

Social Media and Covid19, Implications on Consumer Behavior and Social Life in Uganda

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Abstract: *This study is on how consumer behavior and the social life have been affected by what social media is spreading on COVID19. The objectives of this study are: examine the extent of democratization of information; examine the new Ecosystem of getting information. The researchers used the pragmatic approach exploring the survey of about 87 people individuals comprising of University students, transporters, media houses, and night club owners. The findings showed the extent of the social media on spread of Information about Covid19 and also how consumer behavior and social life have been affected.*

Keywords: Covid19, Social life, Social media, Economy, Uganda

1. Introduction

In terms of user numbers social media has gone from strength to strength. Current statistics show that 2271 million users use Twitter, 326 million use Snapchat, 1000 million use Instagram and 287 million use YouTube [1]. Public health strategies are thus constantly vying for the attention of people and trying to influence their actions across these social media networks. The growing trend in the World Wide Web (WWW) has made it easier than ever to learn, share and transfer information. People from all backgrounds of life can now easily exchange details, images, and post motivational ideas on social media as well as advertising jobs [2]. Political Leaders turn to the web now to make a splash, impact and hear their voices.

Nowadays, social media opens the door to ways to create constructive as well as negative world impacts. Each day we are flooded with messages that can have an effect on how we think, what we think and how we interpret what we think [3].

According to Kaplan [4], with this advent of social media globally, businesses have been steadily relegated as mere spectators to the side lines, with neither the information nor the ability, or often even the right to change publicly posted comments made by their clients. Different kind of information can be spread through the social media and yet their authenticity has to be judge.

2. Problem Statement

Usage of social media has become a way of life, and personal interactions are made public [5]. Several research have been done on the use of social media, their effect on their social behavior, employment, academic performance as well as their positive and negative effects, factors affecting use, ethical use and other morals. Today social media cannot be regarded as a means of spending spare time because it has introduced the biggest shift since the times of the Industrial Revolution. Therefore, the spread of online communication can also be considered a revolutionary shift. Indeed, social networks have altered the traditional image of social communication and have provided new incentives and tools of information exchange [6].

The world is facing now the worst of the virus outbreak called Corona virus (Covid19).

According to WHO [7], many cases have now been reported to WHO (95,555,281 by 18 January 2021), from 118 countries and territories. In the past two weeks, the number of cases reported outside China has increased almost 13-fold, and the number of affected countries has almost tripled, and Max [8] to add that it is not easy to know the exact number of infected people for some the symptoms are very severe, but for a share of the population the symptoms are mild, which means that they are unaware that they are infected with COVID-19; and therefore not everyone who might be infected is seen by a doctor.

Social Media have been playing an important role in spreading updates about COVID19, as it can be seen in Italy, Artists, doctors and politicians have thrown their weight behind the drastic steps taken by the government to fight the latest coronavirus, calling on its social media followers to abide by an unprecedented lockdown in the north of the country. However, In Uganda, it has been observed that, social media play an important by the fact that more than half of population [9] is using social media. In sight of this situation, there's a need to investigate how economy and the social life have been affected by what social media is spreading on COVID19 in Uganda.

3. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Examine the Impact of Social media Covid 19 information on Life style in Uganda
2. Examine the Impact of Social media Covid 19 information on Consumers Behavior in Uganda

4. Research questions

- What is the impact of social media information about covid19 on social lifestyle in Uganda?
- What is the impact of social media information about covid19 on consumer behavior in Uganda?

5. Research methodology

This research adopted both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source of data was obtained by questionnaire while the secondary data was constructed using literature analysis. This study focused on implications of covid19 information spread by social media on lifestyle and economy in Uganda society. The research focused on Central Kampala as a geographic case in Uganda, using random sampling process. The sample size of 87 respondents was involved in the study through questionnaire data gathering technique. The participants were selected among Students, Market sellers, Transporters, Night Club Managers. SPSS 20.0 was useful to analyze data collected.

The initial step is to assess the reliability of the instrument utilizing a gauge for interior consistency. The value of Cronbach's Alpha for the 23 items was 0.86, this value is generally recognized in the social sciences.

