

EXPLORING SOCIAL MEDIA AND INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOURS OF NIGERIANS TOWARDS THE DEATH OF A MUSICIAN

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Abstract

There is a paucity of social media research from the perspective of information seeking behaviours. This study explores social media and information seeking behaviours of Nigerians towards the death of a musician. The population of this study is 4 Nigerian celebrities and social media influencers who used their platforms to advocate for justice on the musician's death. Case study design was adopted so that the researchers can have a deep understanding of information seeking behaviours of Nigerians on social media, particularly X and Instagram (likes and comments) towards musician's death. Criterion sampling was used in selecting the posts relevant to this study's objectives. Covert observation was used because the celebrities and influencers whose posts were sampled were not aware that the researchers were observing their posts and people's interactions with them. Findings revealed that Nigerians reacted on social media, through likes and comments, to information on the musician's death, candle light, causes of his death and the arrest of his alleged killers. Their reactions to information on the results of the autopsy were discouraging and it is believed that the reason for such is because the cause of his death was not ascertained. This study concludes that the social media was instrumental in reporting Mohbad's death, paving the ways for many Nigerian celebrities and influencers to call on the Nigerian government at both the Federal and State levels to ensure proper investigations of the possible cause(s) of his death.

Keywords: Information Behavior, Information Seeking Behaviors, Mohbad, Musician, Nigerians, Social Media.

Introduction

Information is the lifeblood of every human activity. It is an indispensable factor in the daily living of man. As an end product of processed data that contains meanings when communicated (Sulyman, Adeyemi & Kolawole, 2020), it is believed that information is everything that is

perceived by the human senses as a clue or clues for problem solving and decision making (Wilson, 2022). The spur of contributing to the happenings around human societies has triggered human beings to relate, react and share information in formats and media suitable for their comprehension levels.

Understanding the importance of understudying human reactions to and relationships with information made Thomas D. Wilson coined the concept of "Information Behaviour" in the 1980s. According to Wilson (2000), information seeking behaviour is the totality of human behaviours in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking, and information use. It includes communication with others (orally or written), use of any kind of information resource, and the passive reception of information, such as watching television advertisements, or reading unsolicited e-mail messages.

Wilson (2022) described information seeking behaviours as a shortened form of the behaviours of humans in relation to information. It denotes how humans act towards information, how humans seek it or discover it, how humans use it, how humans exchange it with others, how humans may choose to ignore it, and, by extension, how humans learn from it and act upon it. Wilson's submission on information seeking behaviours is espousing context as a veritable tool in our reactions to and relationships with information; for context is person's life-world and its characteristics and the particular province of meaning (or reality) within which the person is located when the problematic situation arises (Wilson, 2022). David-West (2023) ascertain that information seeking starts when someone acknowledges that there is need for information and make frantic efforts to meet that need. That is to say people will go extra mile using the various platforms on internet to meet their information need.

Agarwal (2023) asserted that information seeking behaviour describes the many ways in which human beings interact with information – how people seek and utilise information; it also includes other activities such as avoiding/stopping, distorting, encountering by chance, organising, storing, creating, sharing, diffusing and deciding to stop using information. Looking at how technological inventions have disrupted information-related activities, it is trite to conclude that digital technologies such as social media have stabilised the traditional methods of communicating, interacting and sharing information (Gritt, 2018).

Social media are evolving into important sources of information that complement traditional information sources (Khoo, 2017). Social media has become a major force in the creation,

sharing, accessing, transfer and dissemination of information. They provide an opportunity to study types of information seeking behaviours related to human interaction, that are difficult to study in physical environments because social media users typically shared experiential and practical knowledge in the context of everyday life (Khoo, 2017).

Wilson (2022) posited that knowing that social media is one of the major determinants of human interactions with information in the 21st Century. This makes it unsurprising to discover that social media has filled the space of people's reliability for information, making them react to and relate with posts on social media based on their interests and preference. Social media, in its various manifestations, presents a golden opportunity and rich environment to study information seeking behaviours, as much of the information (in text, image and video formats) are recorded and stored in publicly accessible repositories and on personal devices (Khoo, 2017; Zimmerman, 2020). This serves as the basis for this study to be exploring social media and information behaviour of Nigerians towards the death of a musician.

