Significance of Photographic Images in Youths Interaction on Social Networking Sites in Lagos and Ondo States, Nigeria

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Abstract: **In the age of social photography; the interaction of youths on Social Networking Sites, SNSs, and photographic images appears to have a level of affinity that is worth looking into. The study therefore delved into the use of photographic images by youths in SNSs and tried to evaluate the level of importance of photographic images in youths' interaction in SNSs. Close ended structured questionnaire was used as viable instrument to collect data from respondents which cut across youths from selected secondary and tertiary institutions in Lagos and Ondo states, Nigeria. The results were analysed using frequency count and mean score. The result revealed that quite an appreciable percentage of youths in the study area attached importance to photographic images to their interaction on SNSs.**

Keywords: **Photographic Images, Youths, Social Networking Sites.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital technology has greatly enhanced the multifariousness of photographic images as photography is no longer just a means of recording and storing past events or moments, but a medium of communication (Bilton, 2013). The transition of photography from record keeping to information dissemination is not unconnected with the advent of Social Photography. The Social Photography Revolution rides on digital technology to turn photographic images into booster of social networking and social media at large. Most Social Networking Sites, SNSs such as Facebook, Bebo, MySpace, and Twitter employ the use of photographic images to draw users to them. For instance, a survey of total *posts* on Facebook between February 24, and March 24, 2014 revealed that 87% of all *posts* made were photos (Ross, 2014).

Social network, as a social structure is made up of individuals or organisations called "nodes", which are connected by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, kinship, common interest, financial exchange, dislike, sexual relationships or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige (Adeboye, 2012, in Asemah, Edegoh, and Okpanachi 2013). One of the most popular ways of interaction among users of the social networking is the sharing of photographic images. The activities of online social networking are usually carried out via SNSs. SNSs as described by Merchant (2012) are environments in social networking distinguished from other forms of techno-sociability. Such environment includes but not limited to; Facebook, Bebo, MySpace and Twitter, Classmates.com, Sixdegrees.com, Friendster.com, Myspace.com, Bebo.com, Blankplanet, Care2, Dodgeball, Flixster, and Last Fm. They are platforms for sharing or exchange of photographic images, information, making friends and building relationships (Merchant, 2012).

It is pertinent to note that there exists a general affinity for photographic images by youths who constitute the larger percentage of users of Social Networking. It has become a truism that people, with the exception of the visually impaired, are usually attracted to visual images; the photographic images have however formed one of the strongest driving forces of the Social Networking. The computer technology and the accessibility of photographic gadgets such as digital cameras and smart phones have made it extremely possible and easy for Nigerian youths (who usually constitute the highest percentage of users of the Social Networking Sites) to post or share photographs and connect with loved ones and friends as well as make new friends on SNSs. The Nigerian youths, from the point of view of Nigerian reality, are defined as young men and women between the ages of 13 and 30 (Torimiro and Laogun, 2005).

This study therefore aimed at examining importance youths attached to photographic images in social networking. A study by the Ibiwoye (2016) reveals that many Nigerian youths engaged in inordinate use of photographic images on the Social Networking Sites. The contemporary society is filled with surge of images and signs which are often communicated through the mass media. The information revolution is subtlety compelling people especially the youths to begin to live in a virtual world, where interactions are mostly on the computer or other allied devices that connect them to the Cyber world. This increasing interest in the Cyber world is obviously not unconnected with the ease of interaction and exchange of photographs, ideas/ thoughts on Social Networking Sites.The simplicity of the technicalities of producing a photograph, and the social networking revolution has helped every person become a photographer and get praised for his work (Jose, 2012). The fascination of images however, became more homely and accessible with the advent of photography technology, which was enhanced by the discovery of the internet making the field of photography technology grow tremendously and exponentially (Mae Geroche, 2012).

