

# Relationship between Uses of Social Media on Reading Habits: Evidence from Senior High Students in Ghana

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## Abstract

The study sought to investigate the relationship between the use of social media and its impact on reading habits with evidence from senior high students in Ghana. A questionnaire was administered on sample of senior high students to gather data and analyzed quantitatively with the use of statistical package for social science (SPSS) to form the basis of the study. Out of one thousand questionnaires administered, five hundred and sixty-six responses were retrieved representing 56.6%. The study found out that all the constructs of social media thus (Face book, Whatsapps, Yahoo messenger, Skype and Tango) showed a positive significant interrelationship with each other at 0.01 level. Also there was a significant relationship between all the constructs (Facebook, Whatsapps, Yahoo messenger, Skype and Tango) independent variables and the dependent variable reading habits at 0.01 level. Hence the entire hypotheses tested were accepted.

**Keywords:** Social Networks, Senior High Students, Reading Style, Reading Interest, Information Literacy.

## 1.1 Introduction

The emergence of the Internet and its associate's social media sites has further widened sources of information (Schneider, 2009). The 21<sup>st</sup> century is considered as information explosion age. For one thing, it is an age in which information provision and management have become more critical to all levels of development than before (Schneider, 2009). Furthermore, information is knowledge, and to many, knowledge is power. Therefore, those who lack it will always be behind those who have it.

For the purpose of this study, social media is defined as the use of "Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype, YouTube, Twitter, Tango etc. With smart phones being able to access the Internet and have applications of social networking. Many are concerned about how such phones with social networking applications will affect the reading habits of students. Social networking became popular between 2004 and 2006, after Facebook and MySpace were created. Facebook, for example has over 500 million members and it is still growing. Approximately 85% of undergraduate students are Facebook users. These numbers are only expected to grow since Facebook users will continue to grow. This is not only true for Facebook. Numbers of YouTube users closely follow as well (University of New Hampshire, 2010).

Social media has exploded as a category of online discourse where people create content, share it, bookmark it and network at a prodigious rate. Because of its ease of use, speed and reach, social media is fast changing the public discourse in society and setting trends and agenda in topics that range from the environment and politics to technology and the entertainment industry. Since social media can also be construed as a form of collective wisdom, most of the youth now consider it a source of getting information (Asur & Huberman, 2010).

Social networking websites provide tools by which people can communicate, share information, and create new relationships. With the popularity of social networking websites on the rise, our social interaction is affected in multiple ways as we adapt to our increasingly technological world. The way the web users interact and talk to each other has changed and continues to change. These users now socialize through the internet and it takes away from the person socialization that has been around forever. Social networking websites have affected our social interaction by changing the way we interact face-to-face, how we receive information, and the dynamics of our social groups and friendships (Asur & Huberman, 2010).

Kaitlin (2010) further opines that social networking websites also affect the way we receive information and news. The sites open up different portals through which we get information and create more diverse news outlets. Rather than reading the newspaper or watching the news on television, students rely on "friends" on the sites to give them updates on the world around us (Kaitlin, 2010). Most of the studies (Schneider 2009, Kaitlin 2010, & Palani 2012) conducted in this area dealt with the use of social media, linking it to reading habits among students in the developed world. It is against this backdrop that has necessitated the conduct of this research to investigate students' use of social media and their effect on reading habits among senior high students in Ghana. This is largely because no empirical study has been conducted in Ghana to find out the effect to which social media has on the reading habits of senior high students in Ghana.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

The arrival of the social media has extremely changed the reading habits of most people especially the young ones. It seems they have totally preoccupied attention from the reading of books or fiction, and have depended highly on social media as the main means of communication among themselves. This phenomenon is observed

in most educational institutions in Ghana and it appears to affected student's performance. Today, students mostly do not read novels or fiction to gain knowledge in order to improve their performance. This has created a mixed- feeling among members of the society. It is expected that a study of this kind would help all stakeholders in the educational institutions to establish the link between the use of social media sites and their effect on the reading habits of senior high students in a developing country like Ghana.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

The general objective of the study was to investigate the relationship between the uses of social media on reading among students of senior high schools in Ghana. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. To examine the association between Facebook and reading habits among the students.
- ii. To assess the correlation between Whatsapps and reading habits among the students.
- iii. To evaluate the relationship between Skype and reading habits among the students.
- iv. To evaluate the association between Yahoo messenger and reading habits among the students.
- v. To evaluate the association between Tango and reading habits among the students.