Statement of the Problem

In 2019, the Nigerian hip-hop industry witnessed the rise of a young, talented musical artiste, Ilerioluwa Oladimeji Aloba, popularly known as Mohbad, whose first hit track titled "Komajensun" was released. His joining of the raving Nigerian hip-hop world was perceived by many Nigerian hip-hop lovers as the birth of a genius who combined talents with artistry to compose songs and sing to connect with listeners at the deepest level.

Mohbad became the prince being courted by every record label in the Nigerian hip-hop industry. In 2020, Mohbad released his extended play (EP), "Light," to mark the genesis of his deal with the Marlian Records. In October, 2022, Mohbad parted ways with Marlian Records, citing disputes and unpaid royalties as the major excuses for his departure. Identifying Mohbad's potential and reluctance to lose him to other record labels forced the CEO of Marlian Records – Azeez Adeshina Fashola known professionally as Naira Marley and his cohorts – to result in harassing and bullying – physical and cyber – and even battering of Mohbad (Kolawole, 2023). Kolawole (2023) also claimed that it is an open secret that Mohbad had been complaining of being bullied by Naira Marley. The bullying and other abuses might have caused serious mental health issues for Mohbad. This brings the submission of Amedu (2023) into fore that social media platforms have been used negatively over the years, from cyber bullying to invasion of privacy, defamation of character, fake news dissemination, misinformation and propaganda.

It was reported that Mohbad petitioned the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) to investigate Naira Marley and his cohorts, but the petition fell in deaf ears, until it was reported on Tuesday, 12th September, 2023, that Mohbad is dead! His death raised suspicions, generated controversies and has been like the eruption of a volcano, with the lava spreading uphill and downhill (Abati, 2023). The vigour at which the youth in Nigeria and other parts of the world reacted to his death, most especially on social media reflects their beliefs and values as individuals and groups (Zimmerman, 2020). Thus, this study is designed to explore social media and information behaviour of Nigerians towards the death of Mohbad.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to explore social media and information seeking behaviours of Nigerians towards the death of a musician.

The specific objectives are to:

- i. Determine the reactions of Nigerians towards information about Mohbad's death;
- ii. Explore the reactions of Nigerians towards information about organising candle night for Mohbad;
- iii. Ascertain the reactions of Nigerians towards information about exhumation of Mohbad's corpse for autopsy;
- iv. Examine the reactions of Nigerians towards information about investigating the causes of Mohbad's death;
- v. Ascertain the reactions of Nigerians towards information about the arrest of alleged killers of Mohbad; and,
- vi. Determine the reactions of Nigerians towards information about the results of Mohbad's autopsy.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the questions below:

- i. What are the reactions of Nigerians towards information about Mohbad's death?

- ii. What are the reactions of Nigerians towards information about organising candle night for Mohbad?
- iii. What are the reactions of Nigerians towards information about exhumation of Mohbad's corpse for autopsy?
- iv. What are the reactions of Nigerians towards information about investigating the causes of Mohbad's death?
- v. What are the reactions of Nigerians towards information about the arrest of alleged killers of Mohbad?
- vi. What are the reactions of Nigerians towards information about the results of Mohbad's autopsy?

Literature Review

Khoo (2017) surveyed some literature on information behaviour related to social media, focusing especially on social networking sites and online discussion fora. It reviews the characteristics of social media users and use, the predominant types of information behavior, and new types of information found in user-contributed content. Studies have found clear age, gender and national differences, and differences between local citizens and foreigners, in the frequency and purpose of social media use, the choice of social media sites, number of online friends, and types of information posted. Informational support provided by social media users is complemented with socio-emotional support. Predominant types of information behavior include asking (i.e. request for information), answering with information, unsolicited information sharing, and information integration. Browsing and monitoring are important types of information seeking behavior on social media. Users use a combination of information behaviors, information sources, and online as well as offline sources for information needs that are important to them.

Yahaya and Ayodeji (2019) examined the influence of social media usage on the information behavior of undergraduate students in selected universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was undergraduates in Al-Hikmah University, Kwara State University and University of Ilorin. The sample size was three hundred and eighty-five (385) and simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The study used a self-designed questionnaire divided into five sections.

Findings showed Facebook as the most preferred social media tools by undergraduates. Findings further revealed that there is a high usage of social media for connecting with friends and academic activities among undergraduates.

