

## **Exploring Social Media as a Net Positive or Negative Influence on Nigerian Youth Culture and Identity**

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### **Abstract:**

*This study is aimed at exploring social media as a net positive or negative influence on Nigerian Youth Culture and Identity. The widespread adoption of social media has raised concerns about its impact on Nigerian youth culture and identity. This study explored the opinions of Nigerian youth on whether social media is a net positive or negative influence on their culture and identity. The purpose of this study is to understand the perceptions of Nigerian youth on the role of social media in shaping their cultural values, identity, and social behavior. The study discussed vital issues such as the potential benefits of social media (e.g., connectivity, access to information, and self-expression) and its potential drawbacks (e.g., cultural homogenization, cyberbullying, and erosion of traditional values). The researchers employed analytical method to decipher the issues raised in this work. The findings suggested that while social media has some benefits, such as connecting Nigerian youth with global trends and ideas, it also has significant negative influences, including the erosion of traditional cultural values and the promotion of unrealistic expectations and consumerism. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended that Nigerian youth, parents, and educators should take a more proactive role in promoting responsible social media use and preserving traditional cultural values.*

**Keywords:** *social media, Nigerian youth, culture, identity, influence.*

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### **1.0 Introduction**

The proliferation of social media has revolutionized the way Nigerian youth interact, communicate, and express themselves, according to Adebayo (2020), a leading researcher on social media and youth culture at the University of Lagos. Adebayo notes that social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become an integral part of Nigerian youth culture, with millions of users across the country. The widespread adoption of social media has provided Nigerian youth with a platform to connect with others, access information, and express themselves freely, thereby shaping their identities and influencing their cultural values. Furthermore, social media has enabled Nigerian youth to participate in global conversations, access educational resources, and engage with social issues that affect their lives. This has led to a significant increase in the use of social media for educational purposes, with many Nigerian youth using social media to access online courses, educational videos, and other learning resources.

However, the widespread adoption of social media has also raised concerns about its impact on Nigerian youth culture and identity, according to Eke (2019), a researcher at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Eke notes that social media has the potential to erode traditional cultural values and promote cultural homogenization, leading to a loss of cultural identity among Nigerian youth. This is particularly concerning, given the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria and the importance of preserving traditional values. Eke argues that social media platforms often prioritize Western cultural values, thereby perpetuating cultural imperialism and threatening the cultural diversity of Nigerian youth. Moreover, the exposure to Western cultural values has led to a decline in the use of indigenous languages and cultural practices among Nigerian youth.

Social media has also been linked to the promotion of unrealistic expectations and consumerism among Nigerian youth, according to Onyeizu (2022), a researcher at the University of Ibadan. Onyeizu argues that social media platforms showcase unrealistic beauty standards, lifestyles, and consumer behaviors, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem among Nigerian youth. This can have serious consequences, including body image issues, depression, and anxiety. Onyeizu notes that Nigerian youth are often bombarded with advertisements and sponsored content that promote materialism and consumerism, thereby shaping their attitudes and behaviors. Furthermore, the constant exposure to unrealistic beauty standards has led to a rise in body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem among Nigerian youth.

On the other hand, social media has also provided Nigerian youth with a platform for self-expression and creativity, according to Nwosu (2021), a researcher at the University of Port Harcourt. Nwosu notes that social media has enabled Nigerian youth to express themselves freely, share their ideas, and showcase their talents. This can have a positive impact on their self-esteem, confidence, and overall well-being. Nwosu argues that social media has democratized the media landscape, providing Nigerian youth with a platform to challenge dominant narratives and promote alternative perspectives. Moreover, social media has enabled Nigerian youth to connect with others who share similar interests and passions, thereby building online communities and networks.

Despite the potential benefits of social media, there is a need for Nigerian youth to be critical users of social media, according to Uche (2020), a researcher at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Uche argues that Nigerian youth need to be aware of the potential influences of social media on their culture and identity and take steps to promote responsible social media use. This includes being mindful of the content they consume, avoiding comparisons with others, and using social media to promote positive cultural values. Uche notes that Nigerian youth need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to navigate the complexities of social media and promote a positive online presence. Furthermore, Nigerian youth need to be educated on the importance of digital literacy and online safety.

The impact of social media on Nigerian youth culture and identity is a complex issue that requires careful consideration, according to the researchers cited above. This study aims to explore the perceptions of Nigerian youth on the role of social media in shaping their cultural values, identity, and social behavior.