### **1.4 Literature Review**

#### **1.4 .1 Concept of Social Media**

Social media has exploded as a category of online discourse where people create content, share it, bookmark it and network at a prodigious rate. Examples include Facebook, Tango, Twitter, Yahoo Messenger, MySpace, Digg, and others. Lusk (2010) further defines social media as “an aspect of the Internet which allows individuals and groups to create and publish online content, share the content, and interact about it”. Social Media Sites include social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook and MySpace, blogs, microblogs such as Twitter, wikis, tools for sharing photos and videos such as Flickr and YouTube, online gaming, and virtual worlds such as Second Life. According to Junco and Loken (2010), social media are a “collection of Internet websites, services, and practices that support collaboration, community building, participation, and sharing”.

#### **1.4.2 Reading Habits among Students**

In the opinion of Dadzie (2008), reading is the ability to understand words contained in a document and make use of the knowledge for personal growth and development. In other words reading is in fact making meaning out of recorded information printed, by an individual. There are many reasons why people read. The reasons among others are for pleasure, leisure and relaxation, for information and for knowledge. According to Palani (2012), reading habit is an essential and important aspect for creating the literate society in this world. It shapes the personality of an individual and it helps an individual to develop the proper thinking methods and creating new ideas. At present, because of the influence of the mass media, people tend not to show much interest in reading books, magazines, journals etc, therefore, there is an urgent need to develop the reading habit among the individuals in the society.

Palani (2012) is of the opinion that, effective reading is the most important avenue of effective learning. Reading is interrelated with the total educational process and hence, educational success requires successful reading. Reading is the identification of the symbols and the association of appropriate meaning with them. It requires identification and comprehension. Comprehension skills help the learner to understand the meaning of words in isolation and in context. Before the advent of the television, both the young and the old had enough time to read. Apart from teachers, other professionals use to spend their leisure time in reading both English and vernacular literature. English medium schools insisted upon extra reading from their students. But all these have become a thing of the past. Now, reading habit has lost its importance as both the young and the old are glued to the television. As far as the educational institutions are concerned, coaching students for the examinations seems to be the be-all and end-all of our educational system, (Palani 2012).

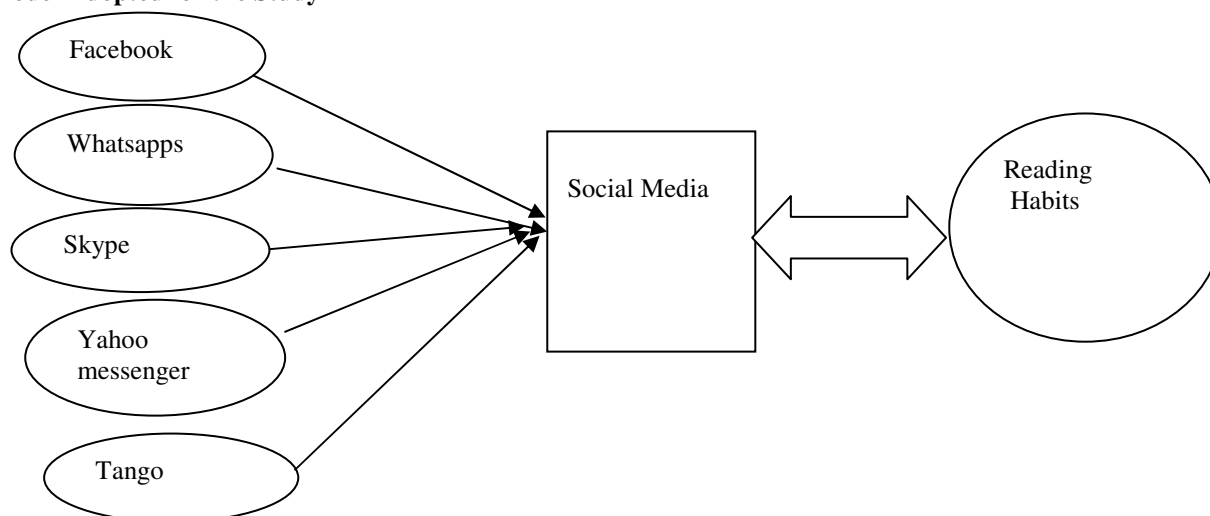
Many authors such as Palani (2012), Grosseck (2009) and Gaona (2012) agree that reading is an essential tool for knowledge transfer. In this sense, the habit of reading is an academic activity that increases skills in reading strategies. The National Survey of Reading in Mexico reveals that the highest levels of book reading are between 17-22 year and most frequent reading material are text books (Gaona, 2012). To know about the world and its environment, a child helps himself through reading books, newspapers and other magazines. Once the child has been taught to read and develop a love for books, he can explore for himself the wealth of human experience and knowledge. Children, who miss the opportunity of getting in touch with books at this stage, find it hard to acquire good reading habits in their later years (Deavers, 2000).