Zimmerman (2022) conducted a study titled "Social noise: The influence of observers on social media information behavior." The author argues that under the influence of social noise, a social media user may adjust information behavior based on external cues, attempting to present themselves in a more desirable way to increase their social capital. A qualitative study informed by an ethnographic approach was used to examine social media information behavior. Participants were observed using Facebook, followed by semi-structured interviews. The study reveals that social media users' awareness of observation by others does impact their information behavior. Efforts to craft a personal reputation, build or maintain relationships, pursue important commitments and manage conflict all influence the observable information behavior of social media users.

Alhoori, Samaka and Furuta (2019) investigated the anatomy of scholarly information behavior patterns in the wake of academic social media platforms by students and faculty at two universities, one in the USA and the other in Qatar. The study identifies and describes new behavior patterns on the part of researchers as they engage in the information-seeking process. The analysis reveals that the use of academic social networks has notable effects on various scholarly activities. Further, the study identifies differences between students and faculty members in regard to their use of academic social networks, and it identifies differences between researchers according to discipline. Although the researchers who participated in the study represent a range of disciplinary and cultural backgrounds, but the study still reports a number of similarities in terms of the researchers' scholarly activities.

Gritt (2018) explores the information behavior in a UK policing context with a focus on how social media influences their everyday work practice. To address the research questions, the research takes an interpretive approach using activity theory as a methodological and analytic framework. Semi-structured interviews and observations were conducted in three policing organizations. In exploring the first question it was found that social media was used in multiple ways, which created new and different ways of policing low-level crime and anti-social behavior. This in turn led to new and distinct information behaviors in three different contexts.

The explorations made by Gritt (2018) identified three models of use of social media for

policing. In the emergent model, social media was used to share information with the public but a high degree of ambiguity constrained work practices, which also led to information avoidance. In the augmented model, social media was enhancing existing policing activities and was used for information seeking and to support decision making. In the transformed model, a radical change in policing activities is taking place. This led to new collaborative information behaviors evolving. The study provides new insights by highlighting the complexity and layers of police use of social media in practice.

Agarwal (2023) paper seeks to answer the question, “What is the trajectory of information behavior research in the 21st century? What are some of the future directions?” The unit of analysis is research articles published on information behavior between the years 2000 and 2023. These include papers published in *Information Research*, the *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, and those presented in *Information Seeking in Context* conferences and the *Annual Meetings of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, and research on information behavior models and context. While not meant to be exhaustive, this paper should bring new and existing researchers up to speed on some of the recent developments in the field during the past two decades.

Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature. Bannah (2024) explained qualitative research as a form of research that seeks to understand and explain social phenomena, individual experiences, and behaviours through non-numerical data. The population of this study is 4 Nigerian celebrities and social media influencers who used their platforms (X and Instagram) to advocate for Mohbad’s death. This study adopts case study design so that the researchers can have a deep understanding the reactions of Nigerians (with likes and comments) on social media towards the death of Mohbad.

Criterion sampling was used to pick the respondents. The major criteria used were the celebrities’ verifications and posts from September 12th, 2023 to May 15th, 2024 related to the objectives of this study. Covert observation was used in this study because the celebrities and influencers whose posts were sampled were not aware that the researchers were observing their posts and people’s interactions with them. The qualitative data gathered through the covert observation provided springboards for the researchers to draw inferences on how social media influences the information behaviours of Nigerians towards the death of Mohbad.

To ensure that the conduct of this study aligns with ethical provisions, the posts observed were reported in anonymity, making it possible to protect the privacy of the celebrities and the influencers. With this, the potential harms such as abuses or derogatory comments that may affect the reputation or credibility of the participants have been duly considered.

Results

Reactions of Nigerians towards information about Mohbad's death

On the posts related to this, the participants posted 8 different posts reporting the death of Mohbad. The posts, in total, have 456,030 likes and 14,053 comments. The posts were filled with pictures, emojis and captions expressing the participants' surprises, sadness and disappointments on Mohbad's death.

Reactions towards information about organising candle night for Mohbad

Here, 17 different posts were made; the posts have 1,037,958 likes and 22,760 comments. The celebrities and influencers used different images and captions to appeal to the emotions of their followers.

Reactions of Nigerians towards information about exhumation of Mohbad's corpse for autopsy

Findings revealed that the three posts sampled on this objective have gathered 50,618 likes and 1,718 comments. The posts maybe because of their contents or people's interest about the issue, could not generate much interactions.

