Reading Habits on Social Media for Academic Purposes

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Abstract

The study examined the reading habits on social media platforms of undergraduate students in Adamawa State University, Mubi in Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. Five hundred questionnaires using Google designed forms were distributed. Four hundred and thirty valid responses were analysed. The analysis showed that all of the respondents engage in reading on various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, and Twitter and has increased their level of reading due to easy availability of information on these platforms. The study also revealed that the students use these platforms mainly for academic activities that involve reading required in that academics. The recommendation from the study is that social media should be used pragmatically for the purpose of enhancing educational pursuit. This is without prejudice to communication with family and friends, keeping abreast with current situations and for self-development and even some form of entertainment. This study also recommended that lecturers should encourage students to be more involved in using the social media to access vital information for their assignments, group work in order to inculcate the use of the platforms for educationally productive ventures.

Keywords: Social media, information, Reading Habit, Content

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Introduction

Technological advancement heralded the advent of the social media in the educational landscape. Presently, the social media has permeated the learning space. Reading and accessibility to materials have become easier as most students have access to information at their convenience. The kind of reading activity the students engage in has become a subject of discourse considering the time spent on the social media engagements on different platforms. Nkordeh et al. (2017) stated that 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 boundaries. The interconnection between the social media and reading has gained ascendancy in present day discourse. This is captured in the view of SciSpace Typeset (2024), which stated that social media platforms significantly influence teens' reading choices by shaping their reading habits and preferences. Adolescents are increasingly drawn to social media, such as Twitter and bookstagram, where reading-related content is shared, impacting their interest in reading. The shift from traditional print media to online platforms has altered reading patterns among young people, with online media offering greater accessibility and interactivity, albeit with some drawbacks like information accuracy concerns. Bookstagram, a social media phenomenon dedicated to books, enhances adolescents' reading experiences by fostering a sense of community, promoting diverse genres, and encouraging more attentive reading practices. Integrating social media platforms into literacy curricula could leverage teens' engagement with reading and cater for their evolving reading interests. This study is concerned with the level of reading for academic or non-academic purposes by undergraduate students of Adamawa State University.

Statement of the Problem

The social media use has tremendously increased and has gained more prevalence especially among Nigerian undergraduates. Most undergraduates perceive and understand social media as an easy way to connect, reconnect, chat, date, network, and obtain information to gratify themselves. Such online environments like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube to mention a few are seen as hubs and platforms that many people rely on for their day-to-day interactions in terms of business, education, politics, sociology, religion and host of other affairs (Suleiman, 2014). Ahmed (2019) stated that social media have contributed to the decline of reading culture among students because instead of using it positively, they use it to chat and spend most of their time doing that. Many of these students no longer have control over their use of these applications. In the light of these studies, this research tries to find out the nature of reading habit among undergraduate students whether it is for educational purposes or for other social purposes as well as the hindrances.

Objectives of the study

1. To identify the types of social media used by undergraduate students in Adamawa State University, Mubi.
2. To determine reasons and purpose for the use social media.
3. To find out the Specific use of social media for academic purposes by the students.
4. To find out perceptions of the students on effect of social media on reading for academic purpose

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the types of social media used by undergraduate students in Adamawa State University, Mubi?
2. What are the reasons and purposes for the use social media?
3. What are the specific academic purposes the students use social media use for?
4. What are the perceptions of the students on effect of social media on reading habit for academic purpose?

Literature Review

The Social Media

The social media being the current information hub brought about by the development in technology has facilitated dissemination of information at a large-scale level and has increased the availability of same to the public at a global level. DataReportal (2023) referred to the social media as "a variety of technologies that facilitate the sharing of ideas and information among their users. Mozee (2012) has described states that social media is a term commonly used to describe different types of communication platforms and electronic ways of interacting. It is also described as a collection of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological underpinnings of Web 2.0, which permits the formulation and exchange of user generated content and depend mostly on mobile and Web technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, create, discuss and modify user-generated content. Junco et al (2010) also stated that "this technological advancement and revolution have greatly transformed and influenced the manner at which people from all walks of life communicate and disseminate information with each other. Social media are therefore a collection of internet websites, services, and practices that support collaboration, community building, participation, and sharing".

