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, Tumblr, Instagram, Blogger, and YouTube, among others. The private–public criterion, however, eliminates an important platform such as Wikipedia from social media platforms. This is because, although Wikipedia is a public-directed venture, it lacks the personal dimension that makes a media social or not. Although individuals can open accounts to get editing rights into a Wikipedia page, the inability to link those accounts with accounts of other users and friends means Wikipedia is not social media (Meikle, 2016).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2012), however, in categorising the different types of social media, add collaborative projects such as Wikipedia as social media. The 2001-founded collaboration between individuals from all over the world and from all walks of life has turned Wikipedia into the de facto key information provider on the Internet. Nguyen (2010) also added ‘wikis’ as forms of social media since, by definition, social media are media forms that allow for social interaction, exchanging of information, experiences as well as opinions.

Aside from collaboration projects, the other categories of social media, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2012) include:

- blogs and micro-blogs (e.g., Twitter),
- content communities (e.g., YouTube, Daily Motion, Flickr, and Imagr),
- social networking sites (e.g., Facebook),
- virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft), and
- virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life).

Zarella (2010) states that there are about eight types of social media. These are blogs, micro-blogs (Twitter), social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn), media sharing sites (YouTube, Flickr), social bookmarking and voting sites (Digg, Reddit), review sites (Yelp), forums, and virtual worlds (Second Life).

Jue et al. (2010) add that various electronic tools available to help individuals connect, communicate, and collaborate should all be classified as *Social Media*. Broadly, any Internet-based website that allows users to network and connects with friends, share contents[, send messages, collaborate in real time, gather news, information, feedback, or just upload or download media files such as videos, music, photos can be classified as a social media site (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012).

With the availability of a variety of social media, it is not surprising that a vast number of people log on to one site or another daily. The number of individuals sharing their private information on social media is staggering. More than half of the global population, approximately 4.33 billion individuals, are active social media users (Kemp, 2021). As a percentage of the entire global population, active social media users constitute 55.1%. There was a 13.7% annual rise from the year 2020, an increase that was attributed to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. As more countries went into lockdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus, people had to turn to social media to interact with family, friends, acquaintances, and customers. In the first quarter of 2020, at the peak of the pandemic, the use of the Internet was said to have increased by 35% (Austin, 2020).

According to Tankovska (2021), as of January 2021, globally, the following were the number of users for the most popular social media platforms:

- Facebook (2.74 billion),
- YouTube (2.29 billion),
- WhatsApp (2 billion),
- Facebook Messenger (1.3 billion),
- Instagram (1.22 billion),
- Weixin/WeChat (1.21 billion),
- TikTok (689 million),

- QQ (617 million),
- Douyin (600 million),
- Sino Weibo (511 million).

The number of people using social media worldwide is projected to increase to almost 4.41 billion in 2025 (Tankovska, 2021). The exact number of social media users at any point in time is difficult to ascertain since users usually have multiple social media accounts. For instance, in China, a nation with the largest social media market, 80% of social media users had multiple social media accounts (Chiu et al., 2012).

The staggering number of daily usage is a clear indication that social media has become such a pervasive presence in the lives of people. As a matter of fact, the reach of social media has led to some arguments that it has led to a blurring of the line between what is online and what is offline. Just as a normal telephone conversation would not be regarded as anything but a part of everyday life, so has social media become a part of an individual's everyday existence (Miller et al., 2016).

14.5 Communicating on Social Media

One of the unique characteristics of social media is the ability it gives individuals to interact in real time. Instant communication is, without a doubt, one of the several benefits of social media (Dalal, 2019; Gulzar, 2020). Unlike traditional media forms, which did not give receivers the opportunity to contribute to the content being produced, social media allows receivers to express their views instantly. The instantaneous response to any message posted is, however, a recipe for disaster. Users of social media must be wary of whatever they post in the heat of the moment.

Another reason why social media communication must be treated with all seriousness is that once the message is sent, it becomes next to impossible to completely delete it. Messages that are deleted at the sender's end can still be accessed by other users. Wilbanks (2020) touches on the difficulty of removing videos, tags, and posts that are put on social media. This means that a badly communicated message would begin to

cause havoc the second it is sent. The potential for social media information permanence should cause users to give every post a second thought before sending. Many reputations have been ruined on social media by ill-crafted messages.

A third reason why communication on social media must be carried out with seriousness is because of the record it leaves behind, sometimes for good. Social media communication leaves a trail, which, unlike paper, cannot be easily retrieved and burnt. Social media posts, blogs, comments on other posts, tweets, Flickr photos, YouTube videos, Facebook, and LinkedIn profiles, etc., all leave behind what Flynn (2012) refers to as the “electronic equivalent of DNA evidence”.

