

When Values Change Values: Assessing how Social Media Changes Nigerian Youth Communication Patterns and Values

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Abstract

The study examined how social networking sites with alien values changed Nigerian youth communication patterns (values). It adopted library research design. Secondary data were generated for the study. The study found that social media has a set of alien values which include the speech patterns, slang, gossips, rumours, nude pictures, sexual assault, sexually explicit materials, sexual violence, social interactions, behaviour, dressings, and general worldview. Through using these social networking sites, individuals generate, manipulate and create contents for conversations among themselves. This communication and conversation move from person to person and group to group in a virtual setting devoid of any regulation, censorship or interference. This study is anchored on value change theory. This theory challenges the people to test their own values against those of others, which are presumed to be socially more acceptable.

Keywords: Value Change, Social Media, Nigerian Youth, Communication Patterns

Introduction

The concept of ‘Global Village’ earlier propagated by a Canadian communication scholar, philosopher and public intellectual, Herbert Marshall McLuhan in his *Gutenberg Galaxy*, 1962, has become a reality with the advent of the computer, Internet and social media. Today’s world has witnessed high level of dependence on the computer and computer-related technologies as well as the Internet. Interestingly, the Internet provides opportunity for the use of social media for communication either on a computer or computer-related devices such as smartphones and tablet computers. The use of social media networking sites has become part of the daily lives of some Nigerian youths. Facebook, WhatsApp YouTube, Cyworld, Google+, Twitter, Myspace, Tumblr, Instagram, 2go and other social networking sites are very popular in Nigeria. Such sites are commonly used for many reasons such as self-advertisement and private communication, social interaction, e-learning, business transaction, entertainment, sharing of pictures, and gospel, etc.

One key issue of social media communication in Nigeria is the argument about the spread of alien communication values, especially among youths. It has been noted that Nigerian youth communication has been negatively impacted by alien values such as radical shortening of words, and increasing use of symbol and shortcuts, with little or no adherence to traditional grammatical rules. Computers and the internet have made easy the process of creating and editing documents and applying features such as spell check and grammar check automatic. However, this has not translated to impeccable written or spoken language by Nigerian youths. Beyond grammar checks, communication among Nigerian youths on social networking sites has been corrupted. Internet users are at liberty to post whatever they want to post, not minding the ethical dimension of such posts. They are always comfortable with sexual talks, abuses, vent, snoop, bully, gossip, rumour peddling and self - advertisement etc. In view of the above assertion, this paper examined how the social media networking sites have changed communication patterns of Nigerian youths using students of the Department of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic, Auchi, as a case study.

Conceptual Clarification

Social Media: social media otherwise known as new media is a form of electronic communication which facilitates interaction based on certain interests and characteristics on web2.0 technology. The term ‘Web 2.0’ was introduced into use 2004 by Dale Dougherty, a vice-president of O’Reilly Media Inc. at a discussion on the future of the web (O’Reilly, 2005). For him it was an attempt to explore the more potent power of the web that would go beyond the exploits already achieved by the Web 1.0. Web 2.0 is the term used to describe a variety of web sites and applications that allow any person to create and share online information or material that they have created. Such technology allows anyone to create, share, collaborate & communicate with others at any time. Web 2.0 does not require any web design or publishing skills to participate, making it easy for people to create and publish or communicate their works to the world. Many of such Web 2.0 based websites include amongst other social media platforms such as: Facebook, WhatsApp YouTube, Cyworld, Google+, Twitter, Myspace, Tumblr, Instagram and 2go amongst others. Social media is a powerful platform for social interaction, using

highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Asemah (2011) sees social media as a digital interactive media. Social media uses web-based technologies to transform and broadcast media monologues into social dialogues. Social media networking sites support democratization of knowledge and information and transform people from content consumers to content producers. They are elements of the new media technologies that provide the fastest means of communication to users; an online community that supports one-on-one social interaction. According to Sambe (2014), social media is a new media technology, a product of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Social media has altered our communication patterns by way of providing instant feedback, viral content, popular accessibility and availability. Social media can be classified into different categories based on users' interest such as social networks- Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn; media sharing networks-Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube; discussion forum-Reddit, Quora, Digg; bookmarking and content curation networks-Pinterest, Flipboard; consumer review networks-Yelp, Zomato, Trip Advisor; blogging and publishing networks-WordPress, Tumblr, Medium; interest-based networks-Polyvore, Etsy, Fancy; social shopping networks-Goodreads, Houzz, Last.fm; sharing economy networks-Airbnb, Uber, Taskrabbit; Anonymous social media-Whisper, Ask.fm and After School etc.

Nigerian Youth: National Baseline Youth Survey defines Nigerian youth to be (15–35 years). However, for the purpose of this study; Nigerian youths are 15-35 years who are social media users. According to the 2012 youth survey report by the National Bureau of Statistics, youths of working age in Nigeria stands at 70 million persons in a population of 166 million.

Communication Patterns: In the context of this study, it implies the way language is used on the social media platforms by social media users which includes, word spelling, syntax, semantics, message (content) of the communication with respect to ethical consideration.

Communication of Values: Communication of values is the sharing of ideas, thoughts, feelings and emotions among individuals. In every communication experience, there is usually a sharing of what the communicant believes is right or wrong. What is right is dependent on his or her values. In the social media environment, media users share a number of things they feel are right. However, quite a number of issues have been raised concerning communication values on the social media. One of the major concerns is attributed to the works of Max Scheler who argued that anonymity turns people to irresponsible individuals (Veveve, 2015). Social media communication does not support one-on-one conversation; it is highly mediated, impersonal, encourages free expression of feelings, thoughts, ideas and is anonymous in nature. These attributes of social media communication have posed a serious challenge to the kind of values shared on the social media domain. In communication philosophy it is believed that the primary access to the realm of values is through acts of feeling and preference that are directed upon objects and persons bearing the values. In any concrete situation several values may be shared including nude pictures, sex and sexism, sexually explicit materials, and sexual violence, self-promotion, haste speech, rumour, gossip, use of slang and language constructs which defies the Standard English grammar rules. The dialogic philosophy of communication illustrates the philosophy of language as a feasible communication model that is applied universally. The social media vocabulary with reason refers to the praxis today is pathetically instrumentalized and confused when searching for the protonorms of new communication morality, and semantic exactness.

Statement of the Problem

Communication starts from intrapersonal, interpersonal, group to mass communication. Mass communication has passed through phases, from the earliest book publishing through newspapering, radio broadcasting, television transmitting, film shows and now the internet surfing. In all of these phases, the internet era seems to have more effect on the kinds of communication contents (values) conveyed. Today, Internet has created a global community with everyone saying what they like with common language such: 'what's up on WhatsApp', 'follow me on twitter', 'check my status on Facebook page', 'visit us at www or download video'. This new communication order is said to have some kinds of negative impact on the day-to-day communication of the youths who are the preponderate users of the internet through social media. This claim is not yet ascertained scientifically, but spurs the interest of the researchers to embark on this research project.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to ascertain the communication patterns of youth social media users.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Find out the preferred social media platforms of youth.
2. If preferred social media platforms affect their communication patterns.
3. The dimension of effect on their communication pattern.
4. The values they share and acquire on the social media platforms.

Research Questions/Hypotheses

For this research, 3 three research questions and two hypotheses are formulated.

1. Which are the preferred social media platforms of Youths?
2. Do the preferred social media affect communication patterns of youth?

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between social media use and the communication patterns of youths.

3. What values do youths share and acquire on the social media platforms?

Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between the use of social media and the acquisition of negative values by youths who use social media.

Scope of the study

This study is focused on the impact of social media on communication patterns and the shared values of social media users. It was carried out with Mass Communication students of the Federal Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State, Nigeria. The reason for this case study was because they are active social media users. The second consideration was that they were conversant with the power and effect of the media as communication tools.

