Selfies, Communications and Female Students Self– Presentation in Social Network Sites (SNS)

Oyokunyi Jon Ita

Department of Communication Arts, University of Uyo, Nigeria

Uduot Iwok

Department of Communication Arts, University of Uyo, Nigeria

Abstract

The paper seeks to uncover how the three pronged dynamics of culture, personality and religion have shaped the 3W's and H namely What, Why, Where and How in relation to selfie utilization and self-presentation on Social Networking Sites (SNS). Using quantitative (descriptive survey) rather than the "usual" qualitative approaches used by researchers in the area of selfie studies, this paper examines many variables that highlighted novel undercurrents in the use of selfie by female university students. A total of 370 female students of the University of Uyo were surveyed and another 350 – student member study group was created on SNS to aggregate their views on why they engage in selfies and possible satisfaction from such engagement. The findings reveal that selfie posting by female university student are driven more by personality (59%) and religious orientations (14%) rather than culture (5%),this paper also reveals that female students who engaged in selfiedidso forself-presentation and self-fulfilment. In essence,this paper argues that selfie use on SNSs is not motivated by sociocultural or national issues but by students moods, self - actualisation, and as a way to present preferred self and image on the SNSs. These, the paper concludes, are disconnected from socio economic cum cultural realities that people hope youths should engage in *their SocialNetwork Sites interaction.*.

Keywords: Social Network Site (SNS), self-presentation, communication, selfieand students.

Introduction.

With the advent of the internet, the world has become a global village because of the ease with which we can communicate and transmit information from one country to the other. What existed as boundaries separating countries have become practically non -existent in the eye of the internet. The `internet will bring with it opportunities, challenges , new learnings and even disasters at some levels because the internet has the capacity to economic, social and political landmarks. Curran, (2012) asserts that the Internet would make the world a better place to live in.

Curran et al.,2012) however argues "*that the internet has not lived up to these expectations and calls for a"reality check". Curran demands empirical facts for evaluating if the world has reallybecome a better place with digitalization and online communication".*

It suffice to say that Curran expectations of the role of the Internet may not have been met, however the phenomenon of the Selfie and their online usage across countries and cultures has shown that the internet is providing more and better ways of putting to use old tricks and methods in ways that enhances social being and personalities.

One can curiously ask at this point what exactly is the term referred to as Selfie.   Fausing (2013) points out that a new concept has begun to pop up everywhere: the selfie.

" It means a photograph of yourself that you take yourself .*Time* Magazine designated it one of the most used buzz words of 2012. Lobinger & Brantner (2015) define a selfie as "a self-portrait usually taken with a digital camera or a camera phone in order to be shared with relevant others". Lobinger et all further expantiated that "selfies represent a particular subcategory of self-photographs and have become their own genre of visual self-representation with its own conventions, representational techniques, and poses, such as the "duck face" (pouting with the mouth), the "stone face" (appearing as unmoved but determined)"

Wrammert (2014) asserts that although "selfies are modern media phenomenon in the sense that technology makes it possible to quickly take and display self – portraits online". Fausing (2013) analysed further that "when you look at yourself in a mirror or depict yourself in a self-portrait, that is a selfie in itself and it is a form of reflection in which you distinguish yourself from other people and seek recognition of what is unique about yourself".

Wrammert (2014) points out that today's research on "selfies lacks proofs about the effects of taking and displaying selfies on Social Network Site. Something that has been argued by both opinion leaders and researchers is that using selfies for digital self - presentation is an expression of narcissism."

Statement of the Problem

Selfies studies have dominated the media in recent times, with most researchers trying to establish the reason and

effects of the phenomenon, but mostly as a media effect study. It is in the light of this that the study seeks to uncover how the three pronged dynamics of culture, personality and religion have shaped the 3W's and H namely What, Why, Where and How of selfies is utilised for self - presentation by the undergraduates students of Uniuyo. Hitherto, many researchers who have worked on the selfie study have often focus on the effects and consequences of posting selfies. This study seek to examine the major driving force for female participation in selfies any social network sites.