Bryer and Zavatarro (2011), define social media as "technologies that facilitate social interaction, make possible collaboration, and enable deliberation across stakeholders". These technologies include blogs, wikis, media (audio, photo, video, text) sharing tools, networking platforms, and virtual worlds. The adoption of social media has grown extensively in recent years. As of April 2024, the social media networks had a monthly viewership in millions as stated via: Facebook 3065, YouTube 2,504, Instagram 2000, WhatsApp 2,000, TikTok 1582, WeChat 1,343, Facebook Messenger 1010, Telegram 900, Snapchat 800 (Statista2024). Ezeah et al. (2013) describe social media as a modern

interactive communication channel through which people connect to one another, share ideas, experiences, pictures, messages and information of common interest.

McQuail (2010) further differentiated social media from the traditional mass media asserting that conventional mass communication was primarily one-directional 0rvunidirectional, while the modern forms of communication are essentially interactive. This interactive aura of the social media confers unprecedented popularity on them. Social media by their very nature have the ability to inform, educate, entertain and inflame its audience. Above all, they have a contagious and outreaching magnetism which the traditional media lacks.

Considering the number of users occasioned by reach and accessibility, DataReportal stated that From Facebook and Instagram to X platform (formerly Twitter) and YouTube, more than 4.7 billion people use social media, equal to roughly 60% of the world's population likewise according to Global web Index, in early 2023, 94.8% of users accessed chat and messaging apps and websites, followed closely by social platforms, with 94.6% of users. Internet users of age 16 to 64 worldwide spent a daily average of 2 hours and 31 minutes on social media as at late 2022. DataReportal added that "social media now accounts for its greatest ever share of total online time, with almost four in every 10 minutes spent online now attributable to social media activities."

Asur and Huberman (2010) pinpointed that because of the ease of use, speed and reach associated with social media, it 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 just as it is sprints ahead in academic pursuits and endeavours.

Nigerian undergraduates are not exempted, in recent times there has been a tremendous increase in the number of youths in Nigeria and undergraduates who have signed up in different social media platforms ranging from Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Instagram, 2go, we chat etc. This social media identifications and involvements among undergraduates have helped in terms of communication, gratifications, entertainment, socialization, reunions. These various platforms have provided information to undergraduates on relevant issues, be it academic, social, vocational and otherwise. Thus, in the main students have come to rely on the social media as their first and main reference point.

The Concept of Reading as a skill in communication

Reading, writing, speaking and listening are language skills. Reading is one of the important skills in communication. Being good in reading also makes individual skilful to communicate effectively. Reading is an activity engaged in by most people throughout their life time. Collins & Cheek (1999) described reading as a process that requires the use of complex thought processes to interpret printed symbols as meaningful units and comprehend them as a thought unit in order to understand a printed message.

Chiweta-Odua (2020) defined reading as the process of analysing, decoding and making sense of written, textual or graphic information with the aim of successful interpretation. It is perceived as an instrument for student's improvement and development of intellectual properties of individuals from all walks of life and from generation to generations in order to ensure societal transformations and developments.

Reading enhances experience, knowledge, thinking, and judgment. These enable people to grow in maturity, intellectual maturity, and abilities. Reading is, therefore, an important instrument for the acquisition of knowledge, ideas, and information. This allows readers to study throughout their lives which will lead to the development of a quality of life suitable for the current world environment. That can be seen that reading is very important for living in today's society. Whether it is to communicate for business, earn a living, the acquisition of knowledge, and enjoyment, all activities, thus requires reading and writing skills (Mustafidah, 2021).

Reading is the process of constructing meaning from written texts. It is a complex skill requiring the coordination of number of interrelated sources of information. Reading skills refer to the specific abilities that enable a person to read with independence and interact with the message. Reading skills are vital to knowledge in terms of spelling, writing abilities, vocabulary and even thoughts.

Reading in general aids in the development of the mind and the personality of any individual. It also enhances an individual's intellectual capabilities. However, social media has become a vital component of the daily life of tertiary students and is steadily taking over the consciousness of the youth, consequently affecting their reading culture.

Anyira and Udem, (2020) added that in developed countries of the world, it is generally believed that readers are leaders. Reading, whether for therapeutic purposes, whether for aesthetics, for personal self-development, to up-date knowledge or keep abreast of developments or for academic purpose, is therefore an essential habit that forms the bedrock of greatness in everyone, regardless of age, gender or status.

