

AUDIENCE PERCEPTION ON THE USE OF FACEBOOK IN CREATING AWARENESS ON CORONAVIRUS DISEASE: A STUDY OF OLORUNDA LOCAL GOVERNMENT, OSOGBO, OSUN STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated “*the Audience Perception on the use of Facebook in Creating Awareness on Coronavirus Disease in Olorunda Local Government Area, Osogbo, Osun State*”. The study looked at whether Facebook was able to create awareness among residents of Olorunda Local Government, Osun State. Survey research method was adopted for this research work where the sample used was 400 questionnaires out of which 384 copies were drawn through the simple random probability. The study used Behavior and Perception theories. It is established that Facebook was used effectively to create awareness during the pandemic and the people were active users of social media on a regular basis. Also, it found out that the people are fully aware of the coronavirus disease through social media and source their information on coronavirus through Facebook. Fundamentally, the study suggests that Facebook is a veritable tool for raising awareness about coronavirus disease among residents of Olorunda local government, Osogbo. Based on these findings, it is recommended that government should establish a solid awareness on the use of online campaigns on health matters to all Nigerians. Also, the government should pay more attention to the new media in other to exploit its ability to reach a heterogeneous audience.

Keywords: Facebook, Awareness, Coronavirus, Behaviour, Perception

Introduction

Communication plays an important role in the life of the human race. People communicates using language as a means of expressing their minds, feelings, perceptions and thoughts to other people around him. It is a vital part of personal life and essential for business, education and other situations we tend to encounter with one another (Lievrouw 2003). Akolade (2002) states that communication is the art of transmitting information, ideas and attitudes from one person to another. Communication is known to create awareness, increase knowledge, build approval, and encourages healthy attitudes and behaviour. With the advent of communication technology, it has become easier for people to exchange information and ideas. Internet in particular has revolutionized the way people communicate and it hosts several social media

platforms. (Obono, 2011). Communication plays an important role in the life of the human race. People communicate using language as a means of expressing their minds, feelings, perceptions and thoughts to other people around him. It is a vital part of personal life and essential for business, education and other situations we tend to encounter with one another (Lievrouw 2003). Akolade (2002) states that communication is the art of transmitting information, ideas and attitudes from one person to another. Communication is known to create awareness, increase knowledge, build approval, and encourages healthy attitudes and behaviour. With the advent of communication technology, it has become easier for people to exchange information and ideas. Internet in particular has revolutionized the way people communicate and it hosts several social media platforms. (Obono, 2011). Social media sites have become a very popular means of both interpersonal and public communication in Nigeria. They are modern interactive communication channels through which people connect with one another, share ideas, experiences, pictures, messages and information of interest.

Kapoor, Tamilmani, Rana, Patil, Dwivedi and Nerur (2017) opine that there are various user-driven platforms that facilitate the diffusion of compelling content, dialogue creation, and communication to a broader audience, noting that social media is essentially a digital space created by the people and for the people and provides conducive environment for interactions and networking to occur at different levels. Onomo (2012) acknowledges this ability of the media by remarking that social networking sites have become “a widespread tool for communication and exchange of ideas, helping individuals and organizations with just causes to reach a phenomenally vast audience that could hitherto not be reached by traditional media.” Social media today has made information possible anywhere and any place. In addition, it also makes communication easier.

In the health sector for instance, social media arguably has been a valuable tool of communication especially at this critical time of coronavirus pandemic. According to the World Health Organisation, Coronavirus is described as a respiratory disease that affects human breathing, which may lead to loss of life if not properly managed. The Nigeria Ministry of Health and the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) have both made use of the social media platforms to convey essential coronavirus information to the Nigeria public. Various health facilities such as isolation centres, testing centres as well as health tips on coronavirus protocols are daily announced on the social media platforms. The Presidential Task Force (PTF) on coronavirus put in place by the federal government to oversee Nigeria’s efforts to contain the spread and mitigate the impact of coronavirus pandemic, also makes series of announcement on the social media platforms. Al-Dmour, Masa’deh and Al-Dmour (2020) posit that social media are influential in creating awareness for public health and protection against Coronavirus.