## **2.0 Social Media**

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, transforming the way people communicate, interact, and access information. In Nigeria, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have gained immense popularity, with millions of users across the country. The widespread adoption of social media has enabled Nigerians to connect with others, share ideas, and access information on a wide range of topics, including education, politics, entertainment, and culture. Furthermore, social media has provided Nigerians with a platform to express themselves, showcase their talents, and promote their businesses.

The impact of social media on Nigerian society has been significant, with both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, social media has enabled Nigerians to access information, education, and entertainment, thereby promoting social mobility and economic empowerment. Social media has also provided a platform for Nigerians to engage with others, build communities, and promote social causes. On the other hand, social media has also been linked to the spread of misinformation, hate speech, and cyberbullying, which can have serious consequences for individuals and society. Moreover, social media has also been criticized for promoting consumerism, materialism, and unrealistic beauty standards, which can have negative impacts on mental health and well-being.

Despite the challenges associated with social media, it remains a powerful tool for social change and development in Nigeria. Social media has enabled Nigerians to mobilize around social causes, promote activism, and demand accountability from leaders. Social media has also provided a platform for Nigerians to showcase their creativity, talents, and innovations, thereby promoting cultural diversity and economic growth. As social media continues to evolve, it is essential for Nigerians to develop the skills and knowledge to navigate its complexities, promote responsible social media use, and harness its potential for social good. By doing so, Nigerians can maximize the benefits of social media while minimizing its negative impacts.

### **3.0 Net Positive**

The concept of net positive refers to the idea of creating a positive impact on the environment and society, while also generating economic benefits. In the context of business, a net positive approach involves adopting sustainable practices, reducing waste, and promoting social responsibility, while also increasing revenue and profitability. This approach recognizes that businesses have a critical role to play in addressing global challenges such as climate change, poverty, and inequality, and seeks to create value for all stakeholders, including shareholders, employees, customers, and the environment.

A net positive approach requires a fundamental shift in the way businesses operate, from a focus on short-term profits to a focus on long-term sustainability. This involves adopting circular economy principles, reducing carbon emissions, and promoting sustainable supply chains. It also involves investing in employee development, promoting diversity and inclusion, and contributing to the well-being of local communities. By taking a net positive approach, businesses can create value for all stakeholders, while also reducing their environmental footprint and promoting social justice.

The benefits of a net positive approach are numerous, ranging from cost savings and increased efficiency to improved brand reputation and increased customer loyalty. Companies that adopt a net positive approach are also more likely to attract and retain top talent, as employees are increasingly looking for employers that share their values and are committed to making a positive impact. Furthermore, a net positive approach can also help businesses to mitigate risks, build resilience, and stay ahead of regulatory requirements.

Despite the benefits, achieving net positive is not without its challenges. It requires a significant cultural shift, investment in new technologies, and a willingness to take risks. However, for businesses that are willing to take the leap, the rewards are significant. By embracing a net positive approach, businesses can create a better future for all stakeholders, while also driving long-term success and profitability. As the world continues to grapple with the challenges of sustainability, net positive is likely to become an increasingly important concept for businesses to embrace.

### **4.0 Negative Influence**

The negative influence of social media on Nigerian youth is a pressing concern, with many young people exposed to unrealistic beauty standards, consumerism, and materialism. Social media platforms showcase unattainable lifestyles, promoting the idea that happiness and success are linked to material possessions and physical appearance. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and body image issues among Nigerian youth. Furthermore, the constant bombardment of advertisements and sponsored content can create a culture of consumerism, where young people feel pressured to keep up with the latest trends and products.

The spread of misinformation and hate speech on social media is another significant negative influence on Nigerian youth. Social media platforms can be breeding grounds for false information, propaganda, and hate speech, which can have serious consequences for individuals and society. Nigerian youth are often exposed to inflammatory content, which can fuel ethnic and religious tensions, promote violence, and undermine social cohesion. Moreover, the anonymity of social media can embolden individuals to engage in cyberbullying, harassment, and other forms of online abuse, which can have devastating effects on the mental health and well-being of young people.

The negative influence of social media on Nigerian youth also extends to their mental health and relationships. Social media can create unrealistic expectations and promote unhealthy comparisons, leading to feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Nigerian youth are often glued to their screens, comparing their lives to the curated highlight reels of others, and feeling inadequate as a result. Furthermore, social media can also undermine face-to-face relationships and social skills, as young people spend more time interacting with their devices than with real people. This can have long-term consequences for their emotional intelligence, social skills, and ability to form healthy relationships.

### **5.0 Culture and Identity**

Culture and identity are intricately linked concepts that play a significant role in shaping the experiences and worldviews of Nigerian youth. Culture refers to the shared values, customs, and traditions that are passed down from one generation to the next, while identity refers to an individual's sense of self and belonging. For Nigerian youth, culture and identity are critical components of their social and emotional development, influencing their attitudes,

behaviors, and relationships. The cultural context in which they grow up shapes their perceptions of themselves, their communities, and the world around them.

