Social Network Software (SNS) enabler for Fake News: Peace Education through Academic Libraries as Panacea

By

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Abstract

The paper introduced and dwelled on the application and implications of SNS especially relating to fake news. Fake news has been discovered to be spreading by individual, while conventional and emerging media advocates using several SNS platforms. Fake news is misinformation about an individual, groups, institutions, religions and tribes. Misinformation especially through SNS has wreaked immeasurable societal havoc. This study elucidated some of the importance and issues with SNS, its categories, users, impact and role of libraries in peace education. The article finally made some suggestions and recommendation for peace from suitable use of social SNS.

Keywords: *Fake news, Social media Software, emerging media, Peace education, Information Technology*

Introduction

The advent of Information Communication Technology (ICT) tool has created positive impact and likewise enhanced individual and organisational productivity. Several sectors of the economy ranging from the educational, banking, transportation, even agricultural etcetera, have initiated and embraced ICT either as tools or strategies to interact, collaborate, facilitate, promote or enhance their brands or communication activities. The application and usage of Information

technology has influenced, facilitated and enabled effective and efficient service delivery thereby benefited the service provider, employees and their customers (users) alike .

Technology enabled services now comes with high convenience. It avail organisations with fast and reliable information access and delivery, facilitate access to data and support services and likewise steered transactionsin such a way that does not necessitate the customer visiting the service organisation. In other words, individual sector or management can assent the use of technology as medium to facilitate easy and fast interaction and communication with client and customers. Issues and customers' enquiry can be attended to, promote organisation productivity thus cutting cost.

Majority of organisation, groups, entrepreneurs and individuals have leverage on ICT to promote their products, using Social Network Software (SNS) as platform. Social Network Software is enabled by technology to facilitate and ease communication. SNSs are becoming increasingly ubiquitous in the everyday lives of people worldwide. Report by , attested that the most popular SNSs as of March 2016 are Facebook having 1.56 billion active users, Instagram with 400 million active users, Twitter with 320 million active users, and Snapchat with 200 million active users. The active users of each SNS comprises of individuals, groups, institutions, agencies and so on.

With the exponential growth of SNSs users and the integral roles of social media platforms, the report indicates high level participation and influence of SNS on brand promotion and communication , information dissemination and monitoring . Individual account created on social media platforms are mostly categorised based on the purpose of such account. However, SNS has been discovered to be a promoter and enabler of information and news which includes fictitious ones - the "fake news".

Fake news is vile intentionally deceptive messages passing across different media. Fake news according to dictionary.com are false stories, often sensational in nature purposely shared to either generate revenue, promote or discredit an individual, group, public figure, political movement etcetera. Fake news is a coinage word to tag fabricated information. Several media (even some conventional) media, social media, websites have been used to spread fake news. Most fake news peddlers have been traced to have emanated mostly from SNS as most identity are hidden or also fake, just like the news created.

Fake news has wreaked more havoc on our national peace and unity, harmony, politics, goodwill and coexistence than ever. To enable

the nation enjoy the usual unity, peace and harmony, there is the need for cleansing to wipe out"fake news" and its effect on our society. This study, therefore, aim to elucidate some of the issues with SNS, categories of SNS users, impact of SNS and role of libraries in peace education and finally suggestions and recommendations for peace as a result of suitable usage of SNS.

Literature Review

Social Network Software has proliferate across the Internet at speed lightning, organisations, individuals and groups now have at their disposal vast unprecedented reach by which brand experiences and opinions, positive or negative, regarding any individual, product or service are disseminated. Countries, groups and organisation have increasingly recognised that SNS voices have enormous influence in shaping the opinions of others about their responsibility, loyalties, brand, purchase decisions, and advocacy.

SNS network has important features by enabling users to compose quick short messages to showcase important events and developments. Personalities and superstars use SNS (twitter, Instagram, Facebook etcetera), to stay connected to their fan base, and news organizations cloud source uploads for trends and report their findings as they relate to current happenings. Twitter and other social media sites like Facebook have played significant role in 2011 world events which include protests such as "Arab Spring," the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami, and the "Occupy" movement in the United State and even trends and hash tags on "BringBackourGirls" in Nigeria.

