The Internet as It Affects the Illustrative Acumen of Art Students in Universities South-South of Nigeria

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Abstract

This study of the internet as it affects the illustrative acumen of art students was done in the universities south-south of Nigeria. This is an empirical study that shows how plagiarism of illustrations affects students which, therefore, weakens their illustrative abilities. Federal and state owned universities that had Fine and Applied Arts, only majoring in graphics were selected. Graphic students see illustrations from the internet as a resource for completing their illustrative assignments, with no attempt to avoid plagiarism, but rather aim for higher scores in their zeal to make their layouts easier and faster, rather they avoid sourcing for their original illustration, either by drawing or self-made photographs. From this empirical research, it was found out that it affected their learning process especially fueled by the lack of direction from their teachers on how to source for illustration. In the light of this study, only one objective and research question were formulated. The objective was to find out how ready-made illustration affected the illustrative acumen of under-graduate graphic artists in south-south of Nigeria. The research design was a quantitative survey. The population was made up of all the specializing graphic art students of years three and four. The instruments were interviews for lecturers and students and questionnaires for students. The results indicated great temptation to sourcing illustrations from the internet, and students felt impatient towards their manuals which bred bad finish. It was therefore recommended that lecturers provide direction for sourcing illustrations and continuous practice on their manuals to improve their artistic abilities.

Keywords

Graphic Art Students, Internet, Illustrations, Plagiarism and Acumen

1. Introduction

In this study, plagiarism of illustrations, universities south-south of Nigeria were used, seven (7) Federal and State Universities that had fine and applied arts and only those majoring in graphics were selected. Plagiarism has become a common trait among university students in literary and art studies either knowingly or unknowingly. This copious attitude was emphasized by Seleman et al., (2018) when they averred that plagiarism is one long-standing challenge faced by higher learning institutions among students. According to them, despite the lack of a universally accepted definition of the word plagiarism, most of the definitions agree that plagiarism is premised on the wrong use of words and ideas of others, without acknowledgments. Seleman et al., Ibid.

Plagiarism of illustrations among graphic Art Students has become common place, since lecturers do not discourage it and seek originality (see Table 3). Students therefore seek easier means of reproducing ready-made illustrations through technology without recourse to thinking if it's for their own good or not. They plagiarize illustrations most probably due to laziness or lack of competency in their drawing skills. The quest for technology and an improved way of life has greatly increased within the past twenty years as supported by Sutton (2013) who said that over the last few decades, cellular devices, ipads, ipods, computers and most importantly the internet have completely overhauled the way people interact in society and the way educators work in schools. This quest has brought about the internet as a means of communication and a complex archive for storing information which has no limitation. This proliferation of technology has been propelled by the zeal to make things easier, fast and better in every respect of human life. This has affected the learning process of students in the universities and other tertiary schools to some extent in Nigeria. At any provocation as provided by their teachers on any poster assignment or literary work, the students pounce on their phones, sourcing for information while the graphic students seek for readymade illustrations. This has remained so because most of their teachers do not provide any direction for sourcing illustrations.

Assignment Expert (2019), tells of a study made in the United States of America on a testing which showed that Students who actively use a computer were according to their teachers frighteningly limited in their ability to create their own visual images. When this is compared to this study one would find that technology has in some ways affected the illustrative ability of some of our undergraduate graphic artists studying in universities in Nigeria. The internet has provided an important resource for both scientific and educational research, and for other forms of literary work, but it has also provided a propelling resource for the graphic artist to generate illustrations; this has affected the undergraduate graphic artist, who has lost the true meaning originality and also loosing their illustrative acumen which is meant to be the fulcrum of his graphic profession. The graphic artist should be one whose illustrative acumen should be impeccable and be able to apply design principles of colour, form, shapes and layouts to or-

ganize and showcase original art works when it comes to graphic illustrations. (Pomerleau, 2019). She further reiterates that graphic illustrations keep creative expression at the forefront. The graphic artists, away from computer manipulation, should be able to handle any manual process. This manual process is such that makes the graphic artist what he is, whose training takes years to acquire and perfect; this was confirmed by Valerio (2018) when he said that; "it takes a lot of practice to become good at something, while the skill part takes hundreds if not thousands of hours" as different from that of the computer operator whose ability of CorelDraw and Photoshop could be made perfect with two to three months of training. Just anyone can train himself or herself in the above software, but not anyone could have the talent of illustrative capabilities, which the universities having fine and applied arts are trying to inculcate in students. Paul (2020) says illustration can be an act of creating drawing or a picture while Breadnbeyond (2020) says that illustrations are created by both freehand and vector graphics In this matter, it is still created by hand directly on the computer. This habitual factor that the internet technology has provided in helping us to source for illustrations has brought about an over dependence on it. This is to the disadvantage of our students, who hardly think of self-realization and improvement of their illustrative acumen; which could be re-dressed by exacting oneself in using the right measure of personal sketches and personal photographs while in training; for skill when nurtured increases. Art practitioners know that by constant practice the talent of the artist improves and perfects, otherwise he remains stagnated. This is supported by Brummer, when she said that; when one is taught a skill and made to practice he will get more skillful.