It is common knowledge that in many organisations, when recruiting for new employees, human resource executives would first take a look at an applicant’s social media footprints. This investigative work tends to provide the interviewer with information about the prospective employee—information that would not be found on the one’s curriculum vitae or resume. College Admissions Officers have also been known to turn down applications from prospective applicants because of something the applicant posted on social media. Flynn (2012) quoting a CareerBuilder survey states that 45% of organisations appraise a job applicant’s Facebook profile as part of the recruitment process. 35% of organisations are said to have rejected an applicant’s offer because of something posted on Facebook.

Evidently, the need for a code of conduct, albeit informal, to guide the use of the Internet has been made more pronounced with the advent of social media. In its early stages, when the Internet was mainly for the sharing of research information between researchers, scientists, and academics, the need was not as great as when the Internet became a social playing field. With the floodgates opened, there was a need for some sort of code of behaviour.

14.6 The Netiquette of Social Media

It is for these reasons that individuals must take their communication via social media with all gravity. This is also why it is critical for there to

be some rules to help individuals communicate on the Net. *Netiquette* is therefore for the protection of those sending messages on the Net as it is for the consideration of those receiving the messages.

According to Kemp (2021), of the many reasons for using social media, staying in touch with friends and family was the overwhelming reason (49.7%) cited by global internet users aged 16 to 64 years of age. This was followed by “filling spare time” (36.9%), “reading news stories” (36.1%), and “finding funny or entertaining content” (31.5%). Other reasons given by social media users include “seeing what is being talked about” and “finding inspiration for things to do and buy”. In short, social media is predominantly a medium of communication.

Because the Internet is primarily a text-based communication medium, many of the rules that govern written communication also apply on the Internet. Many people seem to forget that the Internet is just another medium for communication and thus deserves all the decorum that is attached to other media for communication. Hickey (2015) asserts that the use of good manners and common sense are casualties of social media.

Social media indeed gives users the chance to hide behind false identities to engage in all manner of unethical and, sometimes, criminal acts. Although, with the Internet, there is nothing like absolute anonymity (Lipschultz, 2015). Even absolute anonymity in no way absolves the social media user from acting appropriately. As Shea (1994) puts it, “standards of behaviour may be different in some areas of cyberspace, but they are not lower than in real life” (p. 4).

Netiquette can be broken up into general rules those that apply to all social media and those rules that apply to specific social media.

14.7 General Etiquette

Despite the differences in social media platforms, certain rules apply to all users, regardless of the platform in question. The following are some of the general *Netiquette* that social media users must consider.

14.8 Viewers Are Human, Generally

One of the core rules of *Netiquette* is to always remember that the receiver of the message is another human being with feelings. Therefore, what one will not dare to say or will even hesitate to say to someone's face should not be sent to the one over the Net. To deliberately set out to hurt another person over the Net is inappropriate. When one considers the feelings of viewers or readers, it helps to guide the kind of content that is placed on these media. The Golden Rule should be a cardinal consideration in the use of social media. Every communication must be done with the utmost respect and decorum.

14.9 Misinformation (and Disinformation)

A lie is a lie—whether offline or online. Society frowns on individuals who are known as liars. One of the challenges of social media is the potential for untruths to be peddled easily and spread rapidly. By the time the untruth is detected for what it is, it might have travelled so far that retrieving it is next to impossible. Chen et al. (2021) assert that attempting a definition of misinformation can be complex of the many similar concepts or sub-concepts associated with the term, such as disinformation, rumours, and fake news. Misinformation is simply false or inaccurate information. However, in the area of social media, there are other terms that are related to misinformation.

Wu et al. (2019) distinguishes between misinformation and

- disinformation, which is the deliberate creation and intentional sharing of misinformation.
- fake news, which is misinformation in the form of news
- rumour, which is unverified information that can be either true or false,
- urban legend, which is disinformation related to fictional stories about local events, and
- spam, which is irrelevant information that is sent to a large number of users.

In whatever shape it comes, misinformation can have disastrous consequences for the sender, receivers, and the subject.

14.10 Social Spamming

Spamming is another breach of *Netiquette*. Originally restricted to the sending of e-mails, spamming has gradually become a problem on all social media sites (Ferrara, 2019). The term used is “social spamming” (Chakraborty et al., 2016). Social spams are even more difficult to deal than e-mails spams. This is because social spams can occur in a variety of ways that make detecting quite difficult. For instance, social spam can take the form of secretly-sponsored textual posts aimed at swaying the opinion of readers. It can also take the form of an altered photo-image shared multiple times on a site (or sites) with the sole purpose of causing dissatisfaction with a particular individual, organisation, or cause. Social spam can also be used to attempt to artificially manipulate the popularity of products or views.