Reading is an intellectual action which is possible only if an individual formed a habit of reading and practicing it since childhood. The reading habit, therefore, plays a very crucial role in enabling a person to achieve practical efficiency. Indeed, books are the most suitable medium through which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation. The growing dimension of the use of the social media among the youth of today cannot be over emphasized. Over the years, social networking among students has become more and more popular. It is a way to make connections, not only on campus, but with friends outside of school.

Social networking is a way that helps many people to feel as though they belong to a community. Due to the increased popularity of social networking sites, economists and professors are questioning whether grades of students are being affected by how much time is being spent on these sites (Choney, 2010).

Smart phones are a new concern to the academic world when it comes to social networking. A smart phone is a cell phone that "allows users to choose the applications they want to install" while acting as a communication and computing device. A study done at Ball State in 2010 showed that the number of smart phones purchased by students had doubled over the last year (Hernandez, 2010). As at February, 2009, 27% of students had smart phones. However, by February 2010, 49% of students had purchased a smart phone. The reason is that owning a smart phone has made students more aware of grades and students with smart phones access the Internet from the device which allows easier access to social networking sites as well (Hernandez, 2010). Facebook and other social media websites are beginning to take up more time of students due to the society's increasing reliance on computers (Choney, 2010).

### Model Adopted for the Study



Source: Authors Construct (2014)

#### 1.4.3 Research Hypotheses

- i. There is a significant relationship between Facebook and reading habits among the students.
  - ii. There is a significant relationship between Whatsapps and reading habits among the students.
  - iii. There is a significant relationship between Skype and reading habits among the students.
  - iv. There is a significant relationship between Yahoo messenger reading habits among the students.
- There is a significant relationship between Tango and reading habits among the students

### 1.5 Methodology

The survey was a cross sectional descriptive study with the use of questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection. The study was mainly a quantitative approach to solve the study problem.

#### 1.5.1 Population

The targeted population of the study was senior high students between the ages of 14 – 18 years, both sexes, residents of Koforidua and Accra metropolis who have been on social media for at least one year.

#### 1.5.2 Sampling

Probability Simple random sampling technique was adopted to distribute the questionnaire to the respondents in Koforidua and Accra metropolis. This was employed in order to give every respondent an equal chance of being part of the study. Out of one thousand (1000) questionnaires distributed, six hundred and three (603) were returned but after editing and sorting, five hundred and sixty-six (566) was found valid for analysis and interpretation and constitute 56.6 % of the sample size.

#### 1.5.3 Data collection

Data were collected through the use of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A, elicited general and biographical information about respondents. Section B elicited information on respondent's use of Facebook, Skype, Yahoo Messenger, Whatsapps and Tango and section C elicited information on respondent's reading habits. The questionnaire consisted of 21 items covering the variables.

### 1.6.1 Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was employed to determine, descriptive, correlation and regression among others.

**Table 1: Demographic information**

| Participants  | Frequency(N=566) | Percentage (%) |
|---------------|------------------|----------------|
| Accra         | 356              | 62.90          |
| Koforidua     | 210              | 37.10          |
| <b>Gender</b> |                  |                |
| Male          | 110              | 19.44          |
| Female        | 456              | 80.56          |