However, there are divergent opinions on the extent of the impact of social media on the coronavirus pandemic public awareness, whilst Ogbodo (2020) notes that the media play crucial roles in shaping public opinion and perception of issues such as the outbreak of the corona virus pandemic, Obi-Ani, Anikwenze and Isiani (2020) aver that social media is an “invaluable means of disseminating information to the citizenry”. Since audience perception is a veritable tool for media research and drawing of inferences, and further that the audience is the consumer whose manner of interpretation as well as psychography on certain phenomenon is salient. This study therefore seeks to find out audience perception on the use

of facebook in creating awareness on coronavirus disease using Olorunda local government area, Osogbo, Osun state, Nigeria as a study.

Statement of the Problem

The audience is very important when it comes to information collection, gathering and dissemination is concerned. This is because the audience are the primary consumers of media contents. Wu and McGoogan (2020) are of the opinion that traditional media is more reliable, credible in terms of information dissemination; (Ogbodo 2020) posit that social media is porous and needs to be regulated in order to make it credible and reliable channels of information and knowledge sharing. Also, not all areas in Nigeria poses the sophisticated gadgets and technical know-how for the operation of the gadgets that house this social media platform through which information on corona virus can be disseminated.

Pete Cashmore once said “privacy is dead, and social media hold the smoking gun” this however is a pointer that social media has become an avenue for awareness creation and publicity. Among various social media platforms facebook is one of the oldest. In the ongoing pandemic, social media sites like facebook have been used by various agencies such as NCDC, PTF among others to keep their ubiquitous audience abreast of information on the ongoing pandemic. In view of the foregoing, the pertinent question is: what are the audience perceptions on the use of social media in creating public awareness on the coronavirus pandemic.

Research Questions

1. Do respondents in Olorunda Local Government, Osogbo use social media?
2. What is the audience perception on the use of facebook in creating awareness on coronavirus?
3. What social media platform do respondents in Olorunda Local Government, Osogbo use?
4. Are respondents in Olorunda Local Government, Osogbo aware of coronavirus?
5. What are the factors that predisposes the respondents in Olorunda Local Government, Osogbo to use Facebook?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of the paper is the perception theory and the behaviour theory. The perception theory was propounded by B. Berelson and G.A Steiner in 1964. The theory according to Anaeto, Onabajo & Osifeso (2012) states that mass communicators want audiences to pay attention to the messages, learn the contents of the messages and make appropriate changes in attitudes or beliefs or produce the desired behavioural responses. It further states that the process of interpreting messages is complex and that these goals may be difficult to achieve while Berelson and Steiner (1964) in Anaeto et al (2012) avers that perception is the complex process by which people select, organize, and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world. The theory is relevant to this study as respondents pay attention to coronavirus messages which in turn make them to make appropriate changes in attitudes and beliefs thereby producing the desired responses.

Behaviour theory was propounded in 1957 by Ivan Pavlov and B. F Skinner. The theory according to Anaeto et al (2012) states that changes in behaviour are the results of an individuals response to events that occur in the environment. It further noted that it has to do

with peoples behaviour to the mass media, what they learn and how much it affects the individual. Stating that people mould their behaviour after that of the dramatis. The theory is relevant to this study as it has to do with changes in behaviour as a result of an individuals response to event that occur in the society. The coronavirus or covid-19 has made people in the society to have a change in behaviour so as not to get infected with the disease.

Literature Review

Social Media: A Conceptual Clarification

The social media concept refers to a 21st century phenomenon brought about by the advent of the internet and world wide web (Nwabueze, 2014). To Nations, (2010), the social media are instruments of communication which are different from the conventional instruments like newspaper while Kaplan and Haenlin (2010) describe the social media as media that use web-based technologies to transform and broadcast media monologues into social media dialogues. Social media are computer-mediated tools that allow people to create, share or exchange information, career interests, ideas, pictures and videos in virtual communities (Asemah, 2012). It depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create a highly interactive platform through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss and modify user generated content. Across the globe, these social medium have revolutionized the practice of journalism. They have changed the way people communicate, disseminate and consume information. Some basic characteristics of social media is that it is highly decentralized in nature, accessibility in the sense that unlike the mass media which is either government or privately owned, social media tools are generally available to the public at little or no cost. Furthermore, the social media has value of immediacy.