14.11 Posting Private Personal Information

It is almost inevitable that social media users would get personal information out into the open. Giving out personal information is a requirement to get on to most sites. However, there is some information that should be kept off social media. The rule of thumb is that if you would not be comfortable seeing whatever you are about to post on a huge billboard in the centre of your community, do not post it.

Gupta and Brooks (2013) advise against posting information regarding birthdates and addresses. Private locations should also be kept off social media. Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) and passwords must also be kept off social media. Sharing of such personalised information can lead to identity theft, digital stalking and personalised spamming (Zheleva et al., 2012). Golden (2011), however, argues that the benefits of social media far outweigh the risks of divulging sensitive information.

14.12 Posting Sensitive Information About Another

It goes against every *Netiquette* to share sensitive and inappropriate information about someone on any social media platform. This is one of the *Netiquette* that has both ethical and legal ramifications. As stated earlier, the same standards of ethical behaviour offline should guide one's behaviour on the Net. People have been cyberbullied and targeted with hate mail simply because of information about them that was shared by someone else. If the information is of a sexual kind, the sender can be prosecuted in a court of law. Another variant of this breach is the selling of private information about others to third parties for monetary gains, without the expressed consent of the one whose information is being peddled. This is common practice with some unscrupulous businesses.

14.13 Hate Speech

Posting of any content that abuses or threatens, or expresses prejudice against a particular group, based on race, religion, or sexual orientation is deemed hate speech. Many social media sites have policies against hate speech and would remove such content immediately it is flagged up. Malmasi and Zampieri (2017) distinguish between (1) hate speech; (2) offensive language but no hate speech; and (3) no offensive content.

14.14 Proofreading Before Clicking "Send"

It is important to proofread and check for errors before sending any message, regardless of the social media platform. It is true that emoticons, acronyms, and abbreviations have become a norm in digital communication. However, the standards of effective communication remain the same. Until the receiver decodes and makes meaning of the message as intended by the sender, effective communication has not taken place. Shea (1994) affirms that checking the grammar and spelling makes the

sender look good online. In reverse, a poorly crafted message might be construed as proof of a poor mind.

14.15 Accompanying the Message with the Right Emotion, When Necessary

One of the main challenges that social media users face in communicating with each other is the lack of emotion that goes with written communication. In typical face-to-face communication, the receiver can see and evaluate the verbal and non-verbal cues that accompany the message being transmitted. This enables the receiver to make a better judgment about the message. However, with the predominantly text-based nature of Internet communication, the receiver is deprived of these emotional cues. Therefore, the sender is forced to rely only on the ability of the receiver to take from the message the meaning intended by the sender.

One way to go around this is to use emotion icons (emoticons) or “smilies” to indicate the emotion that is supposed to accompany the written message. In more recent times, there has been the invention of emojis (from the Japanese *e*, “picture”, and *moji*, “character”). Seargeant (2019) places the widespread adopting of emojis in 2011. Even without the use of emojis, it is important that when sending messages via social media, an individual uses the appropriate words and phrases to capture the right tone.

14.16 Respond as Soon as Possible

Social media communication is such that there is an unwritten expectation of everything happening in real time. One reason for this is because a vast majority of individuals access their social media pages via their smart mobile devices, which, as the name goes, is supposed to be with the individual at any point in time. When the response to a message is

delayed, there is an assumption that the receiver has received the message and is refusing to respond. This can cause a misunderstanding between the sender and receiver, if not handled well. If the communication is conducted in a business setting, then a lack of an immediate, or at worst a quick, response can result in the business losing a client.

14.17 When Others Make Mistakes

Even the best of communicators occasionally falter. Wrong syntax, misspellings, typographical errors, etc. are all to be expected on social media. This is why it is imperative that people are measured in their response when others make mistakes on social media. Shea (1994) advises that if the correction is minor, it should be ignored. There is nothing more irritating to other users than an individual with a know-it-all attitude. If there is a need for correction of a mistake that cannot be ignored, it is best to do so in private, such as via a Messenger message or a private email.

14.18 Content Ownership

It is proper *Netiquette* to seek permission to use any content that is not one's original work and give a reference for any content owners such as photo credits. This is another of the *Netiquette* that can get one into trouble with the law. Even without the threat of criminal prosecution, it is not proper for one to use another person's creation without acknowledging the source. It is akin to stealing.