Categories of SNS users

Social networking sites (SNS) are platforms that enable users (individual, groups or organisations) create personal profiles for promotion, communication and expressive purposes. These SNS have been found to be means to significantly interact with several moderators to affect brand, community identification, engagement, commitment, and membership intention. Users of SNS register on the platforms with their identities to enable and facilitate connection and interaction with other users and brands. It allows them view, share, upload and comment on users opinions, images, messages, videos and other content posted through status, time line or news feeds. SNS has been categorised based on brand-related participation. Most of the SNS brand-related categories used for following brands include Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat.

Major conventional activities now have online and SNS presence. This proliferation could be considered reality based on trend in information access and dissemination and also to drive content from the market and other users. Several SNS accounts are now created using different platforms. Careful study has proven that SNS accounts are created majorly for purposes such as brand promotion, marketing, motivation, religious doctrines and updates, job and other program updates etcetera.

Social Network Software users

Some active users of the SNS include media houses, institutions and agencies, libraries, religious organisations, professional associations, trade associations, artisans government parastatal, ministry, entrepreneur, Small and Medium Enterprises etcetera. Though, some users of the SNS are more updated and engaging (respond to queries and clarification) than others. Institutions, organisation, group as users of SNS can respond to insights generated through social media monitoring and analysis by modifying messages, brand positioning, product development, and other activities accordingly. Social networking sites (SNS) platforms after creation tolerates addition of member to form a group usually oversee by administrators (admins) permitted.

Conventional media houses just like others deemed it fit to register their presence on the SNS platforms. Almost all the conventional media houses (Channels TV, TVC, NTA, Sahara Reporters, FM radios) in Nigeria have their presence on SNS. This presence facilitated and created improvement in information access on the part of the users and wider coverage on the part of the media houses. However, some of the media houses sometimes publish some unverified information when sighted in some of their revered followers SNS timeline or newsfeed.

Institutions have likewise leverage on SNS to make online presence. Most Institutions now share and update activities and event on social media which is most managed by the public relation units of the institutions. Professional association and organisations have also used SNS to promote their association events and image. Most activities and information updates are shared on their platform for wide coverage and access of members.

Individual SNS users could be categorised into influencers, public figures and other individual users. Influencers are individuals who have established credibility on SNS platforms and have large followers (fan base). They are most of the time invited by organisation for promotion and publicising of products or services. Public figures are well known

individual with high level personality in their field. Most personality on SNS are majorly from the entertainment industry, authors and sometimes politicians. Some SNS users are tagged verified which is one of the dependable way to identify authentic users, though; the process is rigorous and time consuming.

Despite, these categorises of users earlier mentioned, some other individual or group create some SNS platforms accounts. The said accounts created are used mainly for the purpose of deceit and other obnoxious purposes. Some of the accounts have been labelled catfish account, parody account and so on. Mostly, the purposes of the deceit created account are mostly to mislead the public, misrepresent the original owner of the account which can be individuals, groups, organisations or agencies. The accounts are also used to scam individuals or groups off their hard earned resources and spread false information to mislead the public about issues.

Impact of Social Media Networks (SNS)

The advent of Social Media Networks has created several opportunities and jobs prospects for librarians and other professionals. SNS has disrupted by creating several new opportunities and the platforms where opinions in special interest subjects are shared and exchanged .It has help students interact with each other on their academics and beyond. It has been explored by academics and librarians alike to market their library product and services.

There is however needs for librarians and other professional to upgrade their skills to be able to benefit from opportunities created by SNS. These created opportunities required at some level of competencies for effective and efficient usage. Some of the skills needed to benefit from SNS prospect include communication skills, ICT skills, team spirit, knowledge in arbitration, dispute resolution etcetera. SNS mangers are now responsible for online marketing of their brands, institutions, organisation and institutions, monitor, moderate and respond to queries by audience/ followers. SNS can enable career like social media manager, SNS reference desk, online admission officer, online human resources officers and host of others.

Despite the positive impact of the SNS, the impact of the platform can also be felt negatively as it is leverage on by impostors. The impostors have master the skills using SNS as platform to exploit. Therefore, librarians need necessary skills to be able to identify fraudulent activities using the SNS.

