



# Preferences and Motivations of Nigerian Undergraduates in Sharing COVID-19 Information on Social Media

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the practice and motivators of Nigeria undergraduates' use of satire, music, and comedy for sharing COVID-19 information on social media. Just 294 undergraduates from six federal universities in Southwest, Nigeria participated in the survey. A questionnaire was posted on online platforms to collect data from the participants. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with tables and charts adopted in the presentation of results. Findings revealed that the most used of social media platforms for sharing COVID-19 information was WhatsApp, while satire, music, and comedy were moderately used with comedy used mostly. Gratifications for satire, music, and comedy use have positive effect on the undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information ( $\beta = 0.531, P = 0.000$ ). Academic libraries' provision of access to credible COVID-19 information in form of satire, music, and comedy will possibly promote the sharing of reliable COVID-19 information among the undergraduates and foster meeting their gratifications positively.

## KEYWORDS

Comedy, COVID-19, Gratifications, Information Sharing, Media Content Consumption, Music, Nigeria, Satire, Social Media, Undergraduates, University

## INTRODUCTION

Communication is significant to human existence, survival and sustainability. Various mass communication media are preferably used by people to share different types of media content such as satire, music and comedy as coping strategies (Eden et al, 2020). While satire and comedy are both genres and literary devices, music is a collection of coordinated sound or sounds. The use of satire, music and comedy to disseminate information may be circumstance, season, purpose or event-driven. People's media and media content consumption patterns have changed during this critical period of public health emergencies resulting from the corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic (Eden et al, 2020).

DOI: 10.4018/IJLIS.301607

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In such period, libraries' adoption of a positive paradigm shift in information services provision to curtail the spread of fake news will be highly beneficial to people.

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic is causing changes in the lives of people (Cabedo-Mas, Arriaga-Sanz & Moliner-Miravet, 2021). The outbreak has devastating impacts on the economic, social, political, cultural, educational, and religious aspects of people's lives, necessitating lockdown as a preventive measure (Lateef, Adesanmi & Olomola, 2020; Onuora et al, 2021). According to Umezudike et al (2020), "the rapid surge in the number of cases during the COVID- 19 pandemic has placed enormous strain on health care systems and significantly impacted educational systems globally." Hence, strains were on everyone to share vital information and updates that could help them successfully navigate through the pandemic and the induced infodemic. According to Ayanbode and Adetoro (2021), an infodemic is excess information, some accurate and some inaccurate, making it difficult for people to find credible sources and reliable advice when needed. Library and information professionals have critical roles to play in reducing the strains posed by misinformation. In recent times, COVID-19 has become topical and has caught the attention of all mass communication media globally (Karmegam & Mapillairaju, 2020).

Moreover, the dynamism in information sharing has emerged over time since the advent of the advanced means of mass communication. "During the COVID-19 crisis, the main means or channels of communication were social networks." (Cancelas-Ouviña, 2021:1). Social media and their creative use have been playing significant roles in facilitating the processes of social interaction through which vital life-sustaining information are shared. According to World Health Organisation-WHO (2020), social media platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Flickr, Vimeo, MySpace, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Imo were reported being used to share data, news, clinical best practices, and updates about COVID-19 around the world. Hence, this current study is set to evident if gratifications for social media use have a positive effect on Nigerian undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information. Hamzat and Otulugbu (2020) noted that people's dependence on the various social media platforms for information about COVID-19 during this critical time is very high, probably based on the ease and freedom that is attached to the use of social media. It could also be because health information or messages must be communicated effectively in formats that will make a positive impact (Onuora et al, 2021). Intentionally, people have been using social media to share COVID-19 information in formats such as texts, images, memes, cartoons, music, comedies, satire and so on (Obi-Ani, Anikwenze & Isiani, 2020; Sulaiman et al., 2020). Literary devices and genres (such as satire and comedy) are being used to share COVID-19 information (Karmegam & Mapillairaju, 2020). Satire, music and comedy are powerful means of communication media even during an emergency such as the one caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Gharib & Turner, 2020; Onuora et al., 2021). According to Cancelas-Ouviña (2021), satire refers to the use of humour, cartoons or caricature, irony, exaggeration or sarcasm to express an opinion and criticize people's, organizations', and government's action or vices especially in the context of topical issues.

For instance, the Internet meme is medium that engages humor and satire to communicate information (Kulkarni, 2017). Often, satire is engaged in both comedy and music to communicate or express ideas on topical issues. According to Onuora et al (2021:126), "animated cartoons have been used via YouTube to highlight and educate social media users on COVID-19 and further influence their behaviour." Comic strips were created in Chinese and Spanish to disseminate COVID-19 information to kids (Gharib & Turner, 2020). In Nigeria, teenagers and youths are not left out in the use of different social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and so on to socialise, connect, and share information (Ngonso, 2019). Though this present study focuses on Nigerian undergraduates generally, among the Nigerian youths, evidences have shown that information about COVID-19 was shared by different categories of Nigerian undergraduates and that they possess adequate knowledge of the disease. For example, Umezudike et al (2020) found that 50% of undergraduate dental students

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