Source: survey data, 2013

**Table 2 :Correlations**

|                 |                     | Facebook | Whatsapps | Yahoo Messenger | Skype  | Tango  |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------|-----------|-----------------|--------|--------|
| Facebook        | Pearson Correlation | 1        | .392**    | .942**          | .928** | .956** |
|                 | Sig. (2-tailed)     |          | .005      | .000            | .000   | .000   |
|                 | N                   | 566      | 566       | 566             | 566    | 566    |
| Whatsapps       | Pearson Correlation | .392**   | 1         | .382**          | .441** | .422** |
|                 | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .005     |           | .006            | .001   | .002   |
|                 | N                   | 566      | 566       | 566             | 566    | 566    |
| Yahoo Messenger | Pearson Correlation | .942**   | .382**    | 1               | .918** | .921** |
|                 | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000     | .006      |                 | .000   | .000   |
|                 | N                   | 566      | 566       | 566             | 566    | 566    |
| Skype           | Pearson Correlation | .928**   | .441**    | .918**          | 1      | .963** |
|                 | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000     | .001      | .000            |        | .000   |
|                 | N                   | 566      | 566       | 566             | 566    | 566    |
| Tango           | Pearson Correlation | .956**   | .422**    | .921**          | .963** | 1      |
|                 | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000     | .002      | .000            | .000   |        |
|                 | N                   | 566      | 566       | 566             | 566    | 566    |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results from Table 2 indicate that all the independent variables (Facebook, Whatsapps, Yahoo Messenger, Skype, and Tango) had positive interrelationship with each other at level 0.01.

**Table 3: Model Summary**

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .951 <sup>a</sup> | .905     | .894              | .34327                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Tango, Whatsapps, Yahoo Messenger, Skype, Facebook

The results of the multiple regression analysis, as shown in Table 3, R determines the correlation between Social media construct and reading habits. The correlation between the two variables is 0.951 which explains a strong positive significant relationship. Coefficient of determination, R<sup>2</sup>, predicts the relationship between the independent variables and dependent is 0.905. This means that 90.0 percent of the total variance in the dependent variable (reading habits) is accounted for by the independent variables (Facebook, Tango, Skype, Yahoo Messenger and Whatsapps). This result affirms that all the five constructs of social media is significant in affecting reading habits. This indicates that more time spent on social media translate into poor reading habits.

**Table 4 :Anova<sup>a</sup>**

| Model |            | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F      | Sig.              |
|-------|------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1     | Regression | 49.315         | 5  | 9.863       | 83.703 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|       | Residual   | 5.185          | 44 | .118        |        |                   |
|       | Total      | 54.500         | 49 |             |        |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: Reading Habits

b. Predictors: (Constant), Tango, Whatsapps, Yahoo Messenger, Skype, Facebook

The results of the F-ratio, as shown in Table 4, indicates that the regression model is significant at  $p < 0.001$ . It can be accomplished, that the regression model predicts reading habits strongly. In other words, the social media construct: Facebook, Tango, Skype, Yahoo Messenger, Whatsapp (the independent variables) have

the ability to predict reading habits (the dependent variable).

**Table 5 : Coefficients**

| Model           | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t    | Sig. |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|------|------|
|                 | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |      |      |
| (Constant)      | -.054                       | .131       |                           | .412 | .000 |
| Facebook        | -.020                       | .151       | .415                      | 3.35 | .000 |
| Whatsapps       | .001                        | .009       | .403                      | 4.59 | .000 |
| Yahoo Messenger | .404                        | .127       | .475                      | 3.94 | .000 |
| Skype           | -.010                       | .161       | .411                      | 4.60 | .000 |
| Tango           | .437                        | .182       | .430                      | 4.01 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Reading Habits

The regression analysis presented in Table 5 reveals that Reading Habits determined by the social media construct of Facebook, Skype, Tango, Yahoo messenger and whatsapps. Facebook has a beta value of 0.415. This means that Face book explains 41.5% of Reading Habits, at a p-value of 0.000. This explains a significant positive association of face book with Reading Habits.

Whatsapps has a beta value of .403. This means that explains 40.3% of Reading Habits, at a p-value of 0.00. This indicates a significant positive association of Whatsapps with Reading Habits. Yahoo Messenger has a beta value of 0.475.

This means that Yahoo messenger explains 47.5 % of Reading Habits, at a p-value of 0.000. This shows a significant relationship between of Yahoo messenger and Reading Habits. Skype has a beta value of 0.411. This means that Skype explain 41.1 % of Reading Habits, at a p-value of 0.000. This shows a significant relationship between of Whatsapps and Reading Habits. Tango has a beta value of 0.430 .This means that Tango explains 43.1 % of Reading Habits, at a p-value of 0.000. This shows a significant relationship between Tango and Reading Habits. Regression model is significant at  $p < 0.005$ . The above data shows that all the above hypothesized relationships between social media and Reading Habits are accepted.