Research Objectives

1   Toexamine how selfie assist female undergraduates'self presentation in social network site..
2   To examine whether the selfie posting is influenced by any of the following variables ie religion, culture and personality type.
3   To examine the frequency with which students post selfie messages on Social Network Site.
4   To examine if there is any preferred social network site for posting of selfie and why .

Research Questions

The questions that are pertinent to this study are as follows:
1.   How does selfie help female undergraduates' of UniversityOf Uyo in their self – presentation on any Social Network Site.?
2.   Which of the social structures like religion, culture and personality types influence posting of selfies on Social Network Site.?
3.   What is the frequency of posting of selfie by students on Social Network Site ?
4.   Do they have any particular preference for any Social Networking Site when posting their selfie and why ?

Literature Review

The evolution of the term Selfie can be said to originate in the year 2014, when a group was formed on the social photosharing network Flickr with the name selfy (yes, spelled with a y), which was supposed to describe self-taken digital pictures. Fausing (2013).asserts that the term began to expand in usage and application on MySpace, which provided the first definition for the Urban Dictionary in 2005: "self portrait of yourself usually by teen girls"

Then, the name spread out to other media – particularly, to descriptions of celebrities who use selfies. Recently, for example, in June 2013, several hundred fan pages were created on Facebook, designed for selfies and including naked-selfies, fitness-selfies and humorous selfies. The latter form plays with the genre and exaggerates its expression – for example, by pouting.

What is Selfies all about?

Fausing,(2013) states the face is the showroom of the self. "It is here we can see all the features that tell you something about age, ethnicity, gender, mood, presence, etc. It is not for nothing that it is called Facebook and not Footbook. We display ourselves first and foremost through our faces, and we hope that what we display will be accepted."

Suler (2015) in his explanation on what could be the reason for selfiesstarted with a definition of the term, portrait. The Latin roots of "portray" tell us that a self-portrait is to "draw forth" and "represent" one's self. When you take your own picture, you are attempting to extract and depict who you are. You might do this for two basic reasons. Firstly to explore and better understand yourself and secondly to expressyourself to others. In both cases you are doing something very interesting. You are creating an objective representation of the subjective you. The self-portrait allows you to see yourself as others might see you. It allows others to see you as you see yourself or as you wish to been seen. These are all the fancy footsteps of self-awareness that make us human.

Selfie in its intrinsic and deeper level basically allows the characters to paint themselves in the manner they want to be perceive and understood in their own language and style, without distortion of any kind.

Selfie and Communication

Communication in its simplest form is about the transmission and sharing of meanings from the sender to the receiver using a medium or media depending on the context. A picture is often said is worth more than a thousand words. Nkana (2013) states that pictures are devoted evidence of reality. They tell, or are supposed to tell stories more than words .if well arranged, they can give more information and can even mobilize without or with limited audio support.

Looking critically at how the selfie communicates can be likened to what an artist attempts to convey meaning through his or her paintings to the society. His meanings and interpretation of the images he puts down in any medium is first and foremost the artist understanding of the subject matter in question. Secondly, it represents exclusively his or her subjective interpretation of the meaning being conveyed through pictures. The same applies to the selfie.

Ochigbo (2015), puts it succinctly thus as human beings, we dream dreams. If we share this dream with others through words, then we are communicating verbally, and if we share it through illustration using colours , we are communicating through pictures or paintings.

