

Social Media and its Influence on 21st Century Nigerian Youths: The Popular Music Reality

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ABSTRACT

Social media refers to websites and computer applications that help end users create and share things which further enhance social networking. Social media has been a welcome development and has made life easier for man, since from the comfort of one's home, he or she can meet a wide range of people of different race, religion, and belief system. It has affected every sphere of man's existence, from religion and politics, to entertainment and business. Religious beliefs can be sent across the world without physical presence, businesses can be done virtually without physical presence, and musicians can reach a wider range of audience than they would have reached physically. This study interrogated how and to what extent Nigerian popular musicians have used the social media as a tool to influence 21st century Nigerian youths. Data for this research were obtained basically by interview and document study, and conclusions were drawn based on the findings. Findings from this study show that opinions have been divided over the influence of social media on 21st century youths, especially since apart from its positive influence, it has also been a tool for promotion of many societal ills like violence, crime, juvenile delinquency, internet fraud, among others.

Keywords: Popular music, Social media, Influence, Youth.

INTRODUCTION

The hunger to provide better ways of living has been a constant drive to man's continuous life changing innovations. This has accounted for numerous technological advancements, aimed at ameliorating livelihood, and making the world a better and less stressful place to be. Since the dawn of social media in the world, there have been quite remarkable innovations, each a step further from the preceding ones. From the creation of the telegraph in 1792, the radio in 1891, the world's first super computers in the 1940s, the lunch of the World Wide Web (WWW) 1991, LinkedIn in 2002, Myspace in 2003, Facebook in 2004, Reddit in 2005, Youtube in 2005, 2go in 2007, Whatsapp in 2009, Instagram in 2010, Snapchat in 2015, etc.

These inventions have gone on to change the world today, as social media has affected every area of man's existence, and have become an indispensable component of day to day life. Social media can be used for numerous purposes, which includes but are not limited to connecting our friends, helping people find employment opportunities, helping business men and women reach and gain a wider customer base, keeping in touch with family members, catching up with current events and

happenings around the world, helping to promote knowledge sharing, spreading information.

Apart from its use for positive things, Social media has also been found to have its negative impact on the society. Some of which include, spreading of false information, promoting criminal activities, helping in the quick spread of vices, delinquencies in Juveniles. It is also addictive, and can preoccupy someone and prevent him or her from attending to other more pressing things.

Social media has also had its say in the revolution of the music industry. Musicians can now reach a wider audience, with less stress than before. There need not be a mass gathering before musicians can be heard. Social media does not only help the artiste reach the people, it takes the music to the consumers (fans) in record time. This work examines the popular musicians' usage of the social media, and its resultant influence on Nigerian Youths.

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media can be said to mean channels created electronically for real time interaction, communication and dissemination of information, both among individuals and among

a group or groups of persons. It is a wide range of phone applications and software, examples of which include Whatsapp, Facebook, Tiktok, Instagram, Twitter, etc. While people can today, access social media applications from their smart phones, social media actually started with the desktop computers.

Ogbe (2014) defined social media as “the new media that speed up conversations in a more interactive way that makes communication more effective and worthwhile. It is an online media that takes communication beyond the limitations of the traditional media, which most often delivers content but does not allow the reader, or as the case may be, viewers or listeners, to participate in the or development of the content”

Miller et al., (2016) defined social media as “the colonization of the space between traditional broadcast and private dyadic communication, providing people with a scale of group size and degrees of privacy that we have termed scalable sociality.” This definition tried to portray the basic function and use of social media, from the Authors’ perspective. However, in his definition of social media, Nations (2021) saw social media as “web-based communication tools that enable people to interact with each other by sharing and consuming information.” Nations definition, although simple, portrayed in simple terms the very essence of social media, which is the primary aim of sharing and consuming information and ideas.