Review of the Related Literature

Social Media and Nigerian Youth: Scholarly works have shown that the current communication trend is in the use of social media networking sites particularly with the youths. Goel (2008) states that, the youths in their prime are tipped to be the drivers of social media with Web 2.0 applications and the wide acceptance of this new media into the new world. There is a wind of change all over the world regarding the exodus from traditional media to the new media. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) share the same view, they maintain that social media have brought into reality a global village which Marshall McLuhan envisaged some years ago, they went further to list the following as social media sites: Twitter, Blogs, Facebook, Instagram, Skype, Tumblr, YouTube, Podcast, 2go, Eskimi, Flickr. (Tapscott, 1998), believes that using this platform can help youths think more critically. (Abubakar, 2011) also states that, there are many issues surrounding social networking sites particularly with the youths who constitute the majority users of the new interactive platform. However, researchers have ignored the effects of social media on communication patterns; this may not be far from the fact that researchers, particularly in Nigeria have not thought about the implications of social media on communication pattern.

Ahaotu & Amadi (2014), in their study show that, 94.9% of youths sampled use social media not only for social purposes but also for teaching, research and also business purposes, amongst others. The most preferred social media sites used by the respondents sampled in that study was Facebook. The youths sampled also said they belonged to other social media communities such as Twitter, Hi5, My Space, and LinkedIn, etc.

According to World Development Indicators (WDI, 2013), social media users in Nigeria are officially put at 53.5% of the population, in 2012. This is higher than the national average for 2008, which was put at 23.9%. Projected, in 2016, over 80% of those who live in urban areas in Nigeria use social media. The most popular social media networks in Nigeria include Facebook, Twitter, Blackberry messaging, WhatsApp, 2go and Badoo. Olaito (2014) collaborated (WDI, 2013) findings, by saying that, more people are coming on Twitter than any other platform in Nigeria and the percentage of youths here is on increase as they are constantly sharing issues, ideas and events as it bothers them.

Several reasons have been adduced as being responsible for the growing usage of social media amongst Nigerian youths. One of such reasons is the introduction of internet facilities by mobile phone service providers. Many phone users now browse. The new way of conducting national examination may also account for the increase in the usage of social media. It is common practice nowadays for national examination bodies to use online registration, examination and result verification and collection. Most government and private universities and polytechnics in Nigeria have moved the admission processes and result checking processes online. All these account for the sharp rise in the number of internet users in Nigeria, and this has equally led to rise in the use of

social media. Nigerians are quick to copy trend of events overseas, one can also see this trend in the way youth on campuses dress. The Internet provides the platform for the strengthening of globalisation.

Communication Patterns and Values through Social Media Networking Sites

This part of the study reviews empirical works.

Irudaya Raj (2017) in his study on social media and communication patterns studied 120 students of the Periyar University, Salem, who were social media users selected through convenient sampling from six departments from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. A set of questionnaire was constructed to obtain the needed data that were analysed using SPSS. The findings of study showed that social media users have experienced different kinds of communication patterns and have evolved a new kind of online language using concise, brief, crisp, code words and acronyms for easy communication. He listed the acronyms commonly used on social media as follows : LOL(Lough out loud); ASL(Age, sex, location);OMG(Oh my God);AYL(Are you listening);BFF(Best friend for ever);BZY(Buzy); TTYL(Talk To You later);BF/GF(Boyfriend/Girlfriend);IDK (I don't know). He concluded by saying that Internet has made a big revolution in the field of communication.

Velga Vevere (2015) in her work, "Impact of social media on interpersonal communication patterns", sampled (survey) 240 students aged between 18-25 who enrolled in Philosophy, Communication, Communication Management, and Intercultural Communication from a population of 85,881. The students represented three Latvia's higher educational establishments: The University College of Economics and Culture; The Turiba University; The University of Latvia. Her study focused on the use of Twitter, Facebook and email. The data obtained were analysed with simple percentage. The findings of the study showed that social media influence how young people speak and write. This influence is made manifest in what they (social media users) called "Text Speak" characterized by acronyms, emoticons (symbols representing emotions) words are frequently coded in a simple phonetic form, for example, "thanks" becomes "thx", "you" becomes "u", capitalization and punctuation are often left out, a deviation from the standard rules of English Grammar.