Mitchell (2010) asked a question rhetorically"What do pictures want "? The answer is simple and, for a selfie, very appropriate: they want to be kissed, that is, they want to be consumed, they want to be incorporated, they want to be accepted. Pictures want to interact. Selfies, may be considered a special communication medium that serves a double function, in which the form and content are inextricably linked. First, they are a performative act of brand or identity building. Second, they are a proof of "truth," an act of witnessing that indicates the veracity of the individual's actions as well as documenting an event from a hyperpersonal perspective (Walther, 1996) cited in Koliska and Robert, (2015) by making the observer/witness simultaneously part of the observed/witnessed event.Koliska and Robert, (2015) states further that selfies may also be understood as a form of digital storytelling that embeds personal autobiographical elements (self-portraits) about members of a particular community and displays them in semipublic spaces such as social media. In that respect, selfies taken and shared by a variety of people documenting the same event can provide multiple perspectives. Thus, selfies reflect not just personal impressions but also communal experiences of modern life within societies around the world, while creating a constant flow of visual artifacts of personally witnessed history. Of course, the aggregate of this flow may currently not be seen by most, or even many, viewers because access to these images may depend on the size of an individual viewer's social network.

Selfie and Self - Presentation

Green (2007) states that in expressing ourselves, we make manifest aspects of our own point of view: our emotions, attitudes, qualitative experiences, and feelings. We do this most often through overt acts of linguistic communication--public avowals that reveal our thoughts and experiences. We also express ourselves through facial expression, gesture, behaviour, and the creation of art.

In the presentation of self in Everyday life, Erving Goffman, way back in 1959had suggested that we in our daily life together with others, create an image of ourself to give the right impression. In interaction with others, we constantlytry to adjust our looks and postures to suit a particular situation. (Goffman,2005).

Thus,it is safe to say that self – presentation is a process by which individuals engaged in impression management and information control in everyday life. Self-- ‐ presentationis our way of shaping a personal façade in order to generate a desired impression on others. This façade, or mask, is something we put on to meet the expectations of our audiences. According to Goffman, self - presentation is interaction between oneself and the audience. It is the way in which we design our self-identities.

In virtual environments, research as confirmed that personality is an important factor influencing people's self – presentation. Kramer and Winter,(2008)found from their study based on a German social website the more extroverted people are, the more "experimental" profile picture (making a face, striking a pose) they have.

Theoretical framework.

The following theories will guide this work, the uses and gratification theory, and the gate keeping theory.

The Uses and Gratification Theory

Elihu Katz first introduced the Uses and Gratification Approach, when he came up with the notion that people use the media to their benefit. The perspective emerged in the early 1970's as Katz and his two colleagues, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch continued to expand the idea. This theory was contemporary because it contradicted older views that assumed the audience was a passive group. The Uses and Gratifications Approach views the audience as active, meaning that they actively seek out specific media and content to achieve certain results or gratifications that satisfy their personal needs.

" the notion of an active audience has steadily moved from an assumption to obvious reality"(Sundar&Limperos 2013:).

Ojobor (2002) citing Katz says the theory is primarily audience – centred and addresses needs like surveillance, excitement, guidance, relaxation, tension, release, social integration, entertainment, escape, identity, socialization and information acquisition.

The trust of this theory therefore is that users of the media have different needs that they feel and want the media to satisfy. This theory is relevant to this study because people use the media for diverse purposes, therefore the posting of selfieon social network sites serves different purposes to the media user and our interest

is on the purpose of self - presentation.

The Gatekeeping Theory
The theory of Gatekeeping in communication was first propounded by social psychologist Kurt Lewin in 1943. The theory developed in studies of communication and journalism looked primarily at gatekeepers as selectors or human information filters (e.g., editors, gatherers).

Roberts,(2005)stated that "gatekeeping is the vanilla ice cream of mass communication theory. It may not beeveryone's favorite, but nearly everyone can tolerate it. And while it may have an unremarkable flavor, it serves as a building block for other theory and methodological approaches" Shoemaker noted the objection by O'Sullivan in a 1983 text that called gatekeeping theory "oversimplified and of little utility."

Fisher (1978) saw gatekeeping as "a significant element in much communication research." Clearly, Fisher appreciates vanilla ice cream (and gatekeeping theory) for what they are – sometimes good enough on their own, and sometimes not good enough. In this study, therefore, the researcher looks at the posting of selfie messages as akin to what the editor does in determining what content goes into publication or the media.

Every posting by a user of the social network site is self determined, in the sense that the subject only allows us the opportunity of seeing the picture he or she is interested in presenting to the media.