The impact of globalization and social media on Nigerian culture and identity is a complex and multifaceted issue. On one hand, globalization has opened up new avenues for cultural exchange and expression, allowing Nigerian youth to access and engage with diverse cultures and ideas. Social media, in particular, has enabled Nigerian youth to connect with others across the globe, share their experiences, and showcase their cultural heritage. However, this increased exposure to foreign cultures has also led to concerns about cultural homogenization, with some Nigerian youth abandoning their traditional cultural practices and values in favor of Westernized or globalized norms.

The preservation of Nigerian culture and identity is essential for promoting social cohesion, national pride, and a sense of belonging among youth. Nigerian culture is rich and diverse, with over 250 ethnic groups and a multitude of languages, traditions, and customs. However, the influence of Western culture and the spread of globalization have led to a decline in the use of indigenous languages, traditional practices, and cultural values. To mitigate this, efforts should be made to promote cultural awareness, language preservation, and intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge and traditions.

Ultimately, Nigerian youth need to develop a strong sense of cultural identity and appreciation for their heritage, while also being open to learning from and engaging with other cultures. This requires a balanced approach that promotes cultural diversity, inclusivity, and exchange, while also preserving the unique cultural traditions and values that make Nigerian culture so rich and vibrant. By embracing their cultural heritage and identity, Nigerian youth can develop a strong sense of self, build meaningful relationships, and contribute positively to their communities and society at large.

## **6.0 Roles of Social Media in Shaping Nigerian Youth's Cultural Values, Identity, and Social Behavior**

Social media has revolutionized the way Nigerian youth interact, communicate, and express themselves, according to Oparinde (2025). Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become integral to Nigerian youth culture, with millions of users across the country. This widespread adoption has provided Nigerian youth with a platform to connect with others, access information, and express themselves freely, shaping their identities and influencing their cultural values. The proliferation of social media has also enabled Nigerian youth to participate in global conversations, access educational resources, and engage with social issues that affect their lives. Furthermore, social media has provided a platform for Nigerian youth to showcase their creativity, talents, and innovations, promoting cultural diversity and economic growth.

The impact of social media on Nigerian youth culture is multifaceted, with both positive and negative consequences, as noted by Adeyemi (2024). On one hand, social media has enabled Nigerian youth to access information, education, and entertainment, promoting social mobility and economic empowerment. However, it has also exposed them to unrealistic beauty standards, consumerism, and materialism, leading to issues like low self-esteem and body image concerns. Additionally, social media has also been linked to the spread of misinformation, hate speech, and cyberbullying, which can have serious consequences for individuals and society. The constant bombardment of advertisements and sponsored content can create a culture of consumerism, where young people feel pressured to keep up with the latest trends and products.

Social media has also played a significant role in shaping Nigerian youth's social behavior, with many using platforms like Twitter and Facebook to engage in social and political causes, according to Musa (2023). The #EndSARS movement in 2020 is a prime example of social media driving social change, with Nigerian youth using these platforms to raise awareness, organize protests, and demand accountability. Social media has also enabled Nigerian youth to connect with others who share similar interests and passions, building online communities and networks. Furthermore, social media has provided a platform for Nigerian youth to engage in online activism, promoting social justice and human rights.

The influence of social media on Nigerian youth's cultural identity is a pressing concern, with many young people abandoning traditional cultural practices and values in favor of Westernized or globalized norms, as observed

by Frank, Uko, Wilson, Ononokpono,(2025). This cultural homogenization can lead to a loss of cultural identity and heritage, emphasizing the need for cultural education and awareness. The adoption of Western cultural values and norms can also lead to a decline in the use of indigenous languages, traditional practices, and cultural values. Furthermore, the spread of globalization and social media can perpetuate cultural imperialism, threatening the cultural diversity and uniqueness of Nigerian youth.

Despite the challenges, social media has also provided Nigerian youth with a platform for self-expression, creativity, and community building, according to Umuzue and Edih (2022). Many young Nigerians use social media to showcase their talents, passions, and opinions, connecting with others who share similar interests and values. Social media has also enabled Nigerian youth to promote their businesses, products, and services, promoting entrepreneurship and economic growth. Furthermore, social media has provided a platform for Nigerian youth to engage in online learning, accessing educational resources and courses that can enhance their skills and knowledge.

