Impact of Social Media on The Reading Culture of Nigerian Youths; Is the Social Media platform providing an Alternative Source of Education?

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Abstract- **The Social Media is a group of online communication channels that allow individuals, groups, governments, organizations, and companies etc. to share information, ideas and express their selves via virtual networks sites like Facebook, Twitter, linked in, Instagram but to name a few. They have all succeeded in connecting Nigerian youths so that they have been able to share information and connect with each other without any boundaries. The purpose of this term paper is to analyze the impact of social media on the reading habits of Nigerian youths and also determine if it is providing an alternative source of education, this is due to the fact that issues have risen concerning the its effects on the reading culture of Nigerian youths due to the fact that recent statistics has shown that there has been a rapid decline in the reading culture of Nigerian students. Youths tend to spend their time online chatting, posting selfies, keeping up in the latest entertainment news and exhibiting celebrity mania and all this tends to have a negative impact in their reading culture. However, the upside to all this is that it can be an alternative source of education with the introduction of web based technologies, e-learning facilities, online encyclopedias and blogs which have immensely helped in serving as an alternative to education amongst Nigerian youths though research also shows only a few actually use them for educational purposes. The authors concluded that even though the social media has a negative impact on the reading culture of our youths, it also provides an alternative source of education but most Nigerian youths are not making full use of these opportunities and this has to be rectified by creating an awareness on its benefits.**

Index Terms-- Social media, reading culture, education
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I.   INTRODUCTION

Since the advent of six degrees in 1997 which enabled its users to create and upload a profile and also communicate with others around the globe, social media has exploded globally due to the introduction of faster internet connection, affordability and improvements like the introduction of the web 2.0 technology thereby making the world seem like a global village.

Nigerian youths are not left out of the fray, over the years there has been a rapid increase in the number of Nigerian youths who have joined popular social media sites such as Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and BBM etc., It has helped in terms of communication and entertainment with youths now able to have information on issues affecting them in their surroundings. For example, according to Terragon insights, as of the year 2013, there are about 48,366,179 internet users with about 78% of them being between the ages of 19-35, this means that the number of Nigerian youths in the country using the internet was about 37,725,620.
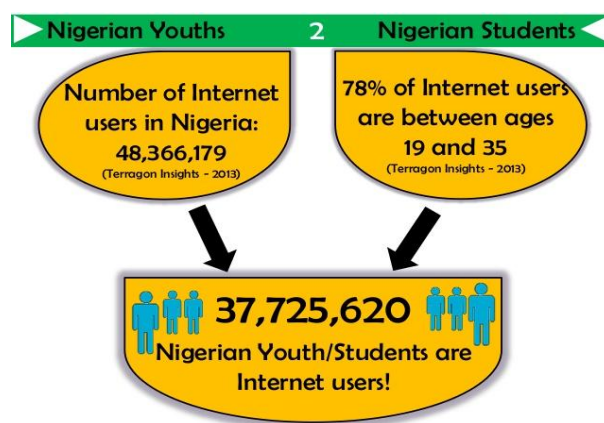

Fig.1 A Summary of Internet users that are Youth and Students

But all this seems to have had a negative impact as no one is born reading, everyone acquires the taste for books over time. Reading is a habit that we develop as we grow in life, come to associate reading with fun, then the habit sticks with them to adulthood [9]. A Reading culture is the process of acquiring a positive reading attitude among students and children over a length of time. When an individual regularly reads books and other materials such as magazines that are not necessarily required for him to advance in his profession or career, he is said to have a reading culture. [5]. But it is a fact that Nigerian youths of today now lack interest in reading. They prefer to spend hours on the social media, chatting, browsing the net, and all sorts of other things hours on end, thereby, making reading a book or any other piece of written material to seem to be an archaic idea for most youths [10]. This led to an observation by Ojeifo who lamented that whenever he posted a picture on Facebook, he would get about 240 likes and 53 comments in 24 hours but if he posted an article he would only be able to garner about 16 likes and 5 comments over that same 24hour period. He felt very worried that many youths spent their time scrolling

from page to page than actually reading [7]. This worrisome trend has also raised its ugly head in not only the reading but also the writing culture of students, many a case when lecturers pick up students' examination or test script to access, they notice that there are some students who use the popular abbreviations such as 'lol', 'lmao', 'g2g', 'asap', and the rest that are used online to write sentences. These youths are so used to their form of chatting that they no longer know how to make correct sentences in English anymore. The continuous decline in reading among Nigerian youths should be a source of concern to parents, teachers, and governments. The reluctant reading behavior displayed by the youths reflects the state of intellectual decay and backwardness in Nigerian educational system. This lack of drive, passion, desire, urge is capable of hampering academic performance as well as the development of a developing country like Nigeria [4].

II. CASE STUDY

However, while many believe that the social media is beneficial to the youths of our society, concerns have appeared about its impacts on the reading culture of our youth due to the fact that our nation still has a long way to go in terms of educational transformation and this is can be achieved through a good reading culture [4]. To support this, we collected and analyzed data from research that was carried out in Ahmadu Bello University and other universities to determine its impacts amongst the Nigerian youths, an example is data from Ahmadu bello university to see if students preferred using social media for academic purposes or non-academic purposes the result is shown below [8]

Table 1: Reasons for using social network site [8].

Reason	Frequency	%
For Reading/Academic Purpose		
Reading of newspapers/magazines	9	4.5
To share and exchange academic information source materials to read for exam and test	30	15
Latest world/surrounding information	18	9
To communicate with lecturer	11	5.5
For Non-academic Purpose		
Chatting with friends	60	30
Photo sharing	30	15
Online dating	10	5
To create/post photo (nudity)	2	1
To create groups of likeminded individual	30	15
Total	200	100

The results from the table above shows that amongst 200 students about 66% do use the social media for non-academic purposes [8]
Another data gotten from research carried out in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in order to determine what the students of the university use the social media [11] is as table II.