Bachman (2000) notes that reading through which we can access worlds of ideas and feelings, as well as the knowledge of ages and visions of the future, is at once the most extensively researched and the most enigmatic of the so-called language skills. It is an interactive activity (Suleiman and Crossman, 1980) as the reader not only gets to share the thought of the author but is also able to interpret the words of the author. Reading is most often associated with literacy as educated persons are expected to have the ability to read and write to a competent level. It is therefore not surprising, that reading is an important topic for undergraduates. In recent times, however, the reading habits of young people have become the concern of educators, researchers and policy makers (Kaur & Thivagarajah, 1999).

Social Media for Educational Purposes

The social media can be an alternative source of education with the introduction of web based technologies, e-learning facilities, online encyclopaedias 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 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. Nkordeh, Bob-Manuel, (2017). Nnadozie & Egwin (2008) noted that reading is an important method of acquiring information, knowledge, experience

and learning. Alawiye, Owolabi & Olagesin (2012) maintained that the ability to read is the heart of self-education and lifelong learning.

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. Reading is a prerequisite for almost all academic, cultural and social activities. When reading becomes a way of life, it is termed "reading culture" or "habitual reading". Reading culture thus refers to habitual and regular reading of books and other information bearing materials as a way of life and not necessarily for passing examinations. The love to read books for leisure and for other purposes as part of daily life best defines reading culture. Anyira (2003). Lusk (2010), considered some positive aspects of social media when he specified that going online can afford tertiary students' academic support. This is so as it provides easy access to virtual space which tertiary students with common academic interest can explore. Hence it is often alluded that a country's level of development reflects its level of mental and cultural evolution, its level of educational advancement, and reading is essential vehicle for this achievement.

There is no gain saying that the social media has tremendous impact on education generally and is changing the educational climate. Raut and Patil (2016) laying credence to this stated that the use of social media is not limited only to professionals or elders but it is also being widely used in educational circles by the students…Students usually used social site for many reason such as for study purpose, for entertainment purpose as social media provides any data you want very easily and quickly within a fraction of seconds… as against the traditional learning method that provide few opportunities for learners to develop and maintain their own learning activities, learning platforms based on social media place the control of learning into the hands of learners themselves… increase their academic success. The increase in social networking sites and their applications has improved learning method, which includes reading and have implications on students' effectiveness. Kirkup (2010) also conceded that the value of interactive social media technologies in tertiary institutions is now recognized in the way that teaching and learning strategies are in an increasingly globalized process. The social media is used principally among the youth, most especially in the tertiary institutions used to interact, share information, messages, pictures videos and used also for academic activities.

Educational advancement requires the ability to read and write. It is also required for the improvement and development of the mind, character and behaviour of people. Since the advent of the social media as an important part of the activities of the students of tertiary institutions, it is worthwhile to consider that it also enhances an individual's intellectual capabilities. However, social media has become a vital component of the daily life of tertiary students and is steadily taking over the consciousness of the youth consequently affecting their reading culture.

This reviews the studies that have been conducted in the area of social media and reading. Kalpidon et al. (2011) asserted that as social media such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter gaining popularity, they are increasingly becoming dangerous as they create modes for students to procrastinate their reading and other projects. The study concludes that intensification of the use of social media among tertiary students has no doubt affected their reading culture negatively.

Adu-Sarkodee and Akussah (2015) conducted an investigation on the relationship between the use of social media and its impact on reading habits with evidence from senior high students in Ghana. The study found that all the constructs of social media thus (Face book, WhatsApp, 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, WhatsApp, Yahoo messenger, Skype and Tango) and reading habits at 0.01 level.

Anyira (2023) investigated the influence of social media on reading culture among polytechnic students in Nigeria. The study was aimed at examining the reading habits of polytechnic students in order to discover the benefits of reading, hindrances to reading, social media habits and extent of social media influence on reading culture. The findings indicate that majority of the students do not read frequently as it takes them between two to six days before they read at all and the students spend an hour or less each time they read. The greatest benefit they derive from reading is confidence in examinations and improved academic performance. The social media is the major hindrance to reading, as majority of the students use the social media daily and some of them to as much as seven hours every day. Majority of the students prefer using social media to reading.