Samuel Olaniran (2014) in his work, "Social media and the changing communication pattern among students: an analysis of Twitter by UniJos students", employed descriptive survey method and administered his questionnaire to 150 online respondents who had valid twitter account. His findings showed that most of the active users of Twitter were aged 21-26, and mainly use the social media for interactive and other leisure entertainment. He concluded by saying that the usability of the Twitter was enhanced by availability of the mobile phones.

Theoretical Framework

Value Change theory is concerned with values members of a given society hold and how it might change over time. People usually conform to a particular behaviour as localized but over a period of time this behaviour is changed due to infiltration of mass behaviour. Early philosophers like Max Weber, Emily Durkheim, and Talcott Parsons in their early studies on ethics espoused on this theory, and based their argument on how, why and to what extent or degree of value a person holds. This theory also uses technique of "comparative feedback" to induce attitudinal and behavioural change. This theory is appropriate for this study because it emphasizes how values held by members of the community change as a result of intervening variables. It is equally important to note that every communication conveys value(s) held by the communicant; social media users therefore share their values on their platform and consciously and unconsciously assimilate new values shared. This is what many are yet to understand about social media communication.

Methodology

The researchers adopted survey design. A set of questionnaire was designed to generate data to answer the three research questions. The questionnaire was designed in two segments; bio-data and thematic data. It was also designed in Likert scale as well as dichotomous response format.

Population of the Study

The study used a population of 66 undergraduate students in the Department of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic, Auchi.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The researchers used a sample size of 66 (sixty six) students as respondents. Quota sampling technique was adopted to choose Ordinary National Diploma (OND) 2 undergraduate students of Mass Communication. These students are in their second year of Mass Communication studies. The researchers however, used convenient sampling method to select sample based on accessibility and willingness to fill the questionnaire.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The data generated for the study are discussed under the research questions they address. It had been stated that three research questions and two hypotheses were posed to guide the study. The research questions are restated here. The data were analysed using SPSS.

1. Which are the preferred social media platforms of Youths?
2. Do the preferred social media affect communication patterns of youth?

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between social media use and the communication patterns of youths.

3. What values do youths share and acquire on the social media platforms?

Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between the use of social media and the acquisition of negative values by youths who use social media.

Results

The results of the research are analysed as follows:

Research Question 1

S/no	Social Media	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	Others (Error)	Percentage
1.	Facebook	45	68.2	17	25.8	4	6.1
2.	WhatsApp	37	56.1	26	39.4	3	4.5
3.	LinkedIn	4	6.1	59	89.4	3	4.5
4.	Twitter	4	6.1	59	89.4	3	4.5
5.	Google+	19	28.8	44	66.7	3	4.5
6.	YouTube	11	16.7	52	78.8	3	4.5

Table 1: Table showing the most preferred social media sites.

Source: SPSS analysis

From the above analysis, results show that 68.2% of the respondents prefer social media as their means of communication. With 56.1% WhatsApp was the next social media to be preferred for their social media communication. This supports the hypothesis that Facebook and WhatsApp are the preferred social media platforms for Communication by Youths.

Research question 2

Do the preferred social media affect communication patterns of youth?

Hypothesis (Null): There is no significant relationship between social media use and the communication patterns of youths.