14.19 Knowing Where You Are

As much as there is *Netiquette* that governs behaviour generally on the Internet, different social media platforms also require specific etiquette. Knowing the rules that govern any particular social media that one wants to use is also *Netiquette*. Just as different social settings require different

etiquette, so do different social media require different *Netiquette*. The rules that apply to Facebook would not apply to LinkedIn and vice versa.

14.20 Specific Etiquette

Vaynerchuk (2013) refers to the unique content on different social media as “native content”—“native” because the content in question is indigenous or designed specifically with that platform in mind. One of the first things users need to know is what content is native to specific social media. Relatively lengthy videos are native on YouTube but might not sit too well on LinkedIn. Casual fun-looking images are native to Facebook and Instagram, but those same images are not native to LinkedIn. Knowing what is native helps the user post content that will be readily accepted on the social media site in question.

14.21 Facebook

Treadaway and Smith (2012) describe Facebook as the “digital cooler” of our days—a place we gather around to discuss the affairs of the day. One of *Netiquette* of Facebook is to desist from spamming, i.e., frequently contacting people with unsolicited and unwanted friend requests. Fortunately, Facebook is able to detect what messages qualify as spam. The company would then warn targeted users. In some cases, Facebook is able to deactivate the account of the spammer. Gunther (2012) advises users not to see friends list as a competition to see who has the most. Quality should be the consideration and not quantity when it comes Facebook friends.

14.22 Twitter

Since its inception in 2006, Twitter has grown to become an international social media phenomenon. The etiquette that apply to Twitter specifically is referred to by many as *Twittequettes* (Kent, 2015). One

of the first has to do with the limit on the number of characters permissible on a Twitter post. This calls for the use of short, effective phrases, statistics, links, and quotes (CMI, 2014). Twitter is not a place for long posts. If Twitter is the social media of choice, then the individual must be ready to tweet regularly.

14.23 Instagram

According to Amaral (2015), Instagram is a combination of “instant camera” and “telegram”. Although Instagram is listed as a photo and video-sharing social networking site, it is mainly known for its photos. Therefore, it is expected that individuals will be wary of the quality of photos they post on the site. Holmes (2015) advises users not to post too much too often, suggesting users restrict themselves to no more than two posts a day. Failure to heed to abide by this *Netiquette* can result in other users unfollowing the individual.

14.24 LinkedIn

Because of its core mandate of being a professionals-only social media site, it is expected of LinkedIn users to always behave professionally on the site. Profile photos must be professional headshots. It is proper *Netiquette* to complete one’s profile on LinkedIn. An incomplete profile does not speak well of the individual. When sending requests for links, it is appropriate to not spam the requests. Requests should be sent to individuals personally. It is good to have a large network of contacts. However, the desire for large contacts should not mean invading the privacy of others with incessant requests. A key etiquette to observe on LinkedIn is to offer help to other professionals on the platform by providing useful information that would help them succeed (McCormick, 2016).

14.25 YouTube

The one difference between YouTube and other social media platforms is that it is a strictly online video platform. Therefore, one of its main etiquette is the posting of decent videos. Videos must also be of high quality. Low-quality videos are not only frustrating for customers, but they are an indictment on the individual or organisation posting them. It is also important to keep YouTube videos quite short, due to the short attention of most viewers. YouTube allows for comments under posts. It is therefore important for those comments to be monitored by the individual posting the videos. Where necessary, it is polite to respond to comments. To ensure that others outside of your domain get to make sense of a video, uploading the transcript is a must (Atwood, 2018).

Hickey (2015) asserts that good manners are made up of three important components. These are kindness, respect, and consideration of others. These three form the basis of the etiquette of the Internet and, by extension, on social media. It is interesting to note that these form the basis of African traditional family values. Bailey (2005) provides a dozen specific family values including respect, manners, compassion, kindness, empathy, sympathy, patience, tolerance, humility, meekness, helpfulness, and imagination skills. As more and more Africans get connected to the Internet, they must come onto the platform imbued with these traditional values that have held for centuries on the continent.

14.26 Conclusion

The Internet and by extension, social media have changed the communications landscape. Businesses and individuals alike are logging on and spending more time on the Internet regularly. As the number of users of social media increases, and Africa makes more of its presence felt on social media, the need for adherence to *Netiquette* would become more important. This compilation of informal etiquette is meant to bring some sanity to communication on the Net. Those who will flout these

rules might not get prosecuted in a court of law, but the repercussions might not be any less detrimental.

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