Effect of SNS on Fake news

The state security in Nigeria over the years have been so deplorable that the citizenry and other sector of the economy have constantly been living in despair and a situation that is very much towards the state of nature.

Advancement in mobile network speed and wireless network coverage has increased the popularity and application of smartphones, tablets, and other mobile intelligent terminals among citizens . SNS has had great influence on activities such as promotion of brands, dissemination of information, political and election monitoring. However, the effect of the fake news seems to have overshadowed its positive impact because the aftermath is usually immeasurable. For some years now misinformation has flourish on issues relating to politics, religion, health, regions, tribe and even organisations.

SNS platforms have ease and enable rebroadcast and recycled of old news, picture or videos especially about unpleasant occurrences. This spread of the old news; picture or videos sometimes reinvigorate riot, rebellion and unrest in the society. Some news is also out of context as some news, picture or videos are not related to the society and even obsolete but sometimes cause disturbance of peace. Several stories have been disseminated on several SNS platforms that have led to hate speech, unhealthy and detribalised society. Some include messages or video of the deadly Boko Harm sects, herdsmen crisis, political riots and sentiments etcetera. All these and more has led to most ethnic, political and religious crisis and have claimed lives and destruction of properties.

Recently, according to Kunle Sanni (in October 5th 2019 report of Premium Times), the Special Adviser to President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria filled a suit of 2billion naira on Leadership newspaper for allegedly defamatory report on the National Social Investment Program . Another, fake news was that of President Muhammadu Buhari getting married to one of his Minister Hajia Saidiyya Umar Farouk. This news was traced to have emanated from the social media platforms and later discovered to be false. Some of these made the incumbent Inspector General of Police according to media reports that social media is one of the major problem of Nigeria.

Role of Nigerian libraries in Peace Education

In the study by , the author raised query on whether democracy can promote peace in a community. The author further stated that the question has generated and still generating discourse among academic and policy making circles alike. However, there is need for citizens to

employ strategies to make our society habitable. Since library is a knowledge hub, communities can employ strategies using libraries as confluence to disseminate information and preach against fake news.

Libraries have earlier employed the opportunities provided by various medium such as newspapers, newsletters, radio and television to market libraries in the real world. There are indications from library and information science literature that make known how libraries and librarians deployed the potentials of this medium and other technology to satisfy library patrons. SNS are continuously changing the outlook of service and information delivery. Institutions, agencies, libraries can reassess the impact of the SNS and embrace it in the promotion of their operation and advocacy using the platforms.

SNS delivers functionality such as free instant messaging service for smartphones. It also enables messages exchange using voice, text, pictures, videos, and most of the time provides location information via mobile phone.Libraries needto leverage on these functionalities to collaborate with Schools or Centre for Peace Studies and the National Orientation Agencies to conduct activities such as webinar using same SNS platforms. There are needs for organised programs such as talks, seminars, workshops digitally and beyond on fact checking and parsing of message received. Face to face activities such asorientation programmes, road shows, poems, spoken words, short drama and illustration on the effect of social media on fake news could be organised either within or outside the libraries. The libraries could be used as point of convergence as not all institutions have the Schools or Centre for Peace Studies but all owned libraries.

Campaign on fake news could be introduced to curriculum of secondary schools and as GST courses in the university. Libraries should see the need to educate library users perhaps using illustrations where necessary, distribution of flyers to library users and also stock books and social media and its positive impact Libraries also use their expertise to determine fake news sources and correcting the public opinion by sharing the fake sources through the SNS itself.

Moreover Libraries can be used to leverage on SNS itself to ameliorate the fake news problem.

Conclusion and suggestion for further studies

Fake news has shattered several lives and placed many nations on timed bomb waiting to explode. The peddlers care more about their short term benefits, advertisers and rating, rather than accurately informing the general public.

Libraries should serve as mediating ground for Non-governmental organisations (NGO), community based organisation (CBO), faith based organisation and pools of community stakeholders to educate them on fake news and its effect on the society. The library could organise regular seminar and workshops on detection of such fictitious and misleading information.

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