Reactions of Nigerians towards information about investigating the causes of Mohbad's death

The 7 posts made by the celebrities and the influencers generated 230,145 likes and 10,528 comments. This shows that Nigerians were interested to know the cause or causes of Mohbad's death.

Reactions of Nigerians towards information about the arrest of alleged killers of Mohbad

Findings from the 6 posts observed showed that 278,929 people have liked the posts, with 15,767 commented. This means that Nigerians believed that Mohbad did not die a natural death. Because of their suspicions, they reacted massively to the posts on the arrests of Mohbad's alleged killers.

Reactions of Nigerians towards information about the results of Mohbad's autopsy

Only 2 posts were found to be relevant to this objective and the posts gathered just 18,059 likes and 4,041 comments. This shows that the interest of Nigerians on Mohbad's death has dissipated as at the time the autopsy results was released.

Discussion of Findings

Social media have become veritable platforms for interactions among the people who share common interests. Social media has gained a wider popularity among Nigerians. A recent study revealed that as at 2023, Nigeria is considered the country with the most social media presence where 16.2 per cent of her population spent at least 4 hours 20 minutes on social media per day (Kareem, 2023). Out of 103 million Internet users in Nigeria, 36.75 million used social media in January 2024 (Michael, 2024). The average Nigerian social media user spends approximately 2 hours and 23 minutes daily on these platforms.

Noting that Nigerians are the most users of social media globally, according to Kareem (2023), it becomes interesting to discover that Nigerians harnessed social media's power to foster a force in mourning the death of Mohbad. This brings into fore, the death of Mohbad trended on social media, making it possible to understand the values and behaviours of Nigerians on the lives of their elite and their interactions with the information about them. The death of Mohbad unearthed the patterns of Nigerians' interactions with death related news, particularly death associated with popular people, their sentiments on the state of affairs and their underlying motivations to advocate for what they believed. This makes it unsurprising to discover that the death of Mohbad shook the Nigerian society and other parts of the world.

Series of posts on the candle light generated more than 1 million likes and 20 thousand comments. Social media made it possible for every global citizen to condole with the family of Mohbad and his loved ones and it was highly instrumental in sharing the information on the candle light organised to mourn his death. The candle light was held in different cities across the world. The candle light held nearly in all the Nigeria's states' capitals and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, with some celebrities and influencers been the organisers.

The assertion of Khoo (2017) that information seeking behaviour covers a wide range of user behaviour in relation to information and information systems, including information need generation, information creation, seeking, encountering, sharing, giving, assessment, management and use reflected a growing effect of information seeking behaviours in the

Nigerian context. Breaking the news that autopsy will be performed on Mohbad's remains excited Nigerians and gave them the opportunity to vent their angers on their perceived torments, bullying and harassment of Mohbad by some of his friends. This makes Nigerians reacted positively to information on the arrest of Mohbad's alleged killers.

Scholars have argued that one of the beauties of social media is that it not only provides an avenue to understand content itself, it also provides the lens to view the socio-cultural context in which information, contents are produced and consumed. This is so in the case of arrest of the alleged killers of Mohbad. Ensuring justice is considered as one of the functions of government, therefore, Nigerian Police Force (NPF) resolved to wade in into the matter, arrest some suspected perpetrators of bullying and harassment reportedly meted against Mohbad. Realising that the case is being taken over by the authority, some Nigerians were relieved and believed that justice will be served.

A shocking comment was made on the possible manipulation of the outcome of the autopsy and prosecution of Mohbad's alleged killers by one of the commenters on the social media handles of the celebrities sampled. The commenter noted his/her suspicion on the outcomes of cases related Mohbad's death and appealed to those who viewed the comments to lower their expectations on the expected outcomes. This was nearly true when a post was released on 21st March, 2024, by the Nigerian authority that the results of the autopsy will be released in coming days.

The posts shared by most of the influencers and celebrities gathered only 2,423 likes and 343 comments. The Mohbad's case affirmed the view of Wilson (2000) that people interact massively with information based on their interest in it and trust of the source(s). Nigerians' waning level of engagements, reactions and interactions with the information on the issue they were pursuing with vigour showed a partial or full loss of interest in the issue.