Social networking is just a trend that will soon disappear as spontaneously as it came. Experience has shown that such technologies that powers social networking do not die, they are usually improved upon. Lo, McKercher, and Law (2010) opine that the usage of this technology is more evolutionary than revolutionary. Meaning it is a revolution that will keep evolving. Therefore, it becomes obvious that the Social Photography Revolution has come to stay, hence, adequate measures should be taken to save-guard its potentials from being misused. Verster (2010) notes that social media are fast becoming the default internet mode of interaction, communication, and collaboration.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is limited in scope to youths in selected secondary and tertiary institutions as well as artisans and employed/unemployed youths in Lagos and Ondo states, Nigeria. Lagos was selected being the most urbanized city not just in South-Western Nigeria, but in Nigeria as a whole (Aluko, 2010). Ondo state was selected as a less urbanised state in comparison with Lagos in South-Western Nigeria. Two Federal Universities, namely; the University of Lagos and the Federal University of Technology, Akure were selected, this was meant to harvest a research population that will fairly capture the six geopolitical zones in the country, as federal institutions are prone to having student population that cut across the entire country. The Federal Government College, Ijanikin, being a mixed-gender secondary school, and the only Federal Government College situated in the West senatorial district of Lagos state was selected; as the other Federal Government Colleges are situated in the Central/East senatorial district, where the university was selected from. CAC Grammar School, Akure, Ondo state was selected based on the fact that it is one of the most populous public mixed-gender secondary schools in the state capital which afford opportunity for research population that cut across, students from different backgrounds
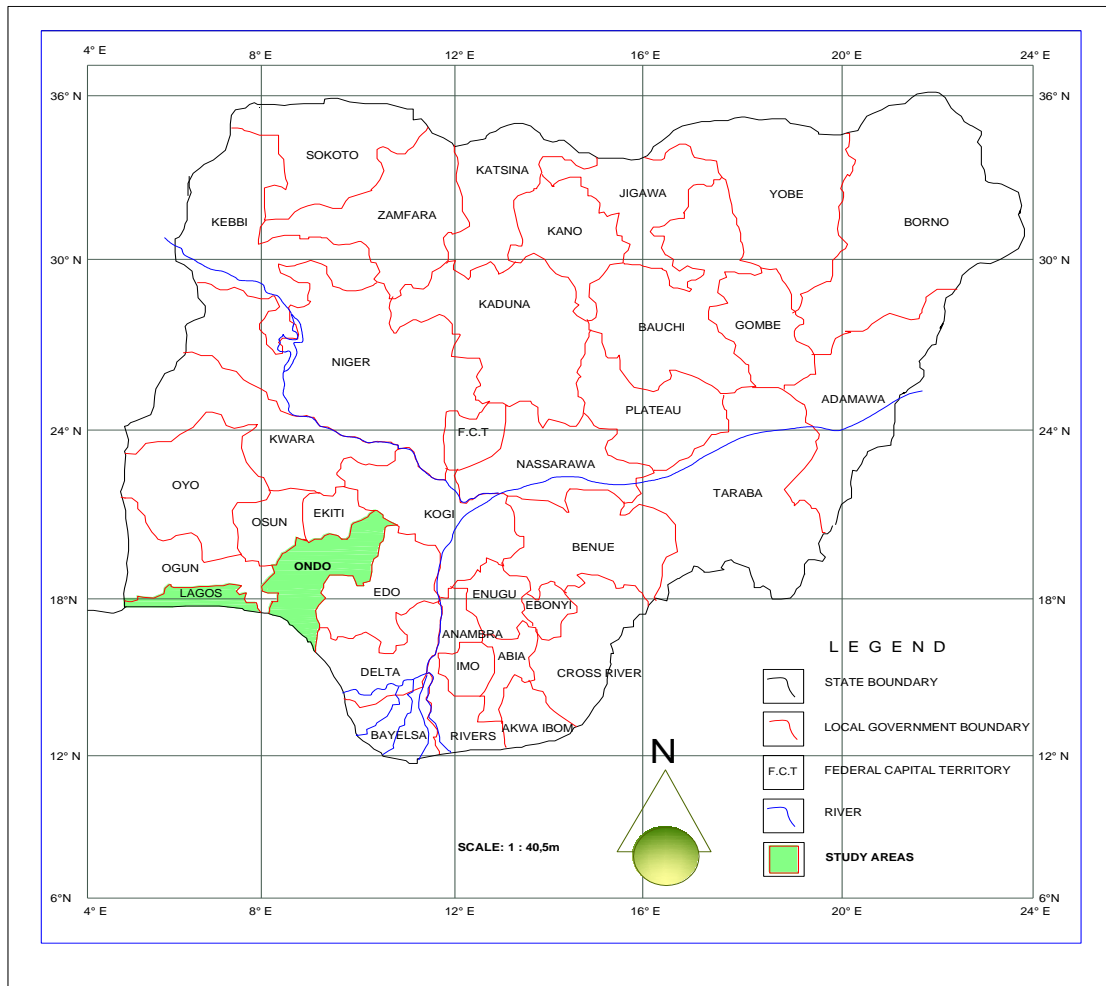
Source: Federal Surveys, Abuja (Digitized in AutoCAD by the Author)

Figure 1: Map of Nigeria Showing the Study Area

This study is essentially survey design. The population for this study cuts across youths in secondary and tertiary institutions, young artisans, unemployed, and working class youths in Lagos and Ondo States, Nigeria. These groups constituted the research population. The data gathered in the course of a preliminary enquiry in the study area provided the necessary information on the population of the students in the selected institutions. The data on population were consequently used in calculating the sample size in Table 1

Table 1: Sample Size fo r ±5% Precision Level where Confidence Level is 95% and P=0.5