Manning (2014), in addition to defining Social media as the “term used to refer to new forms of media that involve interactive participation”, also divided social media into two distinctive ages: The broadcast age and the interactive age. According to him, “in the broadcast age, media were almost exclusively centralized, where one entity such as a radio or television station, news paper company or a movie production studio distributed messages to many people”. During the broadcast age, there was little or no room for interaction. Media Communication happened between people on a very low scale. The rise of more technological gadgets however paved way for and introduced the age of interaction. People could now interact easily with information on a larger scale, and from the comforts of their locations.

WHO IS A YOUTH?

There seems to be no standard definition for a youth. Youth is a term used to refer to a period in one’s life, when he or she is young and full of

energy. It is usually the period in life, between childhood and adulthood. It is difficult to pin down youthfulness to a particular age bracket, as many persons for so many reasons have tried to give various age brackets to cover youthfulness. Unini, C. (2020) opined that “Africa and the global south and of course many countries of the world, have long insisted that youth is not a range of ages but defined by a diversity of culturally defined social processes that mark the transition from child to adult”.

According to the United Nations, the word Youth is portrayed as the period of transitioning from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood, and a consciousness of the interdependence that exist between members of the community. The commonwealth however gave specific age bracket for a youth. It sees youths as people who fall between the ages of 15 - 29 years. The African Youth Charter defines youth as “any individual between 15 - 35 years.

The Nigerian National Youth Policy of 2009 defined a Youth as a person between the ages of 15 - 35. This was an obvious adoption of the definition by the African Youth Charter. However, the 2019 Nigerian National Youth Policy redefined a youth as any person between the ages of 15 and 29.

For the purpose of this research, and considering the Nigerian youths as the population of this research, youths in the context of this work will refer to all Nigerians, whether male or female, who fall within the age bracket of 15 - 35.

POPULAR MUSIC

Popular music can be said to be music that appeals to a wider range of audience, dealing majorly on the current events and popular themes, and are characteristically ephemeral. It can be produced and performed by people with no formal musical training. Denisoff in Jones and Rahn (1977:87) defined popular music as “the sum total of those taste units, social groups and musical genres which coalesce along certain taste and preference similarities in a given space and time”.

To Idolor in Ozoaghuta (2020)

Pop music is a genre of music encompassing several styles that is readily comprehensible to a large proportion of the population; that its appreciations require little or no knowledge of musical theory or technique. It differs in

important ways from classical and folk music and from much jazz. (p. 63)

Popular music is most times commercially oriented. Unlike folk music which has no known composers, popular music is written by known individuals and does not get transmitted through the oral tradition. In an attempt to characterize popular music, Okeke (2015) opines that “it is erratic and unpredictable and most times it tends to target a given population of the society who find it quite appealing. It may convey nothing at all or convey too many things at a time. Sometimes, it is almost unintelligible to the uninitiated. It is also very tuneful and melodious and that is why it commands an unusual wide acceptability within a given society”. (p.4)

KELMAN’S SOCIAL INFLUENCE THEORY

The social influence theory as proposed by Kelman in 1958 states that “an individual’s attitudes, beliefs, and subsequent actions or behaviour are influenced by reverent others through three processes: Compliance, Identification and internalization. To Kelman, social influence brings about different levels of change in attitude and actions. These different levels of change are as a result of individual differences which come into play, since there are differences in the degree to which individuals accept influence.

In simpler and clearer terms, people are influenced by things they see as the norm around them. They are more likely to do what they see others doing. Peoples behaviour can be influenced by others around them, and those around have stronger effect than those who stay far away. According to Katherine (2022), social influence “also states that first impressions are very important and can alter a person’s perception of someone or something which creates a snowball effect on decision-making. For example, a person may not even know why they have certain opinions. It could be because an individual with a higher social standing around an individual has influenced the individual without the individual’s knowledge”.

Considering the numerous social media platforms available in the 21st century, social influence has become more direct and easier than ever. Almost everyone has an internet enabled electronic gadget, like the smart phones, the personal laptops and even desktops. These gadgets together with internet access, has given individuals easy access to the available social media platforms, where people not only carry

out business deals, but also get to meet different kinds of people, of different social class. Individuals decide who they want to be friends with on social media. They decide people they want to follow and unfollow on social media.