1.1. Theoretical Framework of the Study

A graphic artist could be trained to understand and know better skills than he is training for, through the right instructions and conditions that may be set for him by his teachers. But their behavioral skills could gradually be conditioned towards copying what others have done and gradually eroding innovation and originality. Therefore the theoretical framework of this study is based on the theories of behaviorism which combines operant conditioning by B. F. Skinner and Ivan Pavlov's classical conditioning. Cherry (2021), in her study writes that behaviors can be measured, trained and changed. From this statement she concludes that every behavior were the result of conditioning, and that any person, regardless of his or her background could be trained to act in a particular manner given the right conditioning. Behaviorism, Cherry defines as behaviors acquired through conditioning.

Classical conditioning has its roots from Ivan Pavlov and operant conditioning from B. F. Skinner. Cherry (2021) suggested that classical conditioning is a behavioral training which pairs a naturally occurring stimulus with response next to a previously neutral stimulus Eventually, the previous neutral stimulus comes to evoke the response without the presence of the naturally occurring

stimulus. When linked with this study and the possibilities of human nature, having the instinct to take short cuts and go the easy way, one would find that the internet becomes a cheap source of acquiring illustrations for graphic students. When compared to Cherry's analysis of classical conditioning as above, the natural occurring stimulus is the human instinct to take short cuts and do things the easy way. And the response is to get it right in one go, thus ending with good scores. When the natural occurring stimulus is now paired with the neutral stimulus which is the internet (illustrations from the internet), the natural instinct takes over, which is to have illustrations the easy way through the internet, instead of having to stress themselves to take photo shots or make drawings to develop their own illustrations. As students gradually get used to adapting illustrations from the internet, that habit is now formed and covers up their inability to illustrate well, however they are encouraged by good scores which links this study to the operant conditioning which has to do with rewards and reinforcement. According to Mcleod (2018) operant conditioning is a method of learning that occurs through rewards and punishments for behavior; through it, an individual can make association between a particular behavior and a consequence.

When the above statements are now compared to this study, the behavior of graphic student's has become habitually instinctive towards lifting and using illustrations from the internet: and the consequence is that university lecturers appropriate to them scores which gives the students the impetus to continue lifting illustrations from the internet. As against those who would not perform well, either because their illustrations were not well finished or they didn't know where to copy from, or do not know how to apply originality to avoid plagiarism. Another behavioural theory that affects this study is the Bandura's social learning theory. According to Nabavi (2012), Albert Bandura (1925-1921) founded this theory in continuity to that of Ivan Pavlove and B. F. Skinner, Bandura argued that human learning depends also on his environment, this he calls social learning. That people learn by watching others, and in some ways begin to imitate. The way this theory affects this study is such that students see their course mates use the internet and succeed, having good grades for their illustration, they therefore see no reason to follow suit, especially when their teachers do not kick against their work process.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The quest to make things easier through technologies of this generation which has come as the internet, CorelDraw and Photoshop has become the order of the day for the graphic artists. The graphic artist cannot do without the above software's mentioned. However the sourcing of illustrations through the internet has become a factual habit for graphic artist; the graphic art students at study have been most negatively affected, because this is slowly eroding their illustrative acumen. Their professional training requires them to perfect their illustrative skills as they improve on their computer literacy. But rather there is an ab-

andon of acquiring illustrative skills and concentrating on sourcing for ready-made ones from the internet, which is plagiarism.

2. Objective of the Study

In line with the aim of this study which is to find out how the internet has affected the illustrative acumen of art students in Universities South-South of Nigeria, only one objective was set for this study which was to; find the extent to which reliance on readymade illustrations has affected the illustrative acumen of the undergraduate graphic artists in south-south Nigerian Universities.

2.1. Research Question

From the above objective only one research question was formulated; which says: to what extent has the reliance on readymade illustrations affected the illustrative acumen of the undergraduate graphic artists in Universities of South-South, Nigeria?

