

Chapter 15

Citizenship Education: A Panacea for Daunting Social Media Gripe on Key Social Issues in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria as one of the emerging user-countries of social media worldwide has witnessed people relying on information posted on social media on key national issues without checking the reliability of their sources. Sharing such information on social media has led to religious crises, political imbroglio, hate speech, racial discrimination and clashes, and a degenerated socio-psychological wellbeing of the citizens. This chapter suggest that regulating social media to curtail these anomalies may not bring the desired results. On the contrary, citizenship education will equip the citizens with the knowledge to discern reliable and dependable sources of information. Citizenship education might also lead to efficacy of loyalty to their country.

INTRODUCTION

The mass media used for the purpose of social interaction is called social media. More aptly, social media can be defined as: “Activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and content creation... microblogs, and more.” (Wankel, 2010). For any media to be interactive, it needs to co-exist with some

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sort of communication techniques, for which social media is not an exception. In order to twist communication into an interactive dialogue, the social media turns to be one of the most successful applications (Kasturi, 2013). However, of the many definitions that exist, it can be said that social media is the set of web-based broadcast tools that enable the democratization of content, giving people the ability to emerge from consumers of content to publishers. Social media as identified by Kapoor, Tamilmani, Rana, & Patil, (2017) are various user-driven platforms that facilitate the diffusion of content, dialogue creation, and communication to a broader audience. Social media is essentially a digital space created by the people and for the people to provide conducive environment for interactions and networking at different levels.

The development in technology has made social media a convenient mechanism for spreading false or personally tailored contents, particularly during times of public tension like the current Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, Police brutality, corruption, insecurity, mass unemployment, (Zarocostas, 2020). The realization of the need to correct these anomalies has put the information scientists on their toes towards ensuring that prompt and correct delivery of information about the exact situation of any of the national issues is ensured. There are certain basic characteristics of the social media, one of the most noticeable features is the seeming freedom that comes with the use of social media to the extent that users do no longer wait for the government to make official statements before spreading the uninformed information. Nigerians use various social media platforms such as Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, blogs to access, provide and to share information about the key national issues like the presence of corona virus, re-occurrence of banditry, Boko Haram insurgence, kidnapping and communal clash or attack in some part of the country. A day hardly goes by without the emergence of or a new case of some or all of these above mentioned key national issues, the development that gives rise to the use of social media platforms to provide information about the issues. There are many social media platforms in Nigeria, but the most commonly and constantly used are: WhatsApp, Facebook, 2go, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn (Simona, 2021). Various forms of social media like Internet forums, personal websites, advanced bulletin board systems and online chat ensured that the individual's voice reached the mass audience.

Forms of Social Media

Social media technologies take different forms including: magazines, internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, micro blogging, wikis, social networks, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating, social bookmarking, blogs, picture-sharing, vlogs, wall-postings, email, instant messaging, music-sharing, crowd sourcing, podcast, photographs, micro-blogging, to name a few. Many of these services can be integrated via social network aggregation platforms by applying set of theories in the field of media research (social presence, media richness) and social processes (self-presentation, self-disclosure). When social media is used in combination with mobile devices it is called mobile social media. Social media is a group of mobile marketing applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan, 2012)]. Due to the fact that mobile social media runs on mobile devices differentiates it from traditional social media as it incorporates new factors such as the current location of the user (location-sensitivity) or the time delay between sending and receiving messages(time-sensitivity).

Social Media Distinction From Traditional Media

People obtain information, news and other data from electronic and print media. Social media are distinct from industrial or traditional media, such as newspapers, television, and film as they are comparatively

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