Adekunjo and Unuabor (2024) in their study on effect of social media on the Reading Culture of Selected Private Secondary School Students in Akinyele Local Government Area, Ibadan, and Oyo State Nigeria. The findings showed that students' excessive use of social media adversely impact their reading culture and, to a lesser extent, their academic performance.

Though the various studies concluded that the social media has unfavourable influence on reading culture of youth especially as regarding their academic development, this study concurs with Nkordeh et al (2017) that the social media 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.

Methods

This study used the survey method to gather data. A Google online questionnaire was sent to 500 students of Adamawa State University, Mubi a tertiary institution in Nigeria. A total of 430 questionnaire were completed and returned. This implies that the rate of return was 86 %.the analysis of data was done using percentages in tables

Results

Table 1. Gender of respondents

Gender of Respondents	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Male	210	49%
Female	220	51%
Total	430	100%

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430 students of Adamawa State University, Mubi, Nigeria participated in the study. Table 1 shows the gender of the respondents of the study. 220 representing 51% of the respondents are females, while 210 (49%) are males.

Table 2: Utilization and Frequency of social media use

Frequency of Social Media Use	Number of Users (N)	Percentage (%)
Daily	422	98%
Not Daily	8	2%

As shown in Table 2, all respondents indicated the use of social media. Majority 422 (98%) of the respondents indicated that they use the social media everyday (98%) while 8 of them representing (2%) indicated they don't use the social media daily.

Table 3: Type of social media used by the students

Social Media Used by the Students	Number of Users (N)	Percentage (%)
Facebook	422	98%
WhatsApp	419	97%
YouTube	389	90%
Instagram	380	88%
Snapchat	373	87%
Twitter	362	84%
Others	52	12%

The respondents were asked to choose based on multiple options as many social media as they utilize. The responses in Table 3 shows that out of the 430 respondents, 422 (98%) use Facebook, WhatsApp followed closely with 419 with (97%). YouTube was next with 389 (90%), Instagram 380 (88%), Snapchat has 373 representing (87%) Twitter had 362 (84%), others had 52 representing (12%) of the respondents

Table 4: Reasons For Using Social Media

Reason for Using social media	Number of Users (N)	Percentage (%)
Chat with friends and family	430	100%
Keeping current with happenings in the world	430	100%
Discovery of new things for self-development	283	66%
Upload/download of pictures	354	82%
Upload/download of videos	342	80%
Entertainment purposes (playing Music)	426	99%
Academics (Assignments, Reading online, Research)	430	100%

The question had multiple answers thus the respondents could choose from the many options provided. As shown in Table 4, all the respondents (100%) indicated that they use the social media to chat with their family and friends, and browse to know about happenings around them and in the world. 283 respondents (66%) also use the social media to discover new things for self-development. 354 respondents (82%) use the social media to upload and download pictures, 342 (80%) use it to, to upload/download videos. 426 (99%) entertainment purposes (playing music). 430 (100%) use it for one for of academic purpose or the other (assignments, reading online, doing research).

Table 5: Specific social media use for academic purpose.

	Number of Users (N)	Percentage (%)
Reading activities	430	100%
Reading to pass exams	392	91%
Browsing for answers to assignments and share academic knowledge	430	100%

All the respondents (100%) as shown in table 5 indicated that they use the social for reading activities. 392 (91%) of them indicate they read mainly to pass exams, 430 of the respondents (100%) use it to browse for answers to assignments and share academic knowledge.

Table 6: Reasons for social media for academic purposes

	Total number of responses	Percentage (%)
Social media is used for assignment in school	240	63%
Social media is used to read for examinations	240	63%
Social media is used for research	245	65%
Social is used to share academic knowledge	300	79%

They respondents as shown in Table 6 use the social media for assignments in school 240 (63%). to read for examinations 240 (63%), for research 245 (65%), and to share academic knowledge 300 (79%).