Social media is now used as a new tool as part of an organizations communication (Postman, 2009). Online tools can help improve communication and engage an audience. Postman describes how through the use of forums, blogs and Web sites, customers are being influenced and having conversations with friends. It is this communication that is delivering a richer experience that is changing how people work, communicate and live. Social media provides characteristics that make it a powerful instrument for an organization. Online communication can be authentic, transparent, and immediate as well as encouraging participation, connectivity and accountability. As people begin to use technology to get the information they need, it is important that an organization wanting to engage customers online have clear objectives (Li & Bernoff, 2008).

Audience Perception on the use of Facebook and creation of Awareness

Participation in a site like Facebook may be dependent on the specific audience that is anticipated by those who are using the site. Especially given the growing narrative of “literacy” about the public nature of sites like Facebook, we would expect changes in both expectations of privacy and audience over time. In 2006, we reported that users largely considered their peers as their audience, and did not expect others who shared their networks, such as professors, to view their profiles.

Overtime, perceptions have been a contributing factor that aid consumption decision making of customers. Madichie (2012) noted that perception deals with the manner and ways people select, organize and interpret exposed information. He noted that there are basic process of perception which involves exposure, attention and interpretation. Quester and

Mazodier (2014) also noted that audience perception is the process of conforming to the various communications confronted with by people on a daily routine. Sometime, marketing can be complicated due to the manner at which customer perceive some important information. Williams and Sawyer (2013) describes the Facebook as a corporation and online social networking service headed in the United States which allows its users to create profile for themselves, and other users as friends, exchange messages, post status updates and photos, shares videos, use various applications and receive notification when others update their profile. Audience perception is a major concept that reveals the opinions of people and their perspectives about a particular brand or issues alongside. In some cases, it is contributed to the extent at which an idea are patronised and how the situation is perceived (Hitesh, 2017). Based on the literature reviewed, it was revealed that the medium in conveying information also shaped the perception of audience (Hamouda, 2018). Jane and Roozbeh (2020) noted that personal relevance, in formativeness, and entertainment are some of the other perimeters that contribute to audience perception and increase in Facebook awareness. Social Media and Coronavirus Disease in Nigeria.

The social media has continuously been used as convenient media for information dissemination in today's world. The media is also being used to communicate, share and interpret information of any kind. Thus, social media is described as a platform that comprise several actors, all working in the communication process. It involves new strands of media involving interactive participation (Manning, 2014). According to Boyd and Ellison (2008) social media can be described as the computer-mediated tools and platform designed to create profiles, make explicit and traverse relationships. From the above it is clear that once the term social media comes to mind, certain keys thoughts such as a medium for online interaction among others.

This is why Kietzmann (2011) views social media as that web-based applications that creates functionality for sharing, relationships, group, conversation and profiles. More so, there are certain basic characteristics of the social media, one of the most noticeable feature 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, instead, they turn into various social media platforms such as Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, blogs to gain access, to provide or to share information. Today, especially with the presence of the novel corona virus, a day hardly goes by without the emergence of a new case, the development that gives rise to the use of blogs and others to provide information about the pandemic. Notwithstanding, for authorities that has for long been using traditional method to communicate citizens, the use of social media emerged with several challenges, as information moves in through several actors and spaces creating several volumes of this information, as against the traditional one-way they are used to. What this implies is that the usual verified and factual information being released to the public via the traditional method is greeted with a lot misinformation that characterise the social media.

To ensure that correct and accurate information reaches the public through the social media, the role of library and information scientists become rather indispensable. This is so because, libraries as social institutions have the responsibility for making sure that the awareness on public health is adequate, providing daily pieces of information. The place of the social media in public health cannot over emphasized, this is why George, Rovniak, Kraschnewski and Dangers (2013) stated that social media had created a wild range of global

networks that makes it very easy for information spread and the mobilization of large number of users of this media to facilitate greater progress all in a bid to attain higher public health goal. It then implies that social media remain a powerful tool for managing public health through public education and advocacy. (Farnan, Snyder, Worster, 2013). It would be interesting to know that some states’ public health departments use the Twitter App and other social media for these aforementioned purposes. (Househ, 2013).

