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The Place of the Nigerian Family Values in Social Media Usage

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Abstract

African family values are fast changing considering diverse societal factors such as globalisation replicated western government policies and information communication technology. These surrounding factors neutralize the sustainability of historical heritage and identity of the African citizen. While examining the existence of the Nigerian culture within the family setting, this study investigates the role of Facebook, an ICT enabled communication platform, in changing, modifying or building the Nigerian family values. The sample size was drawn from Lagos, a cosmopolitan state in Nigeria. A total number of 289 copies of the questionnaire were randomly administered to Lagos residents from the three senatorial districts. Results showed that respondents strongly believe that Facebook does not impede the values of Nigerians, as it serves as a medium for enhancing Nigerian fashion, information dissemination and creating new forms of relationships. Also, respondents agreed that social media generally have changed or modified diverse aspects of the Nigerian culture. However, westernization, technology, bad family upbringing and globalization were identified as other factors responsible for the changes in Nigerian family values in this era. It recommends that stakeholders maximize social media platforms in reinforcing Nigerian family values, especially amongst the younger generation who are avid users of social media.

Keywords: Facebook, social media, family values, online communication, culture, family upbringing and globalization

1. Introduction

The identity of a man is what makes him what he is and what he will be remembered as for years to come. They are generally defined by the language they speak, the belief they carry, values, dressing, structures, e.t. C These different forms of culture also define identity. According to Nwaolikpe, [1] “Culture plays a role in societal transformation and development, for the stability of a society is ensured through the transmission of cultural values. Culture influences what people communicate, to whom they communicate and how they communicate”. Cultural heritage is either enhanced or changed because of diverse forms of communication taking place through communication media. Changes are influenced by other factors such as globalization, governmental system, and Information Communication technology. ICT has created a platform for other activities to existing on the internet with different applications now used by Internet users for interaction. The Internet creates innovation for social media applications, videos, and music, which provide opportunities for chatting, sharing communication materials, downloading pictures, etc. The internet practically provides the freedom of expression in diverse ways, which unconsciously redefine, modify or change the culture.

Consequently, Costa, Cuzzocrea, and Nuzzaci, [2] affirm that ‘for many people, the Internet is an essential part of daily life, and they have adopted the innovative linguistic practices, cultural forms, and costumes that have emerged.’

Furthermore, the development and rampant use of communication facilities has enhanced the intrusion of Western culture into the third world nations. These intrusions result in changes in the African culture, most noticeable among young Nigerians because of their high rate of exposure to the internet and social media. Also, is the international influence these platforms creates through inter-cultural interactions that occur among people of diverse cultures. Akanle, [3] explains that “the Culture of people as veritable Social Capital that could be deployed for growth and development and even translated to economic and technological capitals. Culture is a cure-all for growth and development”. Nothing is achieved and could be achieved except it is operated within the culture. This reemphasises the relevance of the culture in all societies.” The influences of internet interactions on our culture are obvious in today’s youth’ dressing, language, and general family values such as greeting, absolute obedience to instructions and taking permission to engage in any activity. The opposite of these values is mostly what youths adopt on the internet especially social media where continued communication exists among young people. This could occur on their favourite social media platforms including Facebook. This is why social media easily enhanced social and cultural changes among youths by the social media.

Consequently, Eckert, [4] affirm, “it is traditional to view adolescents in our society as sloppy, rebellious and irresponsible. This view of adolescents is visited on their language, which is sloppy in its imprecision, rebellious in its supposed use of slang and profanity, and irresponsible in its greater use of non-standard grammar.” Many authors have argued [5,6] that technological exposure, especially among the young generation, is restructuring, and redefining the family function, family value, family dynamic and family relationship even though it is generally believed that the family holds the responsibility of building the young generation. These responsibilities are now shared with the internet especially on social media networks.

Most studies [7, 8, 9] on social media focus on investigating the social effects of all social media on mostly the younger generation, which include Adolescents, university students, teenagers, etc. Results emanating from these studies find that these categories of people (youth) engage in social media activities especially for instant messaging, education, and social mobilisation, etc. While engaging in social media using different forms of communication, young people are prone to adopting behaviours probably identified with other nations, groups, and communities, etc., not necessarily accepted by their cultural heritage. Diverse studies have also emphasised the effects of the use of Facebook as one of the most popular social media networks, on the youths and different aspect of their lives. Through proper engagement in the survey and focused group empirical research, Uzuegbunam’s [10] study examined how Nigerian University students’ engagement with

Facebook enhances social change. The result reveals that although their usage of the social media network remains high, Nigerian University students do not use Facebook to advocate for social change or social development. Other research specific to the study of Facebook examined the patterns of experiencing and co-creating culture to see if Facebook has positive effects on a particular community study [11], and the general impact of Facebook on a different category of persons in a locality, community or country [12, 13].