Falola (2023) submitted that the effects of social media platforms cannot be overlooked in this age. The platform offers an unparalleled platform for the spread of principles, permitting individuals to demand transparency from their leaders and voice their hopes for a Nigeria guided by strong moral standards. And on 15th May, 2024, when the news broke that one pathologist has claimed that the cause of Mohbad's death cannot be ascertained, the reactions and engagements with posts related to the information were not encouraging because they brought into reality, the fears of Nigerians that justice may not be served in investigating the

causes of Mohbad's death.

Engagements with posts through comments, likes, shares and retweets on social media serve as notable vehicles for people to measure the acceptability and effects of posts on those who interact with it. This study showed that most Nigerians don't know how to caution themselves when commenting on posts on social media, particularly on issues they are emotionally invested in. Nigerians allowed their emotions to overpower them, leading to different harassments, assaults and abuses online. Such uncivil engagements can frustrate people and make them lose interest in supporting worthy causes.

Conclusion

The social media is a potent tool in the contemporary world, influencing people's reactions to affairs and shaping their positions on issues. On Mohbad's death, the social media was instrumental in reporting his death, paving the ways for many celebrities and influencers to call on the Nigerian government at both the Federal and State levels to ensure proper investigations of the possible cause(s) of his death. This study validates that Nigerians reacted on social media, through likes and comments, to information on Mohbad's death, candle light, causes of his death and the arrest of his alleged killers. Their reactions to information on the results of the autopsy were discouraging and it is believed that the reason for such is because the cause of Mohbad's death was not ascertained.

Recommendations

This study recommends that:

1. Nigerian government, her agencies, bodies, institutions and others stakeholders need to invest in the information and media literacies of Nigerians on the proper and expedient use of social media. This will increase their abilities in reacting and interacting with posts on social media in ethical and legal ways.
2. Social media influencers in Nigeria should leverage the power of social media to drive causes that can contribute to the progress of Nigeria as a country and society. This can be achieved by using their platforms to bring people with novel ideas together and strategise on how to execute their ideas.

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Appendix

Reactions of Nigerians towards information about Mohbad's death

S/N	Observees	No of posts	No of likes	No of comments
1.	Ob. 1	2	84, 747; 71, 105	1, 129; 2,559
2.	Ob. 2	2	83, 525; 43, 100	3, 282; 1,401
3.	Ob. 3	2	53, 877; 24, 499	540; 750
4.	Ob. 4	2	114, 582; 50, 695	1,740; 2,652
Total		8	456, 030	14, 053

Reactions towards information about organising candle night for Mohbad

S/N	Observees	No of posts	No of likes	No of comments
1.	Ob. 1	5	33, 632; 112, 563; 113, 660; 73, 936; 57, 893	516; 3,896; 2,383; 3, 858; 816
2.	Ob. 2	4	44, 869; 10, 316; 12, 034; 14, 805;	1, 175; 161; 153; 221
3.	Ob. 3	4	12, 387; 10, 881; 269, 511; 83, 101;	283; 145; 4, 220; 1, 940
4.	Ob. 4	4	15, 828; 22, 312; 39, 200; 111, 210	335; 365; 1, 070; 1, 213
Total		17	1, 037, 958	22, 760

Reactions of Nigerians towards information about exhumation of Mohbad's corpse for autopsy

S/N	Observees	No of posts	No of likes	No of comments
1.	Ob. 1	1	49, 707	1, 607
2.	Ob. 2	1	446	44
3.	Ob. 3	1	466	67
Total		3	50, 619	1, 718

Reactions of Nigerians towards information about investigating the causes of Mohbad's death

S/N	Observees	No of posts	No of likes	No of comments
1.	Ob. 1	1	6, 392	365
2.	Ob. 2	1	20, 806	875
3.	Ob. 3	1	37, 178	1, 319
4.	Ob. 4	1	8, 829	544
Total		4	73, 205	3, 103

Reactions of Nigerians towards information about the arrest of alleged killers of Mohbad

S/N	Observees	No of posts	No of likes	No of comments
1.	Ob. 1	1	75, 404	3, 204
2.	Ob. 2	2	26, 458; 18, 862	1, 972; 890
3.	Ob. 3	2	19, 044; 61, 993	1, 321; 2, 821
4.	Ob. 4	1	77, 168;	5, 559
Total		6	278, 929	15, 767

Reactions of Nigerians towards information about the results of Mohbad's autopsy

S/N	Observees	No of posts	No of likes	No of comments
1.	Ob. 1	1	15, 432	3, 243
2.	Ob. 4	1	2, 627	798
Total		2	18, 059	4, 041