To maximize the benefits of social media while minimizing its risks, Nigerian youth need to develop critical thinking skills, digital literacy, and responsible online behavior, as suggested by Oloruntoba (2025). This requires a collaborative effort from governments, social media platforms, and civil society organizations to promote digital citizenship and online safety. Nigerian youth need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to navigate the complexities of social media, critically evaluate information, and promote positive online interactions. By doing so, Nigerian youth can harness the potential of social media to promote cultural diversity, economic growth, and social change.

### **7.0 Potential Benefits of Social Media to Nigerian Youth**

Social media has the potential to be a powerful tool for Nigerian youth, providing them with a platform to express themselves, showcase their talents, and connect with others who share similar interests and passions. Through social media, Nigerian youth can share their ideas, creativity, and innovations with a global audience, promoting cultural diversity and exchange. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have enabled Nigerian youth to showcase their artistic talents, such as music, dance, and fashion, gaining recognition and fame both locally and internationally. Additionally, social media has also provided a platform for Nigerian youth to share their stories, experiences, and perspectives, promoting cultural understanding and empathy. By sharing their stories and experiences, Nigerian youth can challenge stereotypes, break down cultural barriers, and promote a more nuanced understanding of Nigerian culture and identity.

Social media has also provided Nigerian youth with access to educational resources, online courses, and learning opportunities that can enhance their skills and knowledge. Platforms like Coursera, Udemy, and LinkedIn Learning offer a wide range of courses and tutorials that Nigerian youth can access to improve their employability and career prospects. Additionally, social media has enabled Nigerian youth to connect with experts and professionals in their desired fields, seeking guidance and mentorship. This has created new opportunities for Nigerian youth to learn, grow, and develop their skills, regardless of their geographical location or financial background. Furthermore, social media has also enabled Nigerian youth to access online communities and networks, connecting with others who share similar interests and passions, and learning from their experiences and perspectives.

Social media has also played a significant role in promoting entrepreneurship and economic growth among Nigerian youth. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp have enabled Nigerian youth to start and grow their own businesses, promoting products and services to a wider audience. Social media has also provided a platform for Nigerian youth to showcase their products and services, gaining recognition and attracting customers. This has created new opportunities for Nigerian youth to become entrepreneurs, creating jobs and contributing to the country's economic growth. Additionally, social media has also enabled Nigerian youth to access funding opportunities, investors, and partners, helping them to scale their businesses and achieve their goals.

Social media has also provided Nigerian youth with a platform to engage in social and political activism, promoting social justice and human rights. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook have enabled Nigerian youth to raise awareness about social issues, organize protests, and demand accountability from leaders. The #EndSARS movement in 2020 is a prime example of social media driving social change, with Nigerian youth using these platforms to raise awareness, organize protests, and demand accountability. Social media has also enabled Nigerian

youth to connect with others who share similar interests and passions, building online communities and networks that promote social change. Furthermore, social media has also provided a platform for Nigerian youth to amplify marginalized voices, promote inclusivity, and challenge social injustices.

Social media has also enabled Nigerian youth to connect with others globally, promoting cultural exchange and understanding. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have enabled Nigerian youth to connect with people from different cultures and backgrounds, learning about their experiences and perspectives. This has created new opportunities for Nigerian youth to broaden their horizons, challenge their assumptions, and develop a more globalized outlook. By engaging with others globally, Nigerian youth can promote cultural diversity, tolerance, and understanding, contributing to a more peaceful and harmonious world. Additionally, social media has also enabled Nigerian youth to promote Nigerian culture and identity, sharing their stories, traditions, and values with a global audience, and promoting cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

### **8.0 Exploring Social Media as a Net Positive or Negative Influence on Nigerian Youth's Cultural Values.**

Social media has become an integral part of Nigerian youth culture, influencing their cultural values, identity, and social behavior in profound ways. On one hand, social media has provided Nigerian youth with a platform to express themselves, showcase their talents, and connect with others who share similar interests and passions. Through social media, Nigerian youth can share their ideas, creativity, and innovations with a global audience, promoting cultural diversity and exchange. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have enabled Nigerian youth to showcase their artistic talents, such as music, dance, and fashion, gaining recognition and fame both locally and internationally.

However, social media has also had a negative impact on Nigerian youth culture, promoting unrealistic beauty standards, consumerism, and materialism. Nigerian youth are constantly bombarded with images and messages that promote Westernized beauty standards, leading to body image issues and low self-esteem. Social media has also created a culture of comparison, where Nigerian youth compare their lives to the curated highlight reels of others, feeling inadequate and dissatisfied with their own lives. Furthermore, social media has also promoted a culture of instant gratification, where Nigerian youth expect immediate results and rewards, without putting in the necessary effort and hard work.