Methodology
The Survey research design was adopted for this study, with the questionnaire as the instrument. According to Awak (2013) " surveys enable the researcher to obtain data about practices, situations or views at one point in time through questionnaires or interview.

The population of this study was 7,864 which represents the total number of female undergraduate students in University of Uyo. The sample size of the study is 380 determined by the Taro Yamane sample size determination formula

$n = N/[1 + N(e)^2]$.

However, the simple random sampling technique was used to administer the research instrument to female students using the following order.

Ninety Five copieswere administered to the female students evenly from 100 – 400 level accordingly, thus each level got 95 copies of the questionnaire. However, 370 were retrieved and duly completed by the students .The questionnairewas divided into two sections . The first section contains the demographic data of the respondents, while the second section comprise of questions that are meant to answer the research questions.

The qualitatitive study involved the use of Facebook study group which comprised of over 350 students in the group, and they were asked to state why they engaged in selfie posting and what is the satisfaction derived from such exercise.

Data presentation and analysis
Data from the field shows that in terms of personality type of students who are engaged in selfie posting, 122 respondents representing 33%are introvert, while 218 respondents representing 59% are extrovert. The remaining 30 respondents who constitute 8% were a mixture of both personality types.

On the distribution of respondents engaged in selfie posting, the data showed that 340 respondent (92%) are engaged in selfie, while 30 (8%) respondents stated that they were not engaged in selfie..

Data on selfie content shows that 186 respondents representing (50%) stated that they posted just anything according to their mood, while 70 respondents (19%) posted events and celebrations ranging from things like (birthdays, weddings, burials etc). Sixty Four respondents representing 17% stated that they posted daily activities, the rest of the respondents who amounted to 50 (14%) claimed that they posted make-over and costumes, friends and hanging out situations. Opinion on why they engage in selfie on the social network site, forty – six percent of respondents which accounts for 140 respondents clearly stated that they engaged in selfie for self – presentation, while 12% just have no clear reason.

Fifty - Five respondents representing 15% say it gives them fulfilment, 19 respondents (5%) are engaged in selfie because their friends are doing it. While 31 respondents (8%)state that it enables them demonstrate their independence

Discussion of Findings
This section discusses the answers to the research questions raised earlier in the this study . Four research questions were raised and the answers are provided with reference to relevant data found in tables and other sections of the study.
Research Question One :What are the experiences of female university undergraduates of University Of Uyo when they use selfie for self - presentation on any Social Network Site. ?The response are indicated in the table below

Table 1: Nature of experiences when engaged in selfie posting

	Responses	No of Respondents	Percentage
1.	I feel excited	127	61
2.	It gives me a sense of satisfaction	55	14
3.	It just an hobby	40	11
4.	It makes me feel among	22	6
5.	Nothing special about the feeling	102	28
6.	If any other, state	16	4
	Total	370	100

As indicated in table 1, 127 respondents representing 35% of the respondent stated clearly that they are excited about the selfie posting, and aggregating the percentage of responses who indicated that the act of selfie posting gives them an experience ranging from the sense of satisfaction to the feeling of belonging, or to the expression of doing it as an hobby, the total number of respondents who have one sense of experience or the other amount to 72% of the respondents while those who have no special experiences are 100 (28%) of the respondents."

Research Question Two :How does social structures like religion, culture and personality types influence what images female undergraduate students choose to share on Social Network Site.?

Table 2 :Factors that influences decisions on what to posts on Social Network Site.

	Response	No of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Cultural	16	5
2.	Religious Orientation	52	14
3.	Academic background	31	8
4.	Personality Type	221	59
5.	My social networks	37	10
6.	Others	13	4
	Total	370	100

Table 2 shows that 221 respondents representing 59% of the respondents are influenced by the personality type in engaging in selfie, while culture and academic background accounted for only 16 respondents(5%) and 31 (8%) respondents accordingly. However, 52 respondents which represents 14% were influenced by religious factor in deciding what is posted by them on the social network site.