2.2. Area of Study

The study area for this research was the South-South region of Nigeria. Only Federal and State owned universities were chosen because most of them have the Department of Fine and Applied Arts amongst their academic programs. The universities chosen were University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, River State, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, River State, Niger Delta University, Amassoma, Bayelsa State, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State and Cross River University of Technology, (CRUTECH), Calabar, Cross River State. The Federal and State Universities were chosen because the governments have been consistent in developing the Fine and Applied Arts Department of the various universities.

2.3. Methodology of the Study

The research design used was the quantitative survey technique. The population of this research work was made-up of all the specializing graphic students in years three and four in all the seven universities. The instruments used were interview and questionnaires for students and their lecturers were also interviewed. Sample population for student respondents to questionnaires was 78; population of interviewed students was 52 while sample population of lecturers interviewed was 11 because they were those on sight from the 7 different universities visited. This provided enough sample since most universities in the south-south of Nigeria had 2 or 3 lecturers in the graphics unit. 11 lecturers made up more than half the total number. The cluster sampling technique was used. The technique required that students of each level found on sight were used. The years three and four were chosen because, at this point students were expected to specialize in either the Fine Arts or the Applied Arts. The Fine arts has two areas which are

painting and sculpture, while the Applied Arts include graphics, textiles and ceramics. The sampling technique was also purposive, because only the graphic art students belonged to the population. The graphic students engage more with assignments that requires illustrative capabilities. The instruments used were questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire and interview methods were used because at the moment of administration, it was difficult to get their works. However, a few posters seen authenticated the results of this research. The data was analysed using simple percentages.

3. Results

Questionnaire was one of the instruments used; below (see Table 1) are five questions that were asked. The research question read: to what extent has the reliance on ready-made illustrations affected the illustrative acumen of the undergraduate graphic artists in Universities in the South-South of Nigeria?

Item one of Table 1 has **21%** agreeing that, they feel better lifting illustration from the internet while **79%** says no. In item 2, **79%** agrees that most times they feel tempted to source illustration from the internet, while **21%** said no. In item 3, **27%** feel that manual work is a waste of time, while **73%** feel that manual work is not a waste of time. In item 4, **24%** says yes they don't feel like sourcing for illustration from the internet, while **76%** says when the internet is available not much need to source for theirs. Item 5 has **55%** saying that taking their own photographic shoots is sometimes cumbersome, while **45%** says it is not cumbersome.

3.1. Results of Interview with Students

52 students made up the sample number for the interview. The interview questions were aligned with the research question. Two interview questions were involved.

Table 1. Showing data distribution of questions from questionnaires.

Items	Item Description	Yes	No	Total	
1	I feel satisfied with illustrations taken from the internet than my own personally generated illustrations!	16 **21%**	62 **79%**	78 100	Sample %
2	Most times, I feel tempted to lift illustrations from the internet!	62 **79%**	16 **21%**	78 100	Sample %
3	I feel manual work is a waste of time!	21 **27%**	57 **73%**	78 100	Sample %
4	I don't feel like sourcing for my own illustration when I know that the internet is available!	19 **24%**	59 **76%**	78 100	Sample %
5	Taking photographic shoots of the right situation for an advert is a little cumbersome sometimes!	43 **55%**	35 **45%**	78 100	Sample %
	Average Percentage	**41%**	**59%**		

Questionnaire for Students.

The results of Table 2 show that 63% said no, because they have never really thought about the reasons for the study of photography. While 19 sample students making up 37% said yes that sometimes they thought of it, but never really to a conclusion. The second question on manuals, 34 students making up 65% said yes, that they truly get impatient using manuals while 18 making up 35% said no, that they don't get impatient.

3.2. Results of Interview with Lecturers

11 Lecturers, made up the sample from the seven universities visited. 2 questions asked were aligned to the research question above.

Table 3 presents results of interview with lecturers. The results shows from the first item that 63% of lecturers making up 7 of them sees a lot of impatience that might lead to bad finish. While 37% making up 4 lecturers said no. Item 2 on grading shows 18% or 2 of the 11 lecturers saying yes they regard the source of illustrations and sometimes send them back for repeats while 9 of the 11 lecturers making up 82% said no, that as far as they are concerned it does not bother them.

3.3. Discussion of Results

The research question states thus: to what extent has the reliance on readymade illustrations affected the illustrative acumen of the undergraduate artists in Universities in the South-South of Nigeria?