Institution	Population Sample Frame	Sample Size	Male Population	Female Population	Sample Size (Male %)	Sample Size (Female %)
Lago						
University of Lagos	45,000	381	24,660	20,340	209 (54.8%)	172 (45.2%)
Federal Government College, Ijanikin	3,245	108	1,890	1,355	63 (58.3%)	45 (41.7%)
Akure						
Federal University of Technology, Akure	15,656	375	10,760	3,396	284 (76%)	90 (24 %)
CAC Grammar, Akure	2,548	85	963	1,585	32 (37.8%)	53 (62.2%)
Employed/unemployed, and Artisans Youths in Lagos and Ondo states	∞	385	∞	∞	196 (51%)	188 (49%)

Source: Computation from Author Preliminary Enquiry

Sample Size

Cochran (1963) equation cited in Israel (1992) with a precision of +/-5% i.e. 0.05 and 95% confidence level was used to determine the sample size thus:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$ ……………………… 1

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 x 0.5 x 0.5}{0.05^2}$$

$$= 384.16$$

$$\approx 384$$

Therefore, the Sample size for the infinite of population of unemployed/employed youths and young artisans according to Cochran (1963) equation is 384.

To determine the Sample Size for each unit of the finite population:

n1 =   no N

      no+ (N-1) ………………………… 2

Equation 2 was used in calculating the sample size of the University of Lagos and the Federal University of Technology, Akure In order to arrive at a fairly proportionate sample sizes. Systematic Random Sampling method was employed to calculate the sample sizes for the Secondary Schools that is, the Federal Government College Ijanikin, Lagos, and CAC Grammar School, Akure.

$$Sampling\ fraction = \frac{n}{N} = \frac{100}{10000} = \frac{1}{100} \quad (i.e.\ 1\ in\ 100)$$ ……………3

There are essentially five units in the sample frame. The sample size for each unit as derived by equation 2 and 3 is as follow:

University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos	-	381
Federal Government College, Ijanikin, Lagos	-	108
Federal University of Technology, Akure	-	375
CAC Grammar School, Akure	-	85
Other Categories of Youths in Akure	-	384
Total		1,333

Both probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling methods were employed in arriving at appropriate sample for the study. Non probabilistic sampling known as convenient/purposive sampling method was employed in selecting Lagos out of the six states in the South-western Nigeria for the study, while a probabilistic sampling method was used to randomly select Ondo State from the remaining five states. Lagos is selected being the most urbanized of the six states in South-Western Nigeria. Aluko (2010) notes that Lagos is Africa's second fastest growing urban centre, second only to Cairo. The choice of a less urbanized state was founded on the premise of comparing the behaviours of respondents in highly urbanized and less urbanized societies. Stratified sampling method was used to categorise the study population into youth groups thus: secondary schools, tertiary institutions, young artisans, and employed/unemployed youths, randomly selected from the study area. Stratified random sampling was therefore employed to select respondents from each stratum of the population for the administration of questionnaire.

A close-ended questionnaire was designed to cover categories of youths of secondary and tertiary institutions in the selected study area. Employed/unemployed youths and young artisans were also captured. The questionnaires were divided into two parts. The first part solicited information on personal data of the respondent to elicit data for demographic sample, while second part/section drew data on photography and social networking among youths. This part

is expected to obtain relevant data that would satisfy the research objectives. A modified version of the Likert scaling was used in eliciting information from respondents.

SA	A	U	SD	D
5	4	3	2	1

Where: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided, SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, (Nworgu, 1991). Questionnaire was used as a the viable instrument for collection of data while frequency count and mean score were used to analyse the data with the aid of the SPSS

3. RESULT

The purpose of sharing or posting photos on the social networking sites according to the respondents is displayed in Table 2. The result reveals that a high percentage (55.6%) of respondents shared or posted photo to catch fun while about 53% did so to pass information to friends, 41.7% did it to celebrate or felicitate with friends and loved ones, 35.4% also did it to pass information to the public and those that did it as pastime formed 28.7% of respondents. The findings reveals that youths have different reasons for sharing photos on SNSs, and the percentages of the frequency with which respondents do this gives credence to the importance youths attaché to sharing photographic images on SNSs.

Table 2: Purpose for Sharing Photographic Images

Purpose	Frequency	Percentages
As pastime	288	28.7
It is fun	559	55.6
To pass information to friends	533	53.0
To pass information to public	356	35.4
To celebrate or felicitate with friends and loved one	419	41.7

Note: Respondents were allowed to make multiple choices

The opinion of respondents regarding the importance of photographic images in social networking were further examined and presented in Table 3.