Research Question three: What is the frequency of posting of selfie by students on Social Network Site ?

Table 3: Frequency of engagement in Selfie.

	Response	No of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Daily	100	27
2.	Weekly	56	15
3.	Monthly	14	4
4.	Occasionally	200	54
	Total	370	100

Inspite of the overwhelming engagement in selfie by the respondents, table 3 shows us that 200 respondents (54%) post selfie occasionally while 100 respondents (27%) post daily, 15% post weekly and 4% post selfie monthly.

Research Question four: Do they have any particular preference for any Social Networking Site when posting their selfie and why ?

Table 4: Preferred Social Network Site.

	Response	No of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Facebook	213	58
2.	Instagram	19	4
3.	Twitter	28	8
4.	Whatapps	88	24
5.	Blogs	22	6
6.	Others	Nil	Nil
	Total	370	100

Looking at table 4, 213 respondents representing 58% of the respondents stated that they had a preferred network namely facebook, while 88 respondents (24%) preferred whatapps,28 and 19 respondents representing 6 % and 4% preferred Twitter and instagram.

Table 5: Reasons for preferred Social Network Site

	Response	No of Respondents	Percentage
1.	**Flexibility**	**85**	**23**
2.	**Reach**	**40**	**11**
3.	**Adaptability**	**46**	**12**
4.	**Community**	**129**	**35**
5.	**Simplicity**	**70**	**19**
	Total	**370**	**100**

Table 5 shows that 129 respondents representing (35%) choose their preferred social network for posting because of the community nature, ie this is what my friends are using, while 23% make their choices because of the flexibility of the network site. 70 respondents (19%) choose their preferred network site for its flexibility. The other factor considered are the reach and adaptability.

Discussions

Research question one sought to find out the experiences of female university undergraduates of University Of Uyo when they use selfie for self - presentation on any Social Network Site. The findings points to the fact that female undergraduate students have positive and diverse experiences when they engage in selfie posting. The positive experiences may be the superficial reasons for engaging in selfies, like one of the respondents posted on the social media in response to the question why selfie. " Gives me a sense of independence and confidence. Confidence gives girls a glow... The camera captures that glow and the picture turns out perfect.". This agrees with the postulation put forward by Karen Nelson-Field, "We now all behave as brands and the selfie is simply brand advertising. Selfies provide an opportunity to position ourselves (often against our competitors) to gain recognition, support and ultimately interaction from the targeted social circle. This is no different to consumer brand promotion.

Research question two sought to find out how social structures like religion, culture and personality types influence what images female undergraduate students choose to share on Social Network Site.?The answer to this question can be seen in table 2, where the critical factor that determine what images the respondents choose to share is influenced more by personality type than any other variable. Putting in proper perpectives, 221 respondents representing 67% stated that personality type influences their posting behaviour than even religion and culture in a multi ethnic and religious society like ours. Therefore it is safe to point out the issue of personality type which data from the field presents 59% as extroverts lends support to the findings of personality type as a major determinant to what Kim &Papacharissi (2013) had discovered in their studies that cultural background and values influence self-‐presentation online, when comparing how American and Korean actors present themselves through personal homepages.. However the findings of this research has revealed that female undergraduates of the University of Uyo are more driven to the act of selfie posting by their personality orientation and sometimes may consider their religious coloration than their cultural values in determining whether to post a selfie or not.

Apter (2015) opines that the young people who engage in selfieare at a stage at which they are trying to define themselves," she explains. "They are trying out different personalities. There's a dissonance between how they want to be and who they have tried to be. They feel they have had an opportunity to say this is who I am, then they feel they have messed up. Then they feel ashamed."

Looking at the personality construct, one can deduce that for young people who are often mesmerised by new things and adventures, it is easy to see why the selfie phenomenon will appeal to them even to the point of ignoring the cultural nuances of protecting ones image and identity. The issue of religion put in perspective becomes more like the checks and balances of what will restrainselfie posting from going overboard to extremes like what obtains in western clime, where one can post absolute nudity as an expression of self image.