More so, other public health organizations employ the social media in obtaining keyword content from Twitter and other social networks, which has proven to be very helpful in combining with location-tracking technologies, to respond rapidly to emergencies and to check the health and welfare of the public. With the large use of social media, it has influenced public health behaviours and goals through social reinforcement (George DR, Rovniak LS, Kraschnewski JL. Dangers, 2013). This is so because by the our nature as human beings, we are a highly social species, as Aristotle puts it, “man is zoo politikun”; this means they are often influenced by their friends, as well as by friends of friends (George DR, Rovniak LS, Kraschnewski JL, Dangers, 2013).

One remarkable example of the influence of the social media in managing public was seen after Facebook decided to allow users to post their organ-donor status in their profile. Donate Life America, reported that after a week of this feature’s introduction, the registries of online state organ-donor recorded a 23-fold surge in donor pledges, this was presumably due to this social-networking effect (George, Rovniak, Kraschnewski, & Dangers, 2013).

Social media has also been adopted to create awareness on public health through formulation of Google Trends to ascertain the correlation between the volume of searches and topics that are related to COVID-19. Thus, with these tools at the beck and call of librarian, he/she is expected to exploit them as much as possible and leaving the rest challenges associated with COVID-19 information dissemination to the technical know-how of the library and information scientists (Bare, 2020).

Since outbreak of this pandemic, the Nigerian libraries and other associations are faced with a rather more crucial role in the face of the prevailing global pandemic. It is very clear how fake news and misinformation have created more confusion and subsequently, producing even more difficulties to every effort aimed at curtailing the spread of the virus. In this regard, the social media comes again as a handy tool for academic, special and public libraries in Nigeria as a medium for them to provide and share information swiftly, in the best possible fashion and in the shortest possible time using it as a strategy in the response to COVID-19 pandemic through their social networking pages like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn (Ladan, Haruna & Madu, 2020). As stated earlier, the nature of the modus operandi of social media comes with certain challenges. These challenges could be managed depending on the users or recipients of such information.

Methodology

The methodology used for the study was the descriptive survey and it was conducted among respondents of Olorunda Local Government in Osogbo, Osun State. The simple random probability sampling technique was adopted. The sample size was calculated using Isreal G. D (2013) citing Yamane (1967) to arrive at 400. The data gathering instrument which was a Likert scale structured questionnaire was validated using Cronbach Alpha score of ($r=0.8$)

Presentation of Data

RQ1: Do respondents in Olorunda Local Government, Osogbo use social media?

Table 1: Usage pattern of social media

Items	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Are you on any social media	Yes	384	100.0
	No	-	-
	Total	384	100.0
How often do you use social media	Once in a while	56	14.6
	Regularly	255	66.4
	Moderately	61	15.9
	Seldom	12	3.1
	Total	384	100.0
How much time do you spend on social media	30 mins	-	-
	1 Hour	20	5.2
	2 hours	34	8.9
	3 hours	39	10.2
	4 hours	42	10.9
	More	249	64.8
	Total	384	100.0

Table 1 shows that the respondents are active user of social media and majority of them often use social media regularly and spend more time when using social media.

RQ2: What is the audience perception on the use of Facebook in creating awareness on corona virus?

Table 2: Respondents Perception and awareness

Items	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Do you think Facebook was used effectively to create awareness during corona virus pandemic	Yes	177	46.1
	No	123	32.0
	I can't say	84	21.9
	Total	384	100.0
Did you get information on Corona Virus through Facebook	Yes	325	84.6
	No	59	15.4
	Total	384	100.0
Do You like the information you get online?	Yes	301	78.4
	No	83	21.6

	Total	384	100.0
Why do you use Facebook	It is easy to use	44	11.5
	Free data	20	5.2
	peer influence	320	83.3
	Total	384	100.0

The table2 shows that majority of the respondents agreed that Facebook was used effectively to create awareness during Corona virus pandemic. They also get information on corona virus through Facebook and are lover of the information they get online. Also peer influence is a major factor behind the use of Facebook among the respondents.

RQ3: What social media platform do respondents in Olorunda Local Government, Osogbo use?