Table 2: Mean responses on their purposes of using social networking sites [11].

SN	Item	4	3	2	1	x	Remark
1	I use social networking sites for communicating and interacting with friends	114	36	0	0	4.56	A
2	I use social networking sites for online learning.	48	90	12	0	3.24	A
3	I use social networking sites for finding friends online.	54	66	30	0	3.16	A
4	I use social networking sites for leisure and personal relaxation.	84	60	0	0	3.56	A
5	I use social networking sites for professional activities (searching for jobs).	30	78	36	6	2.88	A
6	I use social networking sites for academic purposes such as group discussions, and getting study partners online.	36	78	36	0	3.02	A
7	I use social networking sites for watching movies.	36	48	60	6	2.84	A
8	I use social networking sites for connecting and interacting with business partners.	30	60	30	30	2.60	A
9	I use social networking sites for communicating, mobilizing and organizing national issues like politics, economy and religious matters.	30	60	54	6	2.76	A
10	I use social networking sites for private messaging, uploading photos and online profiles.	96	48	6	0	3.6	A
11	I use social networking sites for updating profile information	66	78	0	6	3.36	A

But all these negative impacts, still begs the question, is the social media providing an alternative source of education? Education is seen as the process by which society deliberately transmits or transfers its accumulated knowledge, values, and skills from one generation to another through institutions of learning. In this regard, education here simply refers to schooling, which is a formal training acquired in a recognized institution. The objective of education can thus be said to bring about change in the mental, and behavior of a person [15]. Since its various platforms have succeeded in connecting majority of the youths thereby increasing their ability on how to use it effectively as the data below demonstrates. It has also been able to arrest their attention and interest, something which reading seems to have failed to accomplish. Introduction of platforms like Moodle, e-portfolio/learning, google docs, MOOC, desire2learn cloud based learning solutions, halogen talent space which are springing up with the aim of providing top learning alternatives to education and in some cases have been incorporated into education, i.e. universities

are introducing the sites to their students to enhance their learning experience.

Table 3: Students' perceived competency in social media use (end-of-course survey) [3].

Social media	Very competent (%)	Competent (%)	Somewhat competent (%)	Not specified (%)
Wikis	19.8	35.1	34.4	10.7
Blogs	29.8	34.4	24.4	10.7
Twitter	32.1	30.5	29.8	7.6
Mind Maps	18.3	37.4	36.6	7.7
Google Docs	35.1	34.4	20.6	9.9
Diigo	12.2	29	50.4	8.4

So it is easy to ascertain that this is why educators are examining the combination of distance education delivery with the social media, thus, providing new ways to teaching and learning that blend pedagogy with technology [3].an example is the case of the popular social media site Face book which has been use to connect a lot of Nigerian students for purpose of sharing information. The data from the graph below gotten from Experian Hitwise shows that taking the case of the popular social media platform Facebook which have over 17million user in Africa alone as of 2011 and is expected to rise to about 300 million by 2017 [1]. This indicates that the population of those who have access to the social media increases yearly
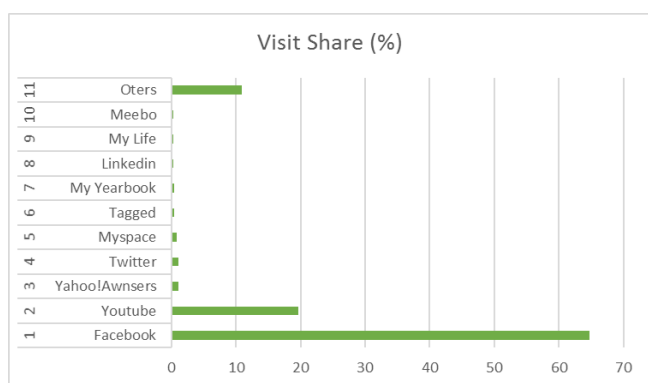

Fig.2 Percent share of the different social media platform

However, despite these brightening prospects this is not the case in reality as research conducted has shown that most Nigerian students do not use Facebook for academic purposes as shown in the table below [1]:

Table 4: Do Nigerian Youths use Facebook platform for academic information exchange? [1]

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	42	33
No	85	67
Undecided	---	---
Total	127	100

This shows that 67% of the 127 respondents who use Facebook do not use it for academic information exchange, while only thirty-three percent responded that they use Facebook platform for academic information exchange. Thereby stating that although Nigerian youths have the knowledge and competence on how to use the social media only a few are using it as an alternative source to education.

III. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the data and research gotten from various sources indicate that although the social media definitely seems to have a negative impact on the reading culture of Nigerian youths since its advent and popularity has led to decline in the interest of reading amongst Nigerian youths, it can be used as an alternative source of education amongst Nigerian youths because a vast majority of the youths are use of services provided by the social media therefore making interactions and exchange of e-books, information and other e-learning resources easier.

It is also recommended that an awareness campaign be carried out in order to inform them about the e-learning platforms available and how they can use them to maximize their potentials, this is because most of them do not know or fully understand the educational capabilities of the social media since they have the wrong notion that social medias are only used for chatting, sharing pics etc. it is also advised that parents, educators, governments and stake holders should try to play their own part in resolving these issues and not only complaining about them. If these issues are resolved, their reading culture will have improved because they will now use their time for reading e-books and other educational materials through the social media.

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