**Table 6: Summary of research hypotheses and results**

| Hypothesis | Description  | Beta  | t-value | Comment  |
|------------|--|-------|---------|----------|
| H1         | There is a significant relationship between Facebook and reading habits among the students.        | 0.415 | 3.35    | Accepted |
| H2         | There is a significant relationship between Whatsapps and reading habits among the students.       | 0.403 | 4.49    | Accepted |
| H3         | There is a significant relationship between Yahoo messenger and reading habits among the students. | 0.475 | 3.95    | Accepted |
| H4         | There is a significant relationship between Skype and reading habits among the students.           | 0.411 | 4.60    | Accepted |
| H5         | There is a significant relationship between Tango and reading habits among the students.           | 0.430 | 4.01    | Accepted |

### 1.7 Discussion

The increase use of social networking sites among student has no doubt affected students reading habit negatively. Reading habit is a deliberate effort towards understanding and acquiring knowledge. It is also a systematic conscious task of acquiring specific knowledge geared toward a set of standards. Reading habits are behaviors that are easily manifested without conscious exertion on the part of the learner (Oloyede, 2005).

Shehu and Shehu (2014) in a previous study which sought to find out the challenges of social networking on Ahmadu Bello University students. Survey method was adopted using questionnaire as instrument for data collection. Copies of questionnaires were administered and retrieved from 200 undergraduates. The findings revealed that 189(94.5%) of the students are involved in social networking to connect with friends and relatives, the study also indicated that 72(36%) respondents stipulated that social networking distract their reading habits. This confirms the revelation from the current study.

On the other hand, Wang, Chenand and Liang (2011) wrote on effect of social media on college students, showed that social media use is negatively associated with academic performance. They also reported that about two-thirds of the students are found using social media while in class studying or doing home work. This multi-tasking increases distraction and becomes detrimental to student performance. The finding is not



different from the issue under discussion.

According to Castia and Morris (2011) as social media websites, such as facebook, youtube and twitter gain popularity, they are also becoming increasingly dangerous as they create modes to students to procrastinate while trying to complete homework and assignment. In their survey of 102 students, 57% stated that social media has made them less productive. The finding has a link with the current study because it could be noticed that students hardly cultivate the habit of reading.

In the view of Oji (2007) in Nigeria, there has been concerned on the possible effect of day time and sometime all night browsing on student's reading time. Many parents are worried over their children's habit on facebook and other social media sites because they are of the opinion that their children now hardly have the time to read.

Ofuani and Gberedio, (2009) in a previous study found out that social networking sites have proven to be universally addictive for tertiary institutions students as well as senior high students who tend to spend considerable amounts of their time maintaining social connections, making new acquaintances and a broad base of friends during their years of study. In addition Loving & Ochoa, (2010) found out that, these however reduce the amount of time they will use to read books aimed at successful completion of their studies.

Due to technological development, reading habits are changing. In our society today, while technology is slowly taking a steady control over individual lives, the reading habit is fast vanishing into thin air. Students now lack the skill of reading and instead they spend more hours on electronic media (The Hindu, 2004). This assertion is a true reflection in the Ghanaian society as exhibited in the study findings.

### 1.8 Conclusion

The study investigated the relationship between use of social media and reading habits focusing on senior high school students from Koforidua and Accra metropolis in Ghana. The study found out that all the constructs of social media thus (Face book, Whatsapps, Yahoo messenger, Skype and Tango) showed a positive significant interrelationship with each other at 0.01 level. Also there was a significant relationship between all the constructs thus Facebook, Whatsapps, Yahoo messenger, Skype and Tango (independent variables) and the dependent variable reading habits at 0.01 level. Hence the all the five hypothesis tested were accepted.

### 1.9 Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations are made.

Students should be encouraged by staff to spend less time when they visit their social media sites and to use the site for more educational purposes than just chatting, downloading music and video etc. Staff should equally encourage students to visit the library to read not only notes but novels and fiction as well and further borrow novels from the library. The Library should include in its stock a variety of novels and fiction. The required publicity must be given to enhance their use by students. Finally, it is recommended that communication skills as a course should be made mandatory for all first year students and as requirement of this course students should read at least two novels or fiction in each term and a non-scoring course for all form 2 and 3 students for a term. This will go a long way to inculcate reading habits into the students.

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