Since social media is a major tool employed in the promotion and widespread of popular music in Nigeria, the popular musicians meet their fans and others on social media. Individuals who cannot have direct access to their favourite celebrities tend to follow their activities and life style on social media. These activities can range from the kind of food they eat, their dress style, the kind of words they speak, e.t.c.

The social influence theory therefore explains why some individuals tend to talk like certain celebrities, by using certain words which are associated with those celebrities, it also explains why some individuals decide to dress like certain people with higher social status than them. In the case of the Nigerian popular musicians, they have become notable figures in the society, and have had their share of influence on the youths. Everyone youth is drawn to music, and different individuals have their favourite popular music celebrities, who they usually tend to gravitate towards in lifestyle as well as express satisfaction in their genre of music.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS GENERAL IMPACT ON YOUTHS

The role social media plays in the 21st century has divided opinion among people. However, everyone gives an opinion on social media, based on their individual experience, or experiences of people around them. Social media has taken centre stage in the life of youths, this has presented many challenges as well as opportunities, and has transformed to a great extent, the way youths interact with the world generally. The following are some of the positive ways social media has imparted youths.

Education: It has helped to educate the youths. Educational materials can be seen in large quantities on social media. A good example is the Youtube, where people who possess vast knowledge of a particular subject(s) can create and upload videos, educating the world. Other social media platforms also possess educational materials which are accessible to the general public at any time.

Avenue for Business Promotion and Growth: Since social media reaches the world as far as the internet can go, it is an avenue for promotion

of one's business. With the millions of people who graduate from the university annually, and the evident fact that government cannot provide enough white collar jobs, many youths have delved into various forms of business to earn a living. Some of these businesses are carried out efficiently without a physical outlet. Business owners can advertise and deliver goods and services to millions of people from the comfort of their homes.

Social Inclusion: Social media provides opportunities for everyone to be socially active. You do not have to be physically present to lend your voice to a trending issue. Daily, there are trending issues of social media, about entertainment, politics, education, etc. One can actively participate in these trending discourse without being physically present. It has helped people who are temperamentally introverted to socialize without being unconsciously deterred by their personality.

Information: Social media has been a good venue for passing and accessing information. Current trends, world events and happenings can quickly reach people as soon as it is happening. Many youths have become gainfully employed through information gotten from various social media platforms.

Just as every area of technological advancement has been shown to have both positive and negative impact on human existence, so has social media influenced Nigerian Youths both positively and negatively. Below are some of the negative impact of social media on Nigerian youths.

Cybercrimes: Social media has helped to increase the number of cyber crimes. It has given perpetrators easy access to their preys. Identity theft and hacking can result to loss of huge amounts of money. Sexual harassment, stalking, kidnapping and other social vices have been facilitated by the advent of social media.

Drug Addiction: Social media is filled with images and videos where people abuse drugs of all kinds. These images constantly flying around unconsciously make an imprint on the youths and children. Continuous contact with these images and videos creates an urge to try them out.

Addiction to Phones: A lot of youths have become addicted to the social media space. They spend a huge chunk of their time on social media. This has displaced many other major activities in their day to day activities. Some of

them barely sleep, and will unconsciously sacrifice their sleep for some more social media experience.

Misinformation: Just as social media has been a great source of right information, it can also be a place for misinformation. Since everyone has access to the space, there is no way of checking the authenticity of information. Anyone can decide to mislead the public at will.

Privacy: During the registration process, some of these social media platforms require the applicants to submit certain private information upon registration. Sometimes, these information are made available to the general public, thereby reducing the amount of privacy available to the users of the platform.