6. Data analyses and Discussions

Using social media has a considerable impact on the social life of users. The use of social media improves communication among citizens according to Chen [10]. Also, there are ongoing discussions on whether the usage of Social Media affects social behavior, lifestyle and well-being [11]. To address the discussion with clarity, this research question aimed to determine the impact of social media information about covid19 on social lifestyle in Uganda.

Table 1: Respondents' preferred Social Media application

| | SM | N | Percent |
|--|-----------|----|---------|
| Which of the following is your preferred social media application? | Facebook | 75 | 86.2% |
| | Twitter | 10 | 11.49% |
| | Whatsapp | 80 | 91.95% |
| | Viber | 1 | 1.14% |
| | Instagram | 3 | 3.44% |

According to Table 1, the finding indicates that 75 (86.2%) of respondents preferred using

Facebook, 10 (11.49%) uses Twitter, 80 (91.95%) uses Whatsapp, 1 respondent (1.14%) uses Viber while 3 (3.44%) prefers Instagram and the list continue. However, according to study by Jha et al. (2016), Facebook is the most used SM application and it is used across different professions to connect friends and colleagues. But this study suggested Whatsapp to be the preferred SM application.

Table 2: Positive and negative impacts of social media information

| Construct | SA | A | Total | D | SD | Total | Neutral |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|---------|
| The use of social media impacts positively on social lifestyle | 31 | 41 | 72 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 6 |
| | 35.6% | 47.1% | 82.7% | 6.9% | 3.4% | 10.3% | 6.9% |
| Social media usage promotes good behavior vis a vis covid19 | 43 | 37 | 80 | 1 | | 1 | 6 |
| | 49.4% | 42.5% | 91.9% | 1.1% | | 1.1% | 6.9% |
| The posting of irrelevant, fake news about covid19, racist, abusive, anti-cultural and religious contents and links promotes hatred among racial groups in the society. | 29 | 46 | 75 | 5 | | 5 | 7 |
| | 33.3% | 52.9% | 86% | 5.7% | | 5.7% | 8.0% |

In Uganda the degree of change attributed to social media during covid19 can be either positive or negative. Table 2's first question was aimed at understanding whether SM has a positive or negative effect on social life.

According to the study finding, 72 (82.7%) of the participants agree that SM information about covid19 has positive and negative impact in their social life in covid19 period, while 9 (10.3%) contradicts by disagreeing that SM information about covid19 does not have any impact on values and lifestyle and 6 (6.9%) did not show their opinion. At this point, the study proves that SM information about covid19 has an influent positive and negative impact on social life.

Behavior is element of social construct. According to the finding in Table 2, the second question seeks to understand if Social Media information about covid19 promotes good behavior vis a vis covid19. The finding indicates 80 (91.9%) of the respondents concord that SM promotes good behavior vis a vis covid19. This finding depicts that SM usage influences adoption of good behavior in covid19 pandemic period

Third question on Table 2 aimed to address whether SM assists in promoting fake news about covid19, racist, abusive, anti-cultural and religious contents and links promotes hatred among racial groups in the society. The finding shows that 75 (86%) accepts that SM promoting fake news about covid19, racist, abusive, anti-cultural and religious contents and links promotes hatred among racial groups in the society.

Table 3: Social Media and Consumer Behavior

| Construct | SA | A | Total(A) | D | SD | Total(D) | Neutral |
|--|-------|-------|----------|------|------|----------|---------|
| Social media information on covid19 has changed consumer behavior | 18 | 52 | 70 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 12 |
| | 20.7% | 59.8% | 80.5% | 4.6% | 1.1% | 5.7% | 13.8% |
| Prices have increased due to the information people are reading on social media | 25 | 35 | 60 | 5 | 6 | 11 | 16 |
| | 28.7% | 40.2% | 91.9% | 5.7% | 6.9% | 12.6% | 18.4% |
| Social media have promoted some fake information pushing people to avoid using some services of purchasing some products | 17 | 41 | 58 | 7 | | 7 | 22 |
| | 19.5% | 47.1% | 86% | 8.0% | | 8.0% | 25.3% |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|--|-------|------|
| Information spread by social media about covid19 has affected negatively some services like transports, nightclubs, etc. | 33 | 35 | 68 | 16 | | 16 | 3 |
| | 37.9% | 40.2% | 78.1% | 18.4% | | 18.4% | 3.4% |