Table3: Social Media frequency

Items	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Which social media do you use often?	Facebook	197	51.3
	Instagram	88	22.9
	Twitter	65	16.9
	Other	34	8.9
	Total	384	100.0
What do you use social media for	To get information	210	54.7
	Entertainment	102	26.6
	Education	72	18.8
	Total	384	100.0
Do you use Facebook?	Yes	384	100.0
	No	-	-
	Total	384	100.0

Table 3 shows that Facebook is being used the most among other medium to gathered information.

RQ4: Are respondents in Olorunda Local Government, Osogbo aware of corona virus?

Table4: Respondents Awareness of Corona Virus

Items	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Are you aware of Corona Virus	Yes	384	100.0
	No	-	-
	Total	384	100.0
How did you know about Corona Virus?	Peer group	56	14.6
	Social Media	155	40.4
	Radio	40	10.4
	Television	74	19.3
	Newspaper	15	3.9
	Friends	44	11.5
	Total	384	100.0

Table 4 implies that all of the respondents are fully awareness of corona virus and mostly through the social media.

RQ 5: What factors predisposes the respondents in Olorunda Local Government, Osogbo to use Facebook?

Table 5 Factors that Predisposes Respondent's Usage of Facebook

ITEMS	A	SA	D	SD	U	TOTAL
I use Facebook because it is reliable	151(39.3%)	185(48.2%)	48(12.5%)	-	-	384(100%)
I use Facebook because it helps in creating awareness on corona virus	-	-	185(48.2%)	199(51.8%)	-	384(100%)
I use Facebook because my friends uses it	195(50.8%)	65(16.9%)	84(21.9%)	40(10.4%)	-	384(100%)
I use Facebook because it is easy to use	78(20.3%)	42(10.9%)	199(51.8%)	65(16.9%)	-	384(100%)
I use Facebook because it gave access without data	51(13.3%)	70(18.2%)	86(22.4%)	177(46.0%)	-	384(100%)
I use Facebook because I am bored	86(22.4%)	-	99(25.8%)	199(51.8%)	-	384(100%)
I use Facebook because others use it	195(50.8%)	65(16.9%)	84(21.9%)	40(10.4%)	-	384(100%)
Facebook makes me feel relaxed	60(15.6%)	53(13.8%)	201(52.3%)	70(18.2%)	-	384(100%)
I use Facebook because I get to connect with people	83(21.6%)	301(78.4%)	-	-	-	384(100%)

Table 5 reveals that majority strongly agreed that they make use of Facebook because it is reliable but they strongly disagree to the fact that they use Facebook because it helps in creating awareness on corona virus. Most agree that they use Facebook because their friends use it while most of them disagree that they use Facebook because it is easy to use. Also they strongly disagree that they use Facebook because it gave access without data and due to boredom but agree they use Facebook because others use it. They also most disagree that Facebook makes them feel relaxed but strongly agree that they use Facebook because they get to connect with people.

Discussion of Findings

The study looked at audience perception on the use of Facebook in creating awareness on coronavirus disease using Olorunda Local Government as a focus. From the result of the findings, it was discovered that all 384(100%) respondents are users of social media platform and majority 255 (66.4%) of the respondents often use social media regularly. The table also shows that majority 249(64.8%) of the respondents spend more time on social media. Based on the findings of the above, it can be said that the people are active user of social media and majority of them often use social media regularly and spend more time when using social media. This correlates with the findings of Fayoyin (2016) that social media is mostly used among Nigerian and they spend apple amount of time on each of the platform daily and

Mackson, Brochu, Schneider (2019, p. 2) posits that social media has become prevalent among users with over billions active users according to research conducted as of June 2018. In addition, looking at the audience perception on the use of Facebook as a tool in creating awareness on corona virus in research question two, the finding shows that majority 177(46.1%) of respondents said agreed that Facebook was used effectively to create awareness during Corona virus pandemic. 325(84.5%) agreed that they do get information on corona virus through Facebook and 301(78.4%) respondents like the information they get online. It revealed that most 320(83.3%) respondents use Facebook due to peer influence. Based on the finding above, it can be said that Facebook was used effectively to create awareness during Corona virus pandemic and most of the people get information on corona virus through Facebook and are lover of the information they get online. Also peer influence is a major factor behind the use of Facebook among the people. The finding of Hamza and Otulugbu (2020) goes in relation with the findings of the study that social media were being used to disseminate information about COVID-19, most especially Facebook and twitter while Quester and Mazodier (2014) noted that audience perception is a major concept that reveals the opinions of people and their perspectives about a particular brand or issues alongside. This shapes the manner at which information is disseminated.