Another major highlight of the study was the fact that the respondents agreed that they majorly engaged in selfie posting for the purpose of self- presentation and self fulfilment.Nelson- Field(2013), hits the nail on the head when he states thus, "Wenow all behave as brands and the selfie is simply brand advertising. Selfies provide an opportunity to position ourselves (often against our competitors) to gain recognition, support and ultimately interaction from the targeted social circle. This is no different to consumer brand promotion." His argument sounds plausible, as indeed most of the selfies posted to Instagram can appear to be attempts at self-branding, trying to "sell" the best version of #me: positive, happy, accomplished, proud, well-dressed (sometimes partly or completely undressed), seductive or sexy.

Research question four sought to establish if the students had any preferred network and why?.In answering this question, findings from the field showed that students do not just post their selfie in any social network site as the case may be. They have preferred social site and the two that were very notable are Facebook and Whatapps. These preferred social network sites were chosen or preferred so to speak because of certain

characteristics namely the community nature, the flexibility and simplicity of use of the social network site. Table 4 gives us a clear picture of the preferred site utilised by students for selfie posting. and 58% of respondents stated that they prefer facebook as their Social network site for their selfie content, while 24 % choose whatapps. The reason for the preferred site is seen in table 5 where 33% chose facebook because of the community nature and 25% of respondents preferred a social site because of its flexibility. When the community nature of the social network is interrogated it is obvious that these respondents see the facebook as where they can be better seen by the audience they are targeting.

Fausing(2013), while illustrating why facebook has become the preferred social network site stated succinctly that the face is the showroom of the self. It is here we can see all the features that tell you something about age, ethnicity, gender, mood, presence, etc. It is not for nothing that it is called Facebook and not Footbook. We display ourselves first and foremost through our faces, and we hope that what we display will be accepted.

Summary

Taking our study holistically therefore, one can say categorically that much of selfie posting among female undergraduate of the University Of Uyo is a communication of meaning, symbols and self. When we look at selfie as a portrait, drawing from the latin roots of "portray", it tells us that a self portrait is to "draw forth" and "represent"one self. In the light of this therefore, a selfie as a means of self - presentation achieves itpurpose very effectively.

Conclusion

This study was aimed at analysing how female undergraduates of University of Uyo have exploited the practice of selfiefor their self – presentation. The study analysed how the three pronged dynamics of culture, personality and religion have shaped the 3W's and H namely What, Why, Where and How of selfies is utilised for self - presentation. It is worth noting that personality type and religion has played a significant role in shaping the selfie posted by students. And religion probably serves as a regulator in moderating what is posted on the social network site. Self presentation and fulfilement is the dominant experience that drives the phenomenon of selfie among University female students. Like many of the respondents puts it succinctly,"selfieis like a mirror, you get to see how you look and conclude how awesome you are before the world does.

In conclusion therefore, it is worth noting that selfie is communication, and like Goffman, puts it, self - presentation is interaction between oneself and the audience. It is the way in which we design our self-identities and manage the impressions we want people to have of us. Selfie posting allows the individual to shape the message she wants in a manner that suits her for the audience she targets using the community that will give her the maximum impact and reach.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this work, the following recommendations are made.:
1. Selfies should do more than self - presentation to societal presentation ie it should mirror society's problem and social decadence.
2. Student should be more discrete in the content of their selfie and not just allow their moods to determine what they post as the social media often tend to act as a a double edge sword which can build up one's fame and ruin his or her reputation all at once.
3. That female students should not base their sense of self worth and self esteem on the basis of the selfie they post on social network site.
4. Selfie posting should embrace the culture of practicing safe selfies, where they always keep in mind that virtually everyone can see your selfies and that includes authority figures and potential employers.
5. Selfie posting should not be used to replace the actual cultivation of in person relationship.
6. Selfieposting even though fun, should always be regularly evaluated whether "likes" or comments are becoming the measure of one's self worth.
7. Culture should also be allowed to shape our involvement in the art of selfie posting and not just our personality type.

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