Three questions were put forward to find out if the use of social media affects the communication pattern of youths in terms of spelling, use of acronyms, slangs, shortened phrases and abbreviations. The illustrated can be demonstrated as follows:

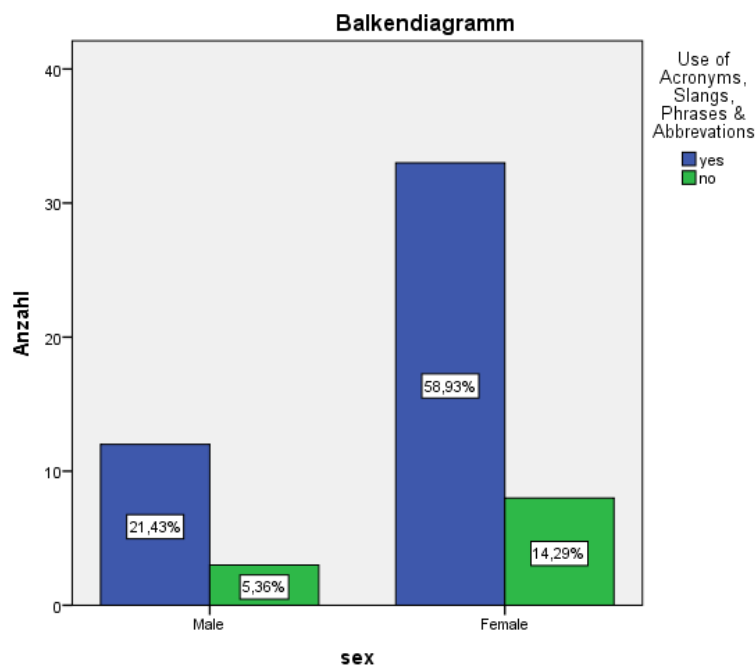


Figure 1: Chart showing from respondent showing how social media has affected their communication pattern.
 Source: SPSS analysis from Author's research

From the above, both sexes 80.36% (24.43% for males and 58.93% for females) are convinced that social media has made them to use slangs, acronyms, shortened phrases and abbreviations. Ironically, many of the respondents said that the dimension of effect of social media on them was on the whole positive as table 2 below shows.

		Dimension of Social Media Effect on English Grammar		Total
		Positive	negative	
sex	Male	10	5	15
	Female	34	10	44
Total		44	15	59

Table 2: showing the dimension of effect of social media

In testing for relationship, a chi-square was used and the following results were given.

Chi-Quadrat-Tests					
	Value	Df	Asymptomatic Significance(2-sided)	Exact Significance (2-sided)	Exact Significance (1-sided)
Chi-Quadrat (Pearson)	,664 ^a	1	,415	,497	,311
Continuity correction	,222	1	,637		
Likelihood-Quotient	,639	1	,424		
Exact Test (Fisher)					
Linear Relationship	,652	1	,419		
Valid Values	59				

Table 3: Showing Chi square test of hypothesis 2.

From the above table, we have our chi square test showing ($\chi^2 = 0.415$), our predetermined alpha level of significance (0.05), and our degrees of freedom ($df = 1$). Entering the Chi square distribution table with 1 degree of freedom, we find our value of χ^2 to be 0.415 and since our corresponding probability is between the 0.10 and 0.05, that means that the p-value is above 0.05 (it is actually 0.415). Since a p-value of 0.415 is greater than the conventionally accepted significance level of 0.05 (i.e. $p > 0.05$) we fail to reject the null hypothesis. In other words, there is no statistically significant relationship between social media use and the communication patterns of youths.

Research Question 3

The research question here was formulated as follows: “What values do youths share and acquire on the social media platforms? To answer this research question, the following hypothesis was formulated to be tested.

Hypothesis (Null): There is a significant relationship between the use of social media and the acquisition of negative values by youths who use social media.