From the 78 questionnaire samples received, 79% felt good using their own illustrations as against downloaded internet illustrations (see Table 1). In item 2, 79% felt that they had constant strong temptation to adapt illustrations from the internet, this temptation showed off in the sampled posters, which ended up having 65% download from an earlier research. Item 3 asked if they thought

Table 2. Showing the interview of Students.

Items	Item Description	Yes	No	Total	Sample
1	Have you ever thought of the reasons you study photography?	19 37%	33 63%	52 100%	Sample %
2	When working on manuals you feel you don't have the speed and impatient.	34 65%	18 35%	52 100%	Sample %

Questionnaire for Students.

Table 3. Showing results of interview with lecturers.

Items	Item Description	Yes	No	Total	Sample
1	Do you see impatience in their works regulating in bad finish?	7 63%	4 37%	11 100%	Sample %
2	When you grade, do you regard the good finish or bad finish based on source of illustration?	2 18%	9 82%	11 100%	Sample %

Questionnaire for Students.

manual work was a waste of time, 27% said yes while 73% affirmed no. 73% used internet downloaded illustrations in their manual (see Table 1) work but had 27% still reasoning that computer should be the main stay of graphics in universities. Item 4 has 76% saying that they still felt like sourcing for their original illustrations despite the availability of the internet. Item 5 has 55% (see Table 1) saying that taking photographic shoots of the right situation for their illustration is cumbersome while 45% is saying it is not cumbersome. The average percentage does not necessarily show a decline in acumen, because it shows 41% for yes while no has 59%. The difference was not significant enough.

From the interview of the 52 sample students, revealed some significance in results; one of the question asked; when working on their manuals, did they feel they did not have the speed and therefore felt a little impatient, 65% said yes while 35% said no (see Table 2). This conforms with interviews with lecturers when they were asked if they observed impatience in students manuals that might instigate bad finish, 63% said yes while 37% said no (see Table 3). A second question related was asked the lecturers that, when grading their students, whether it mattered to them if their works were good or badly rendered when illustrations were generated from the internet or not; 18% said yes and 82% said no. This result signifies that whether illustrations were generated from the internet or not mattered not to the lecturers (see Table 3), what mattered to the lecturers was the rendering. If the treatment of the layout was good they get high scores, if it was bad they get low scores. This has the possibility of reducing the expected acumen of students: only one of the sampled lecturers insisted that no matter how good the rendering may be of a poster, if the illustrations are not locally generated, the poster would be thrown out and he showed evidence of one. This came from the experience of that lecturer working in an advertising agency before he moved to the university to lecture.

When reflection is made back to the theoretical framework of this study it would be observed that this study was closely linked with classical conditioning from Ivan Pavlov, which according to Cherry (2021); is a behavioral training which pairs a naturally occurring stimulus to the previous neutral stimulus, which comes to evoke the response without the presence of the naturally occurring stimulus. The natural occurring stimulus is the human instinct to take the short cut. Since the students were not told where or how to source for their illustrations, they took the easy part of going internet, right on their phones (see Table 3).

4. Conclusion

The one research question for this study; asked to what extent has the reliance on readymade illustrations affected the illustrative acumen of the undergraduate artists in Universities in the South-South of Nigeria? From the results, the questionnaires did not reveal much because of the natural instinct to claim they were on the right part. But more revelations came from the interviews of students and

lecturers, where results showed that 65% of students felt impatient to work on manuals because the speed of work was not enough. This result was buttressed with results from the interview with lecturers where 63% of them said that they saw a lot of impatience and bad finish in their manuals. While 82% said what mattered to them was the good finish of their manual works. But 65% feeling impatient working on manual posters may be because they have been over-whelmed by the presence of digital posters which came from the introduction of Corel-Draw and Photoshop.

Recommendations

1) Manual posters fully presented in layouts must be presented in good finish which should be worked alongside digital imitations in their final year. The manuals help the student's illustrative ability; the use of graphic tools for finishing must be emphasized by their lecturers. If this is not done the students would not be well grounded foundationally in their specializations.

2) Lecturers must insist on where and how illustrations are sourced. Sourcing of illustrations could come using direct drawings from life or using cameras to capture special situations required for illustrations. This could come under the direct supervision of lecturers. Roles to be played by students must be known to them.

3) If illustrative acumen must improve, then continuous practice must be insisted on, for the graphic artist to weld that necessary skill meant for his profession. Enough manual projects should be given to improve the acumen of students.

4) Departments of art should be decisive on disciplinary measures against plagiarism of illustrations.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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