POPULAR MUSIC AND ITS INFLUENCE ON NIGERIAN YOUTHS

Musicians are carriers of influence in any society. The released sound and messages embedded in lyrics affect listeners in direct ways. An average Nigerian engages popular music on a daily basis, either deliberately or inadvertently. Popular music is being played every day on the radio stations, there are channels on television dedicated to the display of popular music videos. Access to popular music has been made so easy, that people can now go to the internet and download both audio (MP3) and videos (MP4) of their favourite Artistes's songs. One can also stream music endlessly on some social media applications like Youtube.

Popular music of a given era, is a reflection of the cultural avails of the said era. These are portrayed in the lyrical contents of the music, as well as in the dress sense and appearance of the popular musicians and their musical team. It has become customary for popular musicians to have a large fan base. Sometimes, an individual can admire more than one popular musician at a time, with different reasons.

These fans, made up of a majority of Nigerian youths, have gone on to look up to most of these popular musicians for inspiration. Ekpe (2019:1) opines that "the Nigerian music industry remains a great influencer of the Nigerian society as children and young adults constitute a large fraction of fans. Most of these young adults look up to these musicians as mentors and role models"

They copy their lifestyle, dress like them, employ the lyrical content of their music in their

day to day conversations, which is the origin of certain slang that are popular today. According to Proctor (2003:1), “music is a lot like alcohol and drugs. It can be very influencing and destructive when misused. It can distort one’s emotion, reasoning, judgment, perspective and behaviour, peer pressure only makes it worse”.

In the age where everyone has a smartphone, tablet or ipad, youths and children have cultivated listening habits that are unsafe with earphones. Most youths and children spend most hours of their day wearing an ear phone. This consequentially have negative effect on health. Research has shown that excessive use of earphones, especially with loud volumes can result to the following: noise induces hearing loss, dizziness, excessive ear wax, pain in the ear, issues in the brain.

Having successfully established the fact that Nigerian Popular musicians are a great all round influence to Nigerian youths, the following are some of the impact they have had on the Nigerian society, and the Nigerian youths precisely.

NIGERIAN POPULAR MUSIC AND IMMORAL CONTENT

Immorality is the state of not conforming to the generally accepted standard of being good. To Ogunrinade (2015:59), it “entails the quality of not being in accordance with standards of right or good conduct..... Immorality relates to behaviour which transgresses a given norm or system of morals. Such acts could be sexual, irreverence or violence, amongst other things”.

Unfortunately, Nigerian popular musicians have through their music, promoted the above listed immoralities. The enormous amount of wealth which can be made through the commercialization of popular music has been the reason many youths have delved into it, while the rest of the youths make mentors and role models out of the already made and established musicians.

Unlike our indigenous folk music which is functional, popular music has grown from being entertaining, to being fiercely competitive. “To survive, musicians are compelled to device all sorts of means to gain competitive advantage. Once a musical idea sells for one musician, competitors replicate this idea to have a share of the dividends therein, without consideration to the negativity such music promotes”. This behavior of Nigerian popular musicians in their quest to gain more popularity, remain relevant

on the grand scheme of things, as well as make more money has had negative effect on the Nigerian Youths.

A good example is seen in how nudity has become an indispensable part of Nigerian popular music videos. Video Vixens who are usually young female models are seen half dressed, revealing sensitive parts of their body and moving their bodies sensually and passionately, displaying choreographed steps. To Ekpe (2019),

The contemporary music video of some Nigerian music artistes is characterized by the nudity of video vixens who are mostly young ladies. These young ladies are seen in music videos displaying to the best of their ability all sorts of erotic and sensual acts in the guise of choreography. They are also dressed in provocative and seductive clothing that often exposes the most sensitive areas of their body to the view of the world. What a way of dehumanizing the female gender – as nudity is now a trend in the Nigerian music industry. This has projected a negative image of women and has reduced the dignity of womanhood to nothing. (p.1)