Despite these challenges, social media has also provided Nigerian youth with access to educational resources, online courses, and learning opportunities that can enhance their skills and knowledge. Platforms like Coursera, Udemy, and LinkedIn Learning offer a wide range of courses and tutorials that Nigerian youth can access to improve their employability and career prospects. Additionally, social media has enabled Nigerian youth to connect with experts and professionals in their desired fields, seeking guidance and mentorship. This has created new opportunities for Nigerian youth to learn, grow, and develop their skills, regardless of their geographical location or financial background.

Social media has also played a significant role in promoting entrepreneurship and economic growth among Nigerian youth. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp have enabled Nigerian youth to start and grow their own businesses, promoting products and services to a wider audience. Social media has also provided a platform for Nigerian youth to showcase their products and services, gaining recognition and attracting customers. This has created new opportunities for Nigerian youth to become entrepreneurs, creating jobs and contributing to the country's economic growth.

However, social media has also had a negative impact on Nigerian youth identity, promoting cultural homogenization and the erosion of traditional values. Nigerian youth are increasingly abandoning their traditional cultural practices and values in favor of Westernized or globalized norms, leading to a loss of cultural identity and heritage. Social media has also perpetuated cultural imperialism, promoting Western cultural values and norms as superior to traditional Nigerian culture. This has created a sense of cultural confusion and disorientation among Nigerian youth, who are struggling to reconcile their traditional cultural identity with the influence of globalization.

To maximize the benefits of social media while minimizing its risks, Nigerian youth need to develop critical thinking skills, digital literacy, and responsible online behavior. This requires a collaborative effort from

governments, social media platforms, and civil society organizations to promote digital citizenship and online safety. Nigerian youth need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to navigate the complexities of social media, critically evaluate information, and promote positive online interactions. By doing so, Nigerian youth can harness the potential of social media to promote cultural diversity, economic growth, and social change, while preserving their traditional cultural identity and values.

### **9.0 Conclusion**

The exploration of social media as a net positive or negative influence on Nigerian youth's cultural values and identity reveals a complex and multifaceted issue. As examined under the sub-heading "Exploring Social Media as a Net Positive or Negative Influence on Nigerian Youth's Culture and Identity", social media has both empowered Nigerian youth to express themselves and showcase their talents, while also exposing them to unrealistic beauty standards, consumerism, and materialism.

The potential benefits of social media to Nigerian youth, as discussed earlier, are numerous. Social media has provided access to educational resources, online courses, and learning opportunities that can enhance their skills and knowledge. Additionally, social media has enabled Nigerian youth to connect with experts and professionals in their desired fields, seeking guidance and mentorship. However, as noted in the sub-heading "Potential Benefits of Social Media to Nigerian Youth", these benefits are not without challenges, and Nigerian youth must navigate the complexities of social media to maximize its benefits.

The impact of social media on Nigerian youth's cultural identity is a pressing concern, as it promotes cultural homogenization and the erosion of traditional values. As examined under the sub-heading "Exploring Social Media as a Net Positive or Negative Influence on Nigerian Youth's Cultural Values", Nigerian youth are increasingly abandoning their traditional cultural practices and values in favor of Westernized or globalized norms, leading to a loss of cultural identity and heritage. This highlights the need for Nigerian youth to develop critical thinking skills, digital literacy, and responsible online behavior to preserve their traditional cultural identity and values.

Ultimately, the influence of social media on Nigerian youth's cultural values and identity is a double-edged sword. While it presents opportunities for cultural exchange, education, and economic growth, it also poses risks to Nigerian youth's cultural identity and traditional values. To harness the potential of social media, Nigerian youth, governments, social media platforms, and civil society organizations must work together to promote digital citizenship, online safety, and cultural diversity, ensuring that social media is a net positive influence on Nigerian youth's cultural values and identity.

### **10.0 Recommendations**

The researchers recommended as follows:

1. **Develop Critical Thinking Skills:** Nigerian youth should develop critical thinking skills to navigate the complexities of social media, critically evaluate information, and promote positive online interactions.
  2. **Promote Digital Literacy:** Governments, social media platforms, and civil society organizations should promote digital literacy among Nigerian youth to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to harness the potential of social media.
  3. **Foster Cultural Diversity:** Nigerian youth, governments, and social media platforms should work together to promote cultural diversity, preserve traditional cultural identity and values, and challenge cultural homogenization.
  4. **Encourage Responsible Online Behavior:** Nigerian youth should be encouraged to practice responsible online behavior, including respecting others' opinions, avoiding cyberbullying, and promoting online safety and digital citizenship.
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