Also in research question three, the findings revealed that majority 197(51.3%) of the respondent use Facebook 210(54.7%) use social media to get information and all 384(100%) the respondents are user of Facebook. From the findings above, it can be said that Facebook is being used the most among the people with the sole aim of gathering information above anything else. This is in correlation with the findings of Williams and Sawyer (2013) that Facebook is widely used by various categories of people, with the latter stating that the Facebook has over 1.59 billion monthly active users. But the findings of Also, the findings of Solomon (2013, p. 410) was not in support of the findings of the study, it noted that an estimate of 75 million users on Instagram on a daily basis, hence we have more of Instagram than Facebook.

According to research question four, on the level of awareness of corona virus among the people. The finding shows that all 384(100%) respondents are fully aware of corona virus and Majority 155(40.4%) of the respondents got to know about corona virus through the social media. From the finding above, it can be said that the people are fully awareness of corona virus and mostly through the social media among other medium available. The study of Ngozika, Anikwenze & Chukwudi (2020) on Social media and the Covid-19 pandemic: Observations from Nigeria, goes with the findings of the study, they noted that social media is the major source of information about corona virus and the people are fully aware about all details regarding the virus. Bare, (2020) noted that the people are fully aware of the virus due to social media platforms.

For the last research question that looked at the factors that predisposes the uses of Facebook. Findings from the study revealed that 185(48.2%) respondents strongly agreed that they make use of Facebook because it is reliable. 199(51.8%) of the respondents strongly disagree to the fact that they use Facebook because it helps in creating awareness on corona virus. most 195(50.8%) agree that they use Facebook because their friends use it. 199(51.8%) disagree that they use Facebook because it is easy to use, 177(46.0%) strongly disagree that they use Facebook because it gave access without data. Also, most 199(51.8%) strongly disagree that they use Facebook because when they are bored, 195(50.8%) agree that they use

Facebook because others use it, 201(52.3%) disagree that Facebook makes them feel relaxed while 301(78.4%) strongly agree that they use Facebook because they get to connect with people. From the findings above, it can be said that the people make use of Facebook due to its reliability, friends and others related to them and with due to the access to connect with them. However, the easy usage, free data, boredom, creation of awareness of corona virus is not a factor or reason behind their usage of Facebook. Statistics according to *cpafrica.com* (2015) shows that Nigeria has become Facebook's largest user base in sub Saharan Africa with over 11 million users. Hamouda (2018) and Jane and Roozbeh (2020) noted in their research that personal relevance, informativeness, and entertainment are some of the factor perimeters that contribute to audience perception and the usage of other social media platform.

Conclusion

Consequent upon the findings, it can be concluded that Facebook was a veritable tool for raising awareness about coronavirus disease. This however is a pointer that social media is an important tool of communication to reach a large audience as Nigerians are active user of social media in accordance to the findings of other experts and scholars. Among the various medium of communication, the role of Facebook in the passage of effective communication can never be underestimated. People are drawn to a medium that streamline with their self-perception and gratification. Among the various factors, we can state that peer influence is a major factor behind the use of Facebook among the people. Aside from the reliability and technical feature, the element of free data or easy usage can never be criteria behind the excessive usage pattern of Facebook among audience. The study therefore recommends the following:

- a) Government should provide the necessary infrastructure needed for health practitioner to make available all health-related materials to all Nigerians. The Government should also encourage internet to aid the passage of health information.
- b) Campaign is a major source of creating effective awareness in this age. In an attempt to establish a solid awareness, the use of online campaigns on health matter through social media should be encouraged among the various genders, regions and sectors.
- c) The government should pay more attention to the new media in order to exploit its ability to reach a heterogeneous audience and health agencies should work more on using the new media to communicate to the masses on latest health information.

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