In addition to the issue of nudity, also worth noting is the lyrical content of Nigerian popular music. Lyrics have become as negative as the vixens’ nudity in musical videos. Lyrics have gone on to promote vulgarity, sex, promiscuity, use of drugs, etc. This has gone on to have adverse effect on Nigerian Youths who are the major consumers of Nigerian Popular music. In Ogunrinade’s (2015) view, Nigerian popular music lyrics particularly focus on sex and rape, doom and gloom, death and suicide, blood and violence. The lyrics often contain satanic rituals and actual oaths to Satan. Many others carry strongly implied messages that promotes immorality. Some lyrics are outrightly satanic. Some though not mentioning Satan, promote masochism, murder, suicide, sexual deviance, hatred, bigotry, violence and occult practices. While others promote drug and alcohol abuse, prostitution, profanity, homosexuality, promiscuity, rebellion and other immoral behaviours that have been expressed through music for decades. (p. 60)

A great percentage of current generation of youths have been on numerous occasion defined to be lazy. Instead of threading paths that will naturally lead to success with hard work, they alternatively find quicker routes to success. This has also been seen in the Nigerian Popular

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music, as the use of these vulgar and profane words have gradually become a norm in the Nigerian music industry. Many of the upcoming

musicians have employed the use of vulgar words, with the hope that it would get them quicker to stardom.

LYRICAL CONTENT OF SOME NIGERIAN POPULAR MUSIC

The following are some of the vulgar excerpts from some Nigerian Popular music.

Artiste	Lyrics	Connotation
Vector	“She also say she wonder how heavy is the download”	She also said she wonders how big my male organ is.
Olamide	“Waist tiny like London road, Baka big like Dubai road, body hot you dey make man cold... baby shey you go wet my plant”.	Your body is perfectly shaped, will you have sex with me?
LilKesh	“Ah sister Kate o wait, I just wanna have a taste. Tell me what it will take, I just wanna have a taste”.	Sister Kate, tell me what it will cost me to have sex with you.
Eriga	“Momsy dey save souls but I dey destroy dem through my lyrics, born again abeg avoid them”	Mum saves souls, but I destroy them with my lyrics, so anyone who is born again should avoid them.
Eriga	“I dey with two naked girls, with one wrap of igbo, dey do wetin sound city no go ever show”	I am with two naked girls, and also with one wrap of indian hemp doing what soundcity will never broadcast on television.
Kiss Daniel	“You ready to give me your waist, I wanna rock your body all over the place”	Allow me to hold on to your waist, and dance to some sensual moves.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since social media has become an integral and indispensable part of our daily lives, especially for our youths, popular music influence have therefore become inevitable, since the media have become tools for the propagation and wide spread of music in Nigeria. Youtube provides access to endless musical videos, tiktok provides access to numerous challenges which are set by celebrities, other social media platforms like instagram, twitter, facebook, etc also provide avenues for direct contact and engagement with popular music and popular musicians. These direct and indirect contacts with popular music, have been the avenue for influence on the Nigerian society, especially the youths. The following are therefore recommendations to help curb the negative influence the popular musicians are having on Nigerian youths:

- Government should in addition to banning music with vulgar and profane lyrics, place more serious punishment on musicians who make music with such morally unaccepted lyrics.
- The internet does not place any restriction on music with vulgar or profane lyrics. There should be measures to checkmate the proliferation of music with immoral

lyrics on the internet and social media platforms, which are the major contact avenues between for the youths and Nigerian Popular music.

- Parents should as a matter of necessity, place checks on their children’s use of the internet and social media platforms. The idea of allowing kids unlimited and uncensored access to the internet exposes them to all forms of immoral avails on social media.
- Nigerian popular musicians should employ folk materials in music making. They should as a matter of helping the Nigerian society and upcoming generations, revert to making more meaningful and morally upright music.
- There should be a general re-orientation of Nigerian popular musicians, with a view to the reduction or total eradication of Vulgar and profane lyrics.
- The use of vixens who are half naked with sensitive parts of their body exposed, should attract strict sanctions and penalties. Also, any form of nude appearance on stage should be met with commensurate penalties for such artiste.

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