Table 7: Perceptions of effect of social media on reading habit for academic purpose

	Number of Users (N)	Percentage (%)
Does not affect reading for academic purposes	379	88%
Affects reading for academic purposes	51	12%

Table 7 indicates that majority of the respondents 379 (88%) agreed that social media does not affect reading habits for academic purposes, 51 (12%) agreed that social media affect reading habits for academic purposes,

Table 8: Respondents Perceptions of Why Social Media Affects Reading Habits for Academic Purposes

	Total number of responses	Percentage (%)
Students use the social media in Academics mainly to complete their assignments	300	79%
Students no longer study for knowledge's sake	152	41%
Students no longer read deeply	150	40%

responded to the questionnaire positively that social media affects reading habits for academic purpose. Their respective responses are as follows: 150 (40%) students no longer read deeply, 152 (41%) students no longer study for knowledge's sake, 300 (79%) students use the social media in academics mainly to complete their assignments.

Discussion of Findings

The research ascertained types of social media used by the students of Adamawa State University, Mubi. addressed how often the respondents use the social media. All the 430 responded. 422 responded that they use the social media everyday (98%) while 8 of them representing (2%) indicated they don't use the social media daily. This showed that there is a high level of use of the social media by the respondents. Facebook was the most used social media platform with the highest number of the students (98%) using the platform., WhatsApp followed closely with (97%). YouTube was next with 90%. In addition, over 80% also use, Instagram Snapchat and Twitter had 362 (84%) This implies that all of the respondents have multiple use of different social media platform for engagement in various social media activities.

The research elicited the reasons for using the social media. The result sought to know what the students regularly use the social media for. The question had multiple answers thus the respondents could choose from the many options provided. 430 respondents (100%) indicated that they use the social media to chat with their family and friends, 430 respondents (100%) browse to know about happenings around them and in the world. 283 respondents (66%) also use the social media to discover new things for self-development. 354 respondents (82%) use the social media to upload and download pictures, 342 use it to, to upload/download videos. 426 (99%) entertainment purposes (playing music). 430 (100%) use it for one for of academic purpose or the other (assignments, reading online, doing research). The categories that have 100% number of respondents are chatting with family and friends, to keep abreast of happenings around them and use for academic purpose or the other (assignments, reading online, doing research). This shows that the respondents give priority to communication, current affairs and educational uses and is

closely followed by reading for self-development. This shows their use of social media for entertainment purposes have taken the back stage in this study.

Specific academic purposes the students use the social media for include reading activities. 392 (91%) of them indicate they read mainly to pass exams, 430 of the respondents (100%) use it to browse for answers to assignments and share academic knowledge. The responses indicate that reading activities in their studies to increase their academic knowledge beyond the classroom and to get answers to their assignments and share academic knowledge is paramount and this is closely followed by those using it to pass their exams.

The research also sought to find out if social media affect reading habit for academic purpose. The study showed that 379 (88%) agreed that social media does not affect reading habits for academic purposes with the responses that they use the social media for assignments in school, use the social to read for examinations, for research and to share academic knowledge. On the other hand, some respondents 51 (12%) agreed that social media affect reading habits for academic purposes because students no longer read deeply, students no longer study for knowledge's sake. The analysis from the responses implies that the larger percentage of students' state that their reading habits are not affected by the social media since it on the whole advances their academic knowledge and performance.

Recommendations

It has been established that the social media is an important component in regular activities of tertiary students, this study, recommends that:

1. Social media should be used pragmatically for the purpose of enhancing their educational pursuit. This is without prejudice to communication with family and friends, keeping abreast with current situations and for self-development and even some form of entertainment.

2. Lectures should encourage students to be more involved in using the social media to access vital information for their assignments, group work in order to inculcate the use of the platforms for educationally productive ventures. The lecturers can assign students to specific social media sites that will promote academic learning and research so as to reduce incidences of use of social media for non-academic activities,

3. Students should also be encouraged to use the social media to improve their read culture in the academic context through constant sensitization at various levels.

4. On the part of the university authorities, students' library services should be made available to students using the internet so as to make academic information/knowledge readily available to the students.

Conclusion

The study investigated reading and social media as well as its implication for education, focusing on undergraduate students of Adamawa State University, Mubi. The study found out that the social media does not affect reading habits negatively. Though students also

use social media for communication, current affairs and self-development. This shows their use of social media for entertainment purposes have taken the back stage in this study. The implication of this is that the reading habits are not affected by the social media since they use the social media for academic purposes. It is evident that the students use social media constructs to enhance reading for academic purposes.

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