Analysis of the respondents opinion to the first perception variable "Photos of friends and relations usually attract people to social networking sites" reveals that 29.4% of respondents strongly agreed with it, 46.6% agreed, 16.6% somehow agree, 3.5% disagree while 1.4% strongly disagree with this opinion, about 2.5% of respondents did not express their opinion. The mean response of 4.02 indicates that, on the average, the respondents agreed with this statement which implies that photos of friends and relations usually attract people to social networking sites.

The result of the analysis on the opinions of respondents regarding the second perception variable "If photos were removed from the social networking sites, less people will visit the sites" reveals that 23.6% strongly agreed with this statement, 35% agreed, 24.5% somehow agreed while 12.6% disagreed, about 2.5% of respondents strongly disagreed with it. The mean response of 3.66 indicates that the respondents also agreed that if photos were removed from the social networking sites, less people will visit the sites.

"The quality of profile photos of users of Facebook and other SNSs often attracts youths to the sites". About 21.6% of respondents strongly agreed with this perception statement, 46% agreed, 22.1% somehow agree, while 5% disagreed, 2.4% strongly disagreed with the opinion. The estimated mean response of 3.82 indicates that the respondent agreed with this perception statement.

The fourth perception variable "Youths will probably not comment on some issue raised by friends if there are no pictures to buttress the issue raised" the result of the analysis reveals that 18.7% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 33.7% agreed, 27.3% somehow agreed, while 14.2% disagreed, 2.9% strongly disagreed. The mean response of 3.53 indicates that respondents, on the average agreed with the statement.

The fifth perception variable "Most youths spend more time than they intended to on social media sharing picture and viewing picture and making comment" 26.4% respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 44.6% agreed, 17% of the

respondents somehow agreed, 6.6% disagreed, while 2.3% strongly disagreed with the statement. About 3.1% of respondents did not indicate their opinions regarding the assertion. The estimated mean response of 3.89% indicates that the respondents also agreed that a larger percentage of the respondents agreed with the perception statement

The sixth perception statement states that "a photograph is the basis of social media and SNSs". 22% respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 41.3% agreed, 22.2% somehow agreed, while 8.5% disagreed, 2.5% strongly disagreed with the statement. About 3.6% of respondents did not indicate their opinions regarding the assertion. The estimated mean response of 3.74 indicates that the respondents also agreed that photography is the basis of social media and SNSs.

The results of the analyses of the of respondents in Table 2 reveals that youths attached so much importance to photographic images, and that many of their interactions on the SNSs either propelled or incited by photographic images. The results further shows that photos are proven pivot upon which many interactions on SNSs stand.

Table 3: Examination of the importance of Photographic Images in SNSs

SN	Statements	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somehow agreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed	No Response	Mean	Rank
1	Attracted by photos of friends & relations to SNSs	29.4%	46.6%	16.6%	3.5%	1.4%	2.5%	4.02	4
2	Removing photos from the SNSs will result in less people visiting the sites	29.4%	35%	24.5%	12.6%	2.5%	1.9%	3.66	4
3	The quality of profile photos of users of SNSs often attracts youths to the sites	21.6%	46%	22.1%	5%	2.4%	2.9%	3.82	4
4	Youths will probably not comment on issues raised if there are not pictures attached	18.7%	33.7%	27.3%	14.2%	2.9%	3.3%	3.53	4
5	More time is spent on SNSs than intended viewing photos	26.4%	44.6%	17%	6.6%	2.3%	3.1%	3.89	4
6	Photograph is the basis of social media and SNSs	22%	41.3%	22.2%	8.5%	2.5%	3.6%	3.74	4

Source: Author's field work (2015)

4.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The results on the determination of the importance of photographic images in youth's interaction in social networking reveals that youth had positive perception regarding the importance of photographic images in SNSs. According to the results, youths believe that photos of friends and relations usually attract people to social networking sites. Furthermore, the youths maintained that if photos were removed from social networking sites, less people will visit the site. It was also discovered that youths will probably not comment on some issues raised by friends if there were no pictures to buttress the issues raised on social networking sites. In addition, photography according to the youths is the basis of social media and social networking. As earlier remarked, one of the most popular ways of interaction among users of social networking is the sharing of photographic images.

According to Merchant (2012), social networking sites are platforms for exchange of photographic images, information, making friends and building relationship. Social networking sites and photographic images/pictures could therefore be described as inseparable duo. The findings of this study have therefore confirmed the importance of photographic images in SNSs. The purpose for sharing photographic images according to the youths include; to pass information to friends, pass information to public, celebrate or felicitate with friends and loved ones; some of the youths agreed that they have taken sharing of photographic images online as a hobby.

Many youths are basically drawn to the SNSs by photographic images and most of them accepted that they would not have visited SNSs if there were no photos to interact with on the site. Youths also agreed that they would not have made comments on posts in the cyberspace if there were no photos attached. This further buttressed the significance of photographic images in social networking.

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