In Covid19 period, the level of change attributed to Social media can either be positive or negative on Consumer behavior. The first question on Table 3 directed to understand whether Social media information about covid19 has changed consumer behavior. According to the study finding, 70 (80.5%) of the participants agree that Social Media Information on covid19 has changed consumer behavior while 5 (5.7%) contradicts by disagreeing that Social Media information on covid19 doesn't have any impact on consumer behavior. At this point, the study proves that Social Media information on covid19 has changed consumer behavior.

Price as a core element of a product, according to Table 3, the second question seeks to understand if Social media information on covid19 promotes increasing prices in the market. The finding indicates 60 (91.9%) of the respondents concord that Social Media promotes increasing prices in the market.

A strong positive statistical relation between social media information about covid19 and increasing prices in the market is noted in Table 4. The overall variation is equivalent to 76.4 percent, suggesting that in social media 76.4 percent of the variance of social media information about COVID-19 has been investigated, and the other factors are due to random error (23.6 percent).

In other words, this indicates that Covid19 social media information is linked to 76.4 percent of the factors influencing the prices in the market in Kampala/Uganda.

Table 4: Simple regression model of the relation between the Covid19 information on social Media and The price in the market

| Model | Unstandardized coefficients | | t test | P value | R | R ² | F test | P value |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|--------|--------|---------|------------------|----------------|--------|---------|
| | B | SE | | | | | | |
| Constant | 0.4346 | 0.219 | 4.865 | .001 | .8701 | .764 | 96.552 | <.001 |
| Prices in the market | 0.6588 | 0.0588 | 11.532 | <.001 | N/A ^a | N/A | N/A | N/A |

^aNot applicable.

Another aspect is about some product and services that has been affected either positively or negatively by Covid 19 Social media information. A strong negative statistical relation between social media information about covid19 and avoidance of some services like night club, common transportation, etc. is noted in Table 5.

Table 5: Simple regression model of the relation between the Covid19 information on social Media and Some services avoidance

| Model | Unstandardized coefficients | t test | P value | R | R ² | F test | P value |
|-------|-----------------------------|--------|---------|---|----------------|--------|---------|
| | | | | | | | |

| | B | SE | | | | | | |
|---|--------|-------|--------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Constant | 2.478 | 0.167 | 14.796 | .001 | 0.106 | 0.011 | 0.974 | <.001 |
| Social Media info affects negatively some services like nightclub, transportation | -0.081 | 0.082 | 0.082 | <.001 | N/A ^a | N/A | N/A | N/A |

^aNot applicable.

The overall variation is equivalent to 1.1 percent, suggesting that in social media 1.1 percent of the variance of social media information about COVID-19 has been investigated, and the other factors are due to random error (9.9 percent). This implies that Covid19 information on social media does not affect directly services like night club, transportation, etc.

7. Conclusion

A considerable portion of potentially hazardous misinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic has been generated and most of it has been transmitted through social networks. This fake news is made up of multiple aspects of an epidemic that is capable of affecting public safety, aggravating crisis management once again. This false COVID-19 rumor spreads more easily than the virus. The study's regression analysis reveals that there is a strong positive statistical association between social media information about covid19 and the COVID-19 panic spread which affect positively the social life of citizen in Uganda. Moreover, the analysis demonstrated that the consumer behavior can be altered by the information getting from social media during Covid19 crisis. Some people in fear of unknown can act differently in terms of buying items in the market. It is necessary to promote this to health care professionals in the area and to collaborate with these professionals in the media to make sure that only well-researched knowledge is disseminated to the public.

8. Limitations

Different study limitations have been established, most notably self-reported data from selfselected participants, and the lockdown time was a constraint on collecting more representative data. Participants who wanted to participate in this study were hard to find. Another aspect is that the study was quantitative, maybe using qualitative methods the researchers may find different findings

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