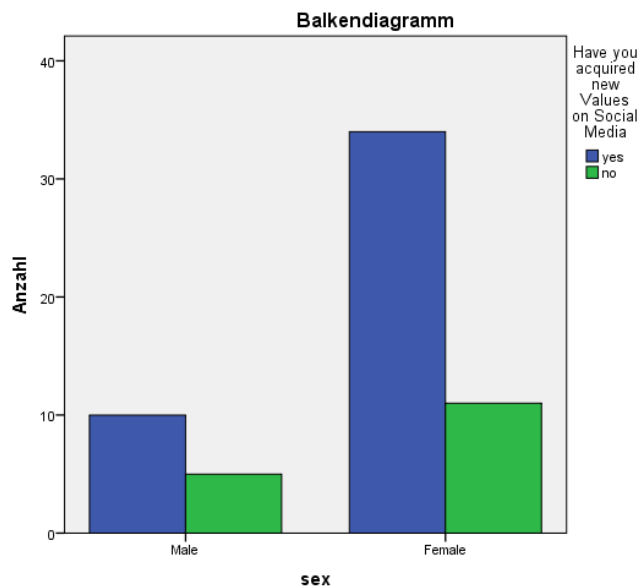


Figure 2: Showing how males and females have acquired new values on Social Media.

Source: SPSS analysis from Author’s research

Frequencies of Values acquired				
		Responses		Percentages of Cases
		N	Percent	
Values ^a	Friendlier	9	3,0%	14,3%
	Sociable	7	2,3%	11,1%
	Charitable	16	5,3%	25,4%
	Gossip	43	14,3%	68,3%
	Rumour	37	12,3%	58,7%
	Pictures	19	6,3%	30,2%
	Self-promotion	18	6,0%	28,6%
	Sexual materials	50	16,6%	79,4%
	Vent	48	15,9%	76,2%
	Bully	54	17,9%	85,7%
Total		301	100,0%	477,8%

Table 4: Showing the percentages of values acquired through social media.

From the above table 4, it can be seen the frequencies, in percentages, of the types of values youths acquired through social media. It is significant to observe that most youths acquire higher negative values than positive ones. For example, the three most acquired values were all negative, namely: Bully was highest with 85.7%,

Sexual Material was next with frequency of 79.4% and Vent was next with 15.9%. Together, these three values make up over 50% (50.4%) of the total values acquired by the respondents, whereas positive values acquired such as friendlier (14.3%), Sociable (11.1%) and Charitable (25.4%) were least acquired by the respondents. Indeed, the three positive values make up only 10.6% of the total values acquired by the respondents. Testing the hypothesis with chi square, the following are the results.

Chi-Quadrat-Tests					
	Values	df	Asymptomatic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Significance (2-sided)	Exact Significance(1-sided)
Chi-Quadrat (Pearson)	,455 ^a	1	,500		
Continuity correction	,114	1	,736		
Likelihood-Quotient	,441	1	,507		
Exact Test (Fisher)				,516	,360
Linear Relationship	,447	1	,504		
Valid Values	60				

Table 5: Showing the chi square test of research question 3.

From the above table, we have our chi square test gives the $\chi^2 = 0.500$, our predetermined alpha level of significance (0.05), and our degrees of freedom ($df = 1$). Entering the Chi square distribution table with 1 degree of freedom, we find our value of χ^2 to be 0.500 and since our corresponding probability is between the 0.10 and 0.05, that means that the p-value is above 0.05 (it is actually 0.500). Since a p-value of 0.500 is greater than the conventionally accepted significance level of 0.05 (i.e. $p > 0.05$) we fail to reject the null hypothesis. In other words, there is a significant relationship between the use of social media and the acquisition of negative values by youths who use social media.

Conclusion

Youths are increasingly using social media to communicate. These social media, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp, have no negative impact on their communication pattern particularly in the area of their English grammar. Most respondents are of the view, according to the results, that social media does not negatively affect their English grammar. On the other hand, youths acquire both positive and negative values in their communication on social media. This research establishes that youths acquire more negative values than positive one. Significantly, a very high proportion of the youths acquire the negative value of bully, whereas the least acquired value by youths was the positive value of sociability (sociable).

Recommendations

Students should continue to use social media to communicate because it has no adverse effect on their English grammar. However, students must be conscious about acquiring negative values while using social media. For further research, it is recommended that how male and female acquire values on social media should be researched into.

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