Chapter XIX
Cybercafés and Cyber Crime in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses cybercafés and cyber crime in Nigeria. It also identifies the various cyber criminals in Nigeria. The working groups set up by the government to redeem the image of Nigerians by monitoring cybercafés and handling cases of cyber criminals and cyber victims are also discussed. Some major factors affecting the rise in cyber crime in Nigeria and methods of preventing cyber crimes (scam mail) are outlined. It was recommended that there is need to educate the populace on café fraud and in fighting cyber crime, the working group established by the government needed to be adequately equipped with ICT knowledge and facilities.

INTRODUCTION

A little backtracking to Nigeria's public sector managed telecommunications history unveils a canvass of exclusivist *telecommunications* services enjoyed by only a privileged few. Such telecommunications services include Internet access and the telephone, particularly the mobile telephone which is penetrating rural communities in Nigeria.

Today, the story is different, as a deregulated telecommunications sector has increased Nigeria's tele-density, which stood at 1:165 at the inception of mobile telephony operations to 1:17 in 2004. With the present growth rate, tele-density by 2007 is estimated at 1:10. The deregulation of the sec-

tor also opened up the superhighway in Nigeria. Today, the Internet access services are readily available either through home use, offices, or in the cybercafés.

In Nigeria, *cybercafés* have become an integral part of the business and social environment. They appeared as a result of the introduction of the Internet which gave rise to the widespread use of instant electronic communication among people, irrespective of their location. Cybercafés have developed to a booming business as the Internet has been found to be useful for business transactions, education, entertainment, and everyday communications. As a result of this, cybercafés are springing up in major cities in Nigeria in order to meet up with the members of the society information needs. One of the reasons why the cybercafé has become a hit in Nigeria is because of the limited *telecommunications* infrastructure in the country. The poor infrastructure situation before now optic fibre cable by which high-capacity telecommunications services could be delivered were not available. Also, the absence of such infrastructure meant that a large proportion of the country's population had to depend on dial up for Internet access. Only 450,000 lines were functional in a country of 120 million people. Members of the society had to source for other means to get information, as a result of this emerged the cybercafés (Iboma, 2005).

The purpose of this chapter is as follows:

- To identify the various categories involved in *cyber crime* in Nigeria;
- To identify the different agencies established by the government to curb the crime and their roles;
- To look into the factors affecting cyber crimes in Nigeria; and
- To make recommendations on how cyber crime can be prevented.

According to Adomi, Okiy, and Ruteyan (2003) *cybercafés*, also known as Internet cafés, are places where Internet services are provided by entrepreneurs for a fee.

They can be run as part of the services provided in restaurants and hotels or can be places wholly set aside for members of the public to gain access to the Internet. These cafés are established in major cities and in places where there are higher institutions. According to Tiemo and Agbabune (2007), cybercafés are places where you pay to browse the Internet, they are operated by private individuals for the purpose of providing Internet services and are profit-making. In a research conducted by Adomi et al. (2003), it was discovered that students ranked highest as users of cybercafés, followed by businessmen, lecturers, and teachers in Nigeria. This is in agreement with the findings of Gitta and Ikoj-Odongo (2003) in Ghana, and Sairosse & Mutula (2004) in Botswana. These cafés provide users easy links with the global community and are therefore heavily patronized by both the old and the young. They are major Internet access points to Nigerians who can not afford computers and Internet connection at home. In essence, they have become 'social services' albeit, provided by the 'private sectors' with the primary motive of profits. This means everyone including hackers and *'yahoo' boys* are all welcomed.

An *advance fee fraud* is a confidence trick in which the target is persuaded to advance relatively small sums of money in the hope of realizing a much larger gain. Among the variations on this type of scam is the Nigerian Letter (or 419 fraud). The term "419" is derived from section 419 of the Nigerian criminal code. Section "419" of the Criminal Code, Law of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and The Federal Republic of Nigeria Criminal Code, 1958. The code states that:

Any person who by any false pretence and with intent to defraud, obtains from any other person anything capable of being stolen, or induces any other person to deliver to any other person any thing capable of being stolen, is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for three years. If the