However, what makes this study different from previous research is that this study explores a specific social media platform mostly identified with Nigeria users. This study goes further to investigate how Facebook a common social media network, affects family values in Nigeria. Facebook has been selected for this study because many use it and stands as a platform that provides an opportunity for family representation compared to other social media networks. The question then is; does Facebook change, modify or redefine the Nigerian culture and how does the avid use of Facebook affect the family relationship? The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the role of Facebook in changing, modifying or building the Nigerian family values.
2. To examines the role of Facebook in family relationships in Nigeria.

1.1.1 Family values

The family remains an institution that continues to evolve into the large society we occupy today. Ojua, Lukpata, and Atama [14] define this institute as “the traditional African institutions responsible for the transmission of traditional norms and values, beliefs, knowledge and practical skills to the members of the society for their future survival”. Values are developed through upbringing and transferred to the society as the family institute. This is where ideologies are first constructed by members of this small institutes that later make up the possible ideology that dissolves into the society. This is the reason “in traditional societies of the world and Africa, all human activities revolve around the family circle” [15]. Consequently, the nature of the family determines the society. The role of the family in determining societal construct, therefore, becomes relevant in this study. This is not the only aspect the family becomes important but it is also necessary for building cultural values in any society. [14]

Cultural values are learned from this institution especially based on the ethnic group the parents originate from. This means that the activities of such institution also play an important role in determining the sustainability of the societal culture. Just as Nigeria consist of numerous, ethnic groups, such as Yoruba, Hausa, Isoko, Igbo, Edo, Igala, Tiv, etc. so also comes the increase in diversity as to their belief, values, and norms.

1.1.2 Nigerian cultural values

The culture of any society speaks volume of the identity of the community. It tells the way other society will see and identify them. Therefore, the relevance societal culture becomes significant to any nation. Culture as ‘reflected in the way of life, ranging from religion, system of government, language, attitudes, their dressing code, their expression of emotion and sadness. In essence, culture is the totality of the way of life of a people. According to Ekeanyanwu [16]

Some of the traditional values in Nigeria include honesty, moral rectitude, respect for elders, and respect for fellow citizens, respect and loyalty to family values, hard work, resourcefulness, and education. Understanding the diversity in religious beliefs is also considered a core value within the country, as there are several religious groups that make up the population in Nigeria. One of the most significant values that Nigeria holds to be of great importance is the wisdom of its elders. Age is a symbol of experience and intelligence, and the mistreatment or disrespect of elders is viewed as taboo and therefore unacceptable. Even in religious gatherings, elders are given pride of place and specially recognized. Also deep spirituality” Christianity is more common in the southern part of the country, while Islam is

the dominant religion in the northern part of the country. Indigenous religious beliefs, although typically spiritual, also include the belief in the magical practices of witchcraft.”

These cultural heritages change or enhanced mainly through the communication process. The act of communication and forms of connection and interaction with other culture might not necessarily change an existing culture but could have a positive or negative effect on the already existing culture. Hosseini, [17] affirmed this when he explained that “Cultures evolve through interactions, culture is not just about where we are (spatially and chronologically), but also how ‘we’ (vs. ‘they’) interact with the other societies/communities. Culture is not a sphere separate from other dimensions of social life but also is a component of all social actions.” This is why the interactive medium among others, play a relevant role in changing, modifying and transforming the culture of any society. Changes emerging facilitated by globalization, inter-cultural and inter-boarder relationships by trade are no exception to the Nigerian cultural systems.

While emphasising that globalization is promoted through technology and a motivating factor for cultural change in Nigeria, Ekeanyanwu and Edewor, [18] accord these changes to the 89% of western media content imported to Nigeria. This act of globalization is enhanced through information communication technology as communication technology device allows for inter-boarder communication paving the way for the exchange of culture.

Considering the benefits ICT has provided for many, Ekeanyanwu [19] believe that the information flow between Nigeria and the western world is imbalanced as information coming into Nigeria from the western nations supersedes information exported from Nigeria to the western world especially through the internet platform. The younger generation of this age enhance these changes as they continue to expose themselves to internet content and therefore at risk everyday of imitating the culture of the dominant western society online. For instance, “before, a child was thus the property of the entire community and subjected to discipline as dictated by the laws of the community. Any adult had the right to punish the child irrespective of that child’s biological origin as a means of correcting the child” [20].

Now, “with Africa subjugated and dominated, the Western culture and European mode of civilisation began to thrive and outgrow African cultural heritage. Traditional African cultural practices paved the way for a foreign way of doing things as Africans became fully ‘westernised.’ Western culture now is regarded as frontline civilisation. African ways of doing things became primitive, archaic and regrettably unacceptable in public domain” [21].

This accounts for the belief that “the Nigerian culture is facing serious decline and difficulty and is obviously in danger of going into extinction or oblivion” [22]. People have continue to show more interest in the use of social media sites as different ones emerge and usage increase on the already existing social media networks. This could help to either facilitate cultural integration, modify the Nigerian culture or change the identity of the Nigerian people in years to come.

1.1.3 Social media network

The social media networks have been given the opportunity to exist because of the expansion of the internet. As more users of the internet with the invention of more devices continue to increase, diverse platforms are also created for people around the world to communicate in their different chosen ways. These growing platforms on the internet asides blogs are the social media network sites that keep increasing because of the opportunities it brings [23,24,25]. To understand these opportunities, Omid, Alesheikh, and Sharif, [26] define Social networking sites are “those sites that make possible a wide range of social interactions with friends and family members.” Social media may be defined as websites or other internet based services where the content

being communicated is created by users of the service. This definition gives rise to the nature of growth, which has existed from history among the creators of diverse social media sites.

Social media was first invented in the 1990s. From the first invention of the first social media site, Six Degress.com in 1997, to the creation of Classmates.com, Friendster, MySpace, Flickr in 2004 and others, the purpose of every social media inventor was to provide a form of communication, participation, and entertainment for their consumers. Consequently, the invention of a new social media application meant the introduction of a new form of communication and a new way for customers to express themselves.

Furthermore, Rabia, and Rashid, [27] notes that “Social media provides a space for individuals, especially the youth, to participate in the act of utilization as well as in the construction and sharing of ideas, knowledge, and culture.” Das and Sahoo [28] affirm that “People join social networking sites because it gives them an opportunity to express their views, a feel of independency and self-esteem.”

With this freedom of expression open to the public through the social media, Owiny, Mehta, and Maretzki [29] suggest that “Social media such as YouTube, Facebook, Google Docs, and Twitter can be used to create, access, and share information or skills within social and geographic communities in East Africa and among wider audiences.” On the other hand, these SNS has been used mostly for chatting among other things. The effect of these is evident in the changing ideology, beliefs, and way of life of the Nigerian people towards their cultural heritage. One begins then to imagine the extent of damage this might have on the transition of Nigerian culture decades to come.

1.1.4 The nature of Facebook

Facebook still records the highest usage compared to other social media networks around the world. Dreamgrow [30] marketing network research shows that even through Facebook is still leading as the most subscribed social media network, YouTube and Instagram are moving fast to meet up. Uzuegbunam [10] stress that “its introduction has become one of the most important social trends of the past decade. Available in over 70 languages, Facebook sure has become a global phenomenon and experience”. With this high usage and world recognition resulting in the international interaction among users comes the possibility of its influence on the culture of parties involved. It means that the tendency to imbibe culture through communication on this platform is inevitable, especially over an extended period.

Facebook has not only created the platform for interaction but also makes it possible for users to create their profile, access friends, identify types of relationships with specific persons, play games, chat, share pictures and messages, connect with friends and families, upload contents such as photos, and videos, invite contacts, and tag pictures, among other things. Also, Facebook attracts the business world as it creates a platform for business owners to promote their brand and advertise products. Facebook, also through its frequent use have unconsciously been used to express an opinion about other people and events surrounding them displayed on the platform. According to Selwyn, [31] Facebook is one of the “personal and personalisable spaces for online conversations and sharing of content based typically on the maintenance and sharing of ‘profiles’ where individual users can represent themselves to other users through the display of personal information, interests, photographs, social networks and so on.” Facebook is used by many and provides a platform for people to identify with their family members. It could, be viewed as a platform that could help encourage family relationships. If this is so, then the possibility of promoting family value is feasible as well as unattainable.

1.2 Materials and methods

The survey method was used to determine the effects of Facebook usage on Lagos state residents. 289 respondents from 9,013,534, the population were selected. To ensure that the population is represented in the sample selection, 100 respondents were randomly selected from three Lagos senatorial districts namely; Lagos

central, Lagos East, and Lagos West. The purposive sampling method was used which focused on the users of the Facebook social media network. Completed Questionnaire collected from respondents from each senatorial district was coded using a statistical tool known as Statistical Package for Social Sciences in collating data generated from each senatorial district in Lagos.

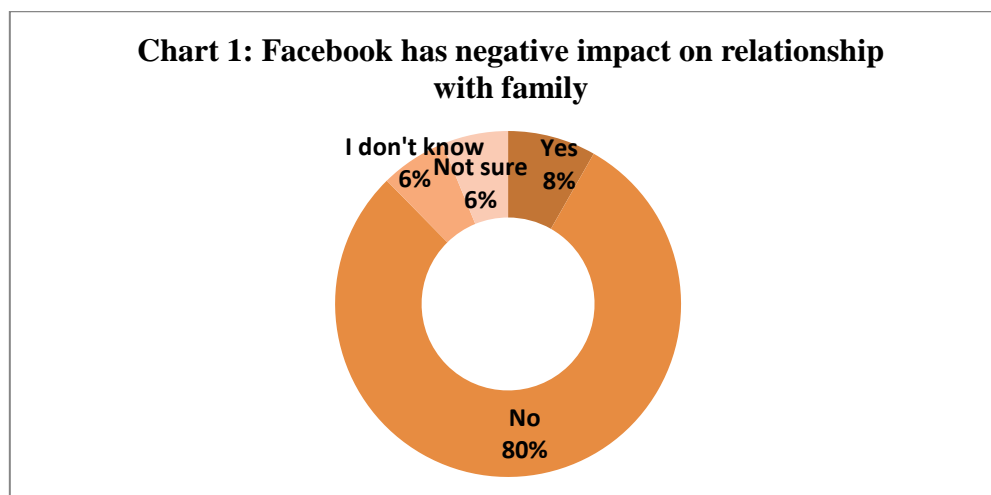
1.2.1 Selection of respondents

The Lagos central senatorial districts consist of major areas, which include Lagos highland, Lagos mainland, surulere, Apata, and Eti-Osa. The Lagos East senatorial district includes Shomolu, Kosofe, Epe, Ibeju-Lekki, and Ikorodu. The Lagos West senatorial district includes Agege, Ifako-Ijaye, Alimosho, Badagry, Ojo, Ajeromi/Ifelodun, Amuwo-odofin, Oshodi/Isolo, Ikeja, and Mushin. Three Nigerian universities from Lagos state were selected from each district. They include; University of Lagos (Federal), Lagos state University (state), and Caleb University (private).

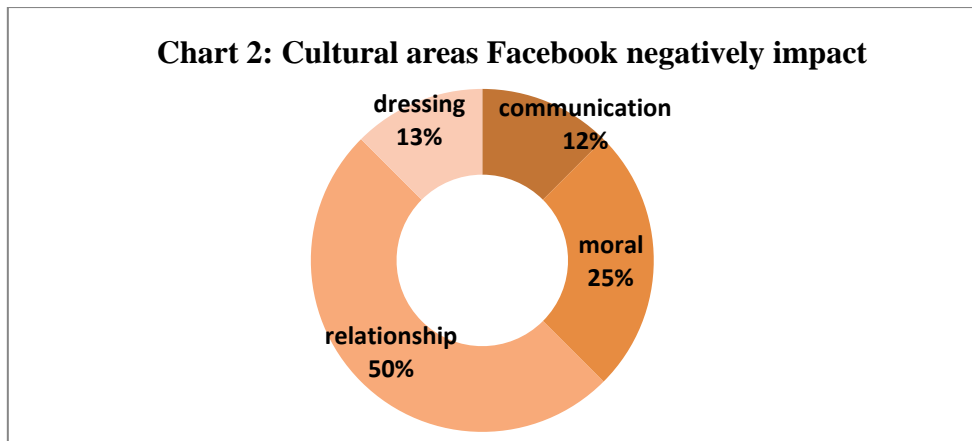
Lagos is a cosmopolitan state in Nigeria because it consists of people with different religion, and ethnic background. Lagos was specifically selected of all the cosmopolitan state because of its high population compared to other cosmopolitan states in Nigeria. The use of Lagos state is therefore appropriate for this study because of the diverse culture and category of people residing there since it is a cosmopolitan state. Residents in such areas as Lagos state are exposed to the internet and social media networks as a commercial environment. Lagos also consists of a mix of different classes of people.

The research instrument, which is the questionnaire, addressed the effects of social media exposure to the family values in Nigeria, demographic information of respondents and effects of Facebook interaction on family relationships.

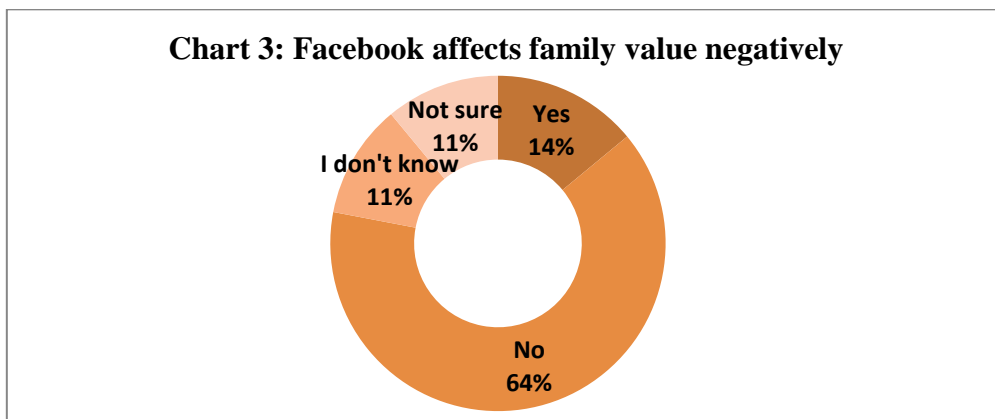
1.4 Findings and Analysis



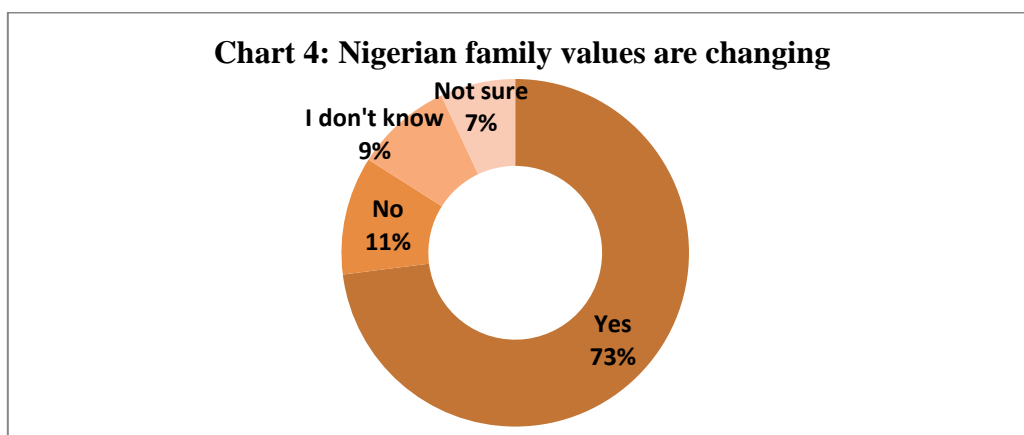
Majority of the respondents believe that Facebook as a social media network has influenced positively on the relationship among families rather than negatively. A very small percentage falls in the category of people who are either not sure of the impact of Facebook or believe Facebook affects the family relationship. This clear result could be obvious because of the particular features of Facebook, which allows for sharing of family activities and celebrations such as pictures of new birth to the family, and pictures of family celebrations, etc.



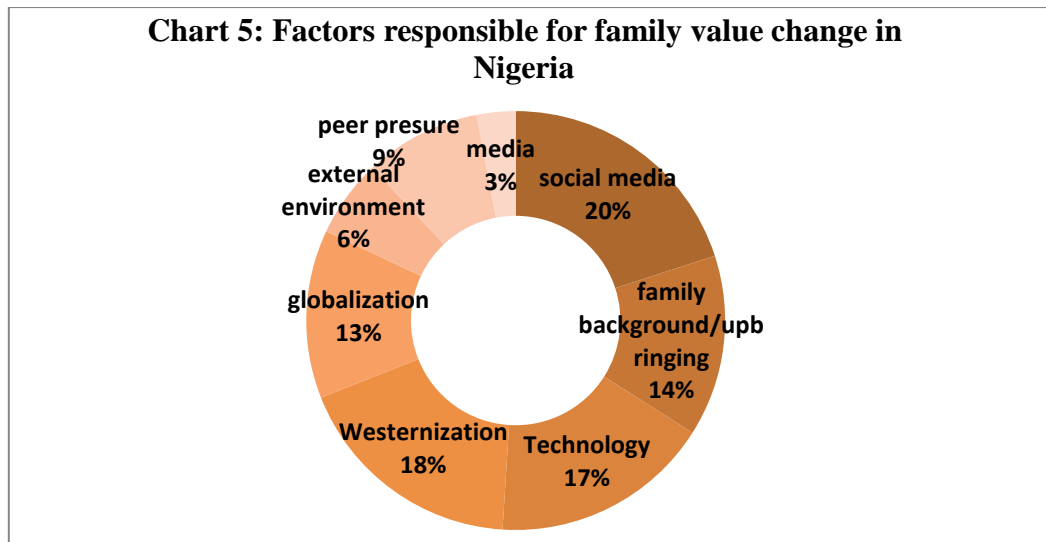
The chart above presents the results of respondents who believe Facebook affects Nigerian culture negatively (8%). The result reveals that, of the few who believes Facebook content impacts the Nigerian culture negatively, half of such population strongly agree that relationships of diverse types are negatively impacted on the social media platform (Facebook). Other areas of culture that could be directly affected negatively by Facebook usage include morals of Nigerians, dressing, and communication culture of the Nigerian people.



A less number of participants admit their use of Facebook does not impede on their family values as Nigerians. In this present age, many are beginning to view platforms introduced by ICT as a playing ground for many to flourish and promote their ideas, culture, and identity. This is probably why 64% of the sample size does not agree that Facebook as a social media site does not distort Nigerian family values rather, it is a platform to enhance the cultural heritage further.



Though respondents believe that Facebook as a social media platform is not responsible for changes in Nigerian family values (see chart 3), generally, respondents agree that family values in Nigeria are changing. Consequently, other factors might be responsible for the changes experienced in the Nigeria family system or culture.



For respondents who agree that the Nigerian cultural values are changing, they identify other factors responsible for the changes in Nigerian culture. Other factors identified by respondents include social media, westernization, globalization and family background/upbringing. It is significant to note based on this result, that respondent strongly believes technology (social media, internet, etc.) and human factor (upbringing) play a major role in the behavioural conduct of young people.

1.5 Discussions and Recommendations Discussion

As the use of social media networking keeps increasing, research might find it difficult to identify fully a particular contributing factor to the impacts of social media use on our daily lives. As the internet creates the platform for social media such as Facebook and others to be used and manipulated in making interaction fun, the factors that enhance the changes and modification in culture and values which exists across nations might soon become more externally generated than internally generated primarily by the extensive use of ICT. There seems to be more numerous driving factors. This opposes the common view that dominant western contents and interactions online are changing African culture rapidly and obstructing African values. Results emanating from this study, therefore, predict the role of human nature in exploring diversities not only generated by exposure to the heavy usage of Facebook and other social media networks but man's environmental factor that is innovated and generated by nature. These environmentally generated factors are not predictable because they are new inventions unveiled as centuries go by.

The unexpected findings derived from the study states that other external factors drive the changes in culture rather than exposure and usage of social media platforms. This attests to the fact that other factors encouraging and spreading up the process of cultural changes in Africa emanates from other variables asides those present or generated because of social media interactions.

First, this study can provide a significant update on the influence of social media interactions on the cultural changes in the African continent. Having done this, the results provide present day factors that could be affecting positively or negatively the culture of African societies. Therefore possible research areas might be to explore the trends of these changes and how possibly new environmental variable have been introduced at

different times to identify other environmental factors or online factors facilitating cultural, changes and cultural modification.

However, the identification of new factors, and how they affect culture might seem an endless journey for researchers. On the other hand, identifying how, when and with what intensity a variable affect positively or negatively an aspect of cultural change and modification is difficult to separate in research.

1.6 Conclusion

The possible way to begin to study the aspect of social media and effect on an aspect of human life might be to seek out predictable uses of the social media networking in the nearest future and the new cultures that that social media networking could create spanning from social media interactions. Furthermore, these future research could result in the development of social media theories that could assist scholars, social media provides, social media users in understanding the nature, power, and effects of social media networks as it